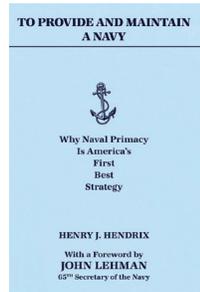


TO PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN: WHY NAVAL PRIMACY IS AMERICA'S FIRST BEST STRATEGY

Henry J. Hendrix. Annapolis, MD: Focsle, 2020. 123 pp. Notes. \$20.

Reviewed by Commander BJ Armstrong, U.S. Navy



The ideals of sea power date back centuries. From the triremes of the Peloponnesian Wars to the long-boats of the Vikings, the use of the maritime world for the purposes of trade, competition, and war has been a fundamental part of the human experience. Today, however, the idea of fighting on and about access to and use of the sea appears to many as a relic of that history. Dr. Jerry Hendrix's book, *To Provide and Maintain a Navy*, offers a much needed corrective to that belief. In a succinct argument, throughout engaging chapters, the retired naval officer and accomplished naval historian demonstrates that the United States must return to its maritime and sea power roots in order to be successful in the 21st century—era of renewed great power competition.

This book is short. And that, perhaps, is one of its greatest strengths. Hendrix explains the core argument that to succeed in the 21st century the United States must look to the sea. Unlike a lot of other naval writing, it makes few assumptions about readers' familiarity with maritime subjects. Instead of an exhaustive examination of U.S. maritime power, it offers a primer for the interested U.S. citizen. Able to be read over a single weekend, the book offers part legal brief, part historical summary, part net assessment of today's great power competition, and part projection toward the future.

Hendrix begins with a philosophical question of identity, illuminating the different perspectives of land powers and sea powers. Applying the ideas introduced by Andrew Lambert in his recent book, *Seapower States* (Yale Uni-

versity Press, 2018), Hendrix returns to the question repeatedly throughout the text. In the United States, how people see themselves and their role in the world is fundamental to the foreign policy and defense policy of the nation. In one view, the United States is a continental land power that sees the world as territory to be invaded, occupied, or "developed" through expeditionary military engagement. In the competing view, the United States is a sea power that sees the world as a network in need of maintenance, where power is derived from ensuring that the economics, diplomacy, and influence of the nation can be grown and exercised in pursuit of its interests.

To Provide and Maintain makes the case that for a democracy such as the United States, a nation that historically has been focused on economic power as much as military power and has placed a high value on diplomacy as much as war, a sea power strategy is not only the more effective, but also more in line with the nation's values. To be a sea power, however, the nation must follow the instructions of the Constitution and "provide and maintain a Navy" of sufficient power.

In addition to the philosophical and strategic argument, the book assesses the continentalist great powers who challenge the United States' role in the world today: China and Russia. The rise in the naval ambitions of these two powers is shown in contrast to the decline of the U.S. Navy over the past several decades, both in size and in capability. Finally, Hendrix lays out a path for American naval rebuilding that he says will offer the United States what it needs to reestablish itself as a sea power in the 21st century.

For today's sailors and Marines, this book offers a clear view of what it is that the Navy and Marine Corps do, and

why we do it. For leaders and politicians in halls of power, it offers a clear-eyed assessment of the current state of great power competition. For U.S. citizens, it offers a rationale for naval power and a clearly written explanation of today's maritime world. Jerry Hendrix offers a call to once again look outward, as Alfred Thayer Mahan suggested, and realize the nation's connection to the maritime world is one of its fundamental strengths.

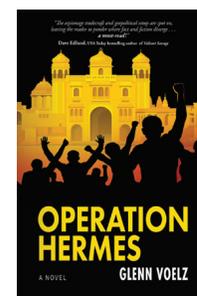
Making the hard choices needed to reinvest in the Navy and Marine Corps may seem difficult, but *To Provide and Maintain* makes a clear and credible argument that it is the path to the nation's best strategy for the future.

■ **COMMANDER ARMSTRONG** is a permanent military professor with the U.S. Naval Academy History Department. He earned his PhD from King's College, London, and is the author of several books.

OPERATION HERMES

Glenn Voelz. Gleneden Beach, OR: First Steps Publishing, 2020. 300 pp. \$19.

Reviewed by Captain Bill Bray, U.S. Navy (Retired)



Operation Hermes is Glenn Voelz's sequel in his Gisawi Chronicles series, after *War Under the Mango Tree*. Gisawi is a fictional sub-Saharan African country that resembles

many sub-Saharan African countries—nations of raw beauty brimming with natural resources, political instability, corruption, and plenty of ungoverned or poorly governed space in which terror-

ists and other bad actors tend to flourish. Avaricious corporations and states hostile to U.S. interests see plenty of opportunity to stick it to Uncle Sam and make a quick buck as well, and it is from this exotic cauldron of shadowy intrigue that Voelz conjures a tightly wrought, edgy, and satirical thriller.

At the novel's outset, Gisawi is a U.S. ally. But following a U.S.-enabled high-tech manhunt that kills a notorious warlord, the country's fragile stability begins to come unglued. Panicked, Gisawi's autocratic and justifiably paranoid president begins to doubt the United States' resolve and turns to China for support. The Great Game is on. Voelz's cast of very realistic U.S. intelligence, military, and State Department characters find it tough going, navigating the shifting loyalties and duplicities that pile up as a mad scramble for power ensues. On top of that, the narrative includes a healthy helping of the foreign affairs expert's nagging paradox—those who seem to know the local actors best are least able to recognize what's really going on in a crisis.

If that scenario seems implausible, it should not. I got a taste of what U.S. diplomats and intelligence professionals deal with on the continent when I served in East Africa in 2006. A year later the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya cabled from Nairobi the rosier of projections for an orderly national election two weeks hence. Within a week following the election, the country had descended into ethnic violence so severe it teetered on becoming the site of the world's next tragic genocide. A few years prior to that, one of my analysts was the most recent defense attache to Liberia and knew all the players personally. He could not be persuaded that then-President Charles Taylor was about to flee the country, regardless of the mounting evidence to the contrary.

And, finally, I once took a class from a retired CIA officer who was the station chief in Libya for three years by 1969, when Muammar Gaddafi engineered a successful *coup d'état*. The CIA officer told me he thought he knew every Libyan Army officer, yet never heard

of Gaddafi or saw the revolt coming. Too much? Perhaps, but the more a reader knows about Africa, the more real Gisawi seems.

And Voelz knows a thing or two about his settings, having spent 25 years in the Army as an intelligence officer that included time on the continent. His eye for detail is informed by experience. And, unlike so many of his contemporaries in the genre, his character development equals that of plot and the dialogue is sharp and believable to anyone who has been in these crisis action rooms.

Readers won't know whether to laugh or wince at the futile U.S. efforts to influence events on the ground. It seems, to quote Christopher Hitchens' take on Graham Greene's perception of similar MI-6 misadventures, the interagency team is a place of "collapsing scenery and low comedy."

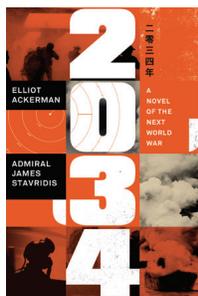
If anyone who has ever followed some of the actual foreign policy debacles in the past gets the sense in reading *Operation Hermes* that he or she has read it all before, it's because they have.

■ **CAPTAIN BRAY** is a retired naval intelligence officer and the deputy editor-in-chief of *Proceedings*.

2034: A NOVEL OF THE NEXT WORLD WAR

Elliot Ackerman and Admiral James Stavridis, U.S. Navy (Retired.) New York: Penguin Press, 2021. 320 pp. \$27.

Reviewed by **Commander J. D. Kristenson, U.S. Navy**



China Sea could look like. In its telling, authors Elliot Ackerman and retired Admiral James Stavridis draw on their unimpeachable military backgrounds and

writing resumes to bring forth a work of great depth.

The authors cast their narrative in a believable context; the backdrop is an imaginative extrapolation of present-day events into the near future of 2034. It is set in a world formed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and further remapped by China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative. There are indeed a few progressive details of their vision of the year 2034, such as a female U.S. President unaffiliated with a political party and an attack a U.S. submarine named the USS *Michelle Obama*, that seem positively wistful in today's political climate. Perhaps least surprisingly though, an 82-year-old Vladimir Putin is still desperately clinging to power in Russia. Ultimately, the novel is not meant to be perfectly predictive, but rather to project an imaginative vision of what might come to pass.

Many readers can remember the events of 2007 when, halfway through the George W. Bush administration's second term, the first iPhone was launched. There is a corresponding truth that is not always as keenly felt, however; 2034 is as close in the future as 2007 is in the past. As such, this setting is not in the distant future—it is all too close at hand. *2034* paints a bracing picture of the United States, with an increasingly irrelevant military technological advantage and an overstretched empire with a sclerotic imagination. Despite the imminent risks, reader will find America clinging to technology that no longer serves its security interests.

Then, on a single, terrifying day, China shakes America's faith in its military's strategic pre-eminence, and a fragile new era is born. U.S. naval power is outdated and overmatched because of a massive underinvestment in offensive cyber capabilities. A likely war between the United States and China is the most dangerous scenario facing the world. Yet, it is regional powers—Iran, Russia, and India—that emerge as most important as the U.S. crisis response follows a familiar choreography of disappointing and predictable moves and countermoves: