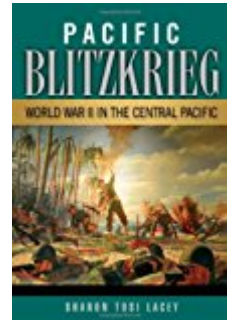


Sharon Tosi Lacey. *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific*. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013. 336 pp. \$27.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-57441-525-4.



Reviewed by Kyle Bracken

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

Sharon Tosi Lacey has contributed a new facet to our understanding of the Pacific war in *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific*. In this book, Lacey's thorough research pieces together previous works about Pacific campaigns and American leadership into a single narrative in order to access what made the U.S. ground effort so effective. According to Lacey, the doctrinally dissimilar Army and Marine Corps underwent a profound wartime transformation, during which their respective leaders patiently assessed the successes and failures of each campaign in order to produce an operationally sound joint force. "[I]t was this transformation," Lacey submits, "even more so than America's industrial might, which made the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor one of history's most colossal strategic errors" (p. xiv). The lessons learned from those engagements mark the primary focus of this work.

As the Army and Marine Corps entered World War II, the former had embraced a future of mechanized warfare, while the latter, eagerly seeking to establish itself as the premier Ameri-

can fighting force, remained a light infantry organization specializing in amphibious operations. Despite these fundamental differences, the two were able to cooperate on the same battlefields well enough to defeat an increasingly resistant Japanese foe. Each chapter analyzes a different Pacific campaign (Guadalcanal, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, Saipan, Okinawa) in order to measure change over time and see just how that cooperation evolved. Lacey approaches these operations chronologically, as many of the leaders involved in planning for the Guadalcanal operation remained active in the same roles for the Okinawa engagement, and each battle demonstrates the recurring use of the same units (e.g., the First Marine Division and 27th Infantry Division). What the two branches accomplished during the war "amounted to a revolution in joint operations" that employed the logic of flexibility and reevaluation to meet strategic needs (p. xvi).

At the center of operational difficulty throughout the Pacific war was the organization of command and control. Despite the relatively

seamless integration of Army reinforcements into the Marines' lines on Guadalcanal, there remained a lack of unified command over the entire invasion force, which led to problems of resource allocation. During the 1944 Saipan operation, the Army and Marines again fought side by side, but differences in ground warfare doctrine accentuated a deep rift between the two organizations. This came to a boiling point when Marine Lieutenant General Holland Smith relieved Army Major General Ralph Smith from command of the 27th Division. While training and intelligence improved with each operation, interservice tension persisted in hampering progress. On Okinawa in 1945, the Americans tested the strategies and tactics developed over three years of island fighting. Though the atomic bombs negated any immediate need to learn from Okinawa, the reports of the battle expressed satisfaction with the cooperation of joint forces.

Lacey has covered this area of Pacific war history with precision, and produced a book that will serve both historians and military officials. The Pacific war marked a watershed moment in the history of joint force operations, during which American armed forces learned to work together on an operationally effective level. Other scholars have explored much of what Lacey includes about the campaigns in question, but this book is the first to synthesize those works (and a litany of new sources) into a comprehensive analysis of the Pacific island war. For this reason it will surely remain the standard volume on the subject for the foreseeable future.

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