

Book Reviews

Assault Landing Craft: Design, Construction and Operations, by Brian Lavery, South Yorkshire: Seaforth Publishing, 2009, 128 pages, diagrams and photographs, ISBN 978-1-8483-2050-5

Reviewed by Major R.D. Bradford, CD

This book details the development and employment of the Landing Craft, Assault (LCA), one of Britain's war-winning tools of the Second World War. The story of the LCA has obvious relevance to the major amphibious operations conducted by British Commonwealth forces. It is related to the history of the Royal Canadian Navy, for the LCA was the principal equipment of four war-time landing craft flotillas. However, this book is also relevant today given the continuing focus on littoral manoeuvre in the Canadian north and the Caribbean and two new ship programs that incorporate landing craft. Canadian experience with landing craft is very limited, so any volume that usefully augments our present elementary knowledge is therefore welcome.

The LCA's development began in 1938. It was the result of an effort to provide a craft "having a small silhouette, capable of carrying forty fully equipped men and having a speed of 8-10 knots" (p. 10) for the purpose of landing the initial wave of troops in an assault while preserving organizational integrity. The first examples went into action in 1940 and a total of 1,929 were built. In British service, the LCA last saw action in the Suez Crisis of 1956. It had been the principal British and Commonwealth assault craft for raids, invasions and other littoral manoeuvre in the European, Mediterranean, African and southeast Asian theatres.

Brian Lavery does not attempt an exhaustive history but rather wishes to exhibit not only the craft but the entire experience that was the LCA. Accordingly, he provides chapters outlining the design and manufacture of the craft, the crews, the parent amphibious ships, handling and employment, the embarked troops, special versions and major operations. The author is well known as a writer of maritime books ranging in scope from the very broad (*Ship: 5000 Years of Maritime Adventure*) to the very specific (*74-Gun Ship Bellona*), encompassing all aspects of the naval experience. That he is not specifically versed in amphibious warfare is evident in several ways in *Assault Landing Craft*. For example, in "The Army on Board" he spends an inordinate amount of time describing the British regimental system, arguably an irrelevant topic, apparently not fully realizing that the British 'regiment' is not part of the hierarchy of field formations and

units. In contrast, he never mentions that other principal 'customer,' the Commando unit.

Certain errors of fact reinforce this impression – for example, he credits US Rangers with the attacks on Port Cros and Levant in 1944 instead of the US-Canadian First Special Service Force. These problems become less troubling once the reader appreciates Lavery's technique of 'quarrying.' A very experienced researcher, Lavery sought what he assessed to be key sources, particularly official documents and doctrine pamphlets, and extracted from them sizeable blocks of information, loosely arranging them in a logical order to produce the story.

The result is not a smoothly woven, comprehensive history nor a meaningful interpretation. However, those quarried blocks contain much intriguing information in raw form for people interested in amphibious matters, especially Canadians potentially involved in landing craft procurement and operations. From kedge anchors, problems of retracting from the beach and maintaining formation to loading, deploying from davits and cranes, and crew specifications, *Assault Landing Craft* prompts thinking. One of the most important points concerns surf operations, particularly the unsuitability of the LCA in heavy Pacific surf, which contrasts with its superior merits along rocky coastlines.

As a general history, *Assault Landing Craft* is quite acceptable, notwithstanding its shortcomings, and is suited to the interested layman. The sections that focus on design, technique and certain operations make it a valuable reference for the interested practitioner, for whom it is highly recommended. ■

Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities, by Frank Chalk, Romeo Dallaire, Kyle Matthews, Carla Barqueiro and Simon Doyle, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010, 191 pages, index, bibliography, appendices, ISBN 978-0-7735-3804-7 (paper)

Reviewed by Ann Griffiths

The Will to Intervene (W2I) Project was launched by the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University in 2007. This book, *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene*, is a result of this project which involved examining the case studies of Rwanda and Kosovo, interviewing 80 people who were involved in or tried to influence the decision-making of the Canadian and American responses to these crises, and making recommendations about how the responses could be improved in future. As it states in the Preface, the book is

concerned with “identifying strategic and practical steps to raise the capacity of governments in the United States and Canada to prevent mass atrocities” (p. xvi). It asks why the world’s record of preventing and responding to mass atrocities is so bad. And it asks what can be done to improve it.

Part Two of the book is dedicated to case studies of Rwanda and Kosovo. It is an interesting examination of the decisions made in both Canada and the United States about these two massive violations of human rights. The discussion in the United States about Rwanda as the genocide unfolded in 1994 is particularly unsettling. The case study section is designed to help the authors learn what they can from a case when intervention *did not* occur and a case when it *did* occur.

In my opinion it is Part One that is the most useful section of the book. There is no secret that this book is a call for action. The authors refer to the doctrine of the responsibility to protect (R2P), in particular its focus on *preventing* mass atrocities rather than *reacting* to them. They do not make the argument that intervening to stop civilians from being killed is the right or moral thing to do – they argue that it is in our national interest to intervene. In this day of globalization, the Rwandas and Kosovos cannot be dismissed as isolated countries far away. We *must* intervene in such places because if we do not, the result will affect our interests in the form of refugees, destabilized neighbouring countries that contain resources we need, diseases born, raised and then transmitted from refugee camps, trade that is destabilized by pirates in the absence of law and order, and/or terrorists or criminals who are born from boredom or radical influences in refugee camps. This argument is made to overcome the lack of political will to intervene in countries where mass atrocities are about to occur or are occurring already.

Part Three of the book provides policy recommendations. Its sections include enabling leadership, enhancing coordination, building capacity and ensuring knowledge. Recommendations relating to government include: make preventing mass atrocities a government priority; create a caucus (United States) and committee (Canada) for the prevention of mass atrocities; encourage individual members of the legislatures to press the executive to implement R2P; provide government support to public discussion of the country’s role in preventing mass atrocities; create inter-agency bodies to coordinate research, policy and responses to mass atrocities; implement funding to institutionalize prevention of mass atrocities as a policy; expand diplomatic and development representation abroad so that more information can be gathered about potential violence; and enhance the ability of the military

to act and to be better trained to protect civilians. The book also includes recommendations on how Canadian and American citizens and the media can help build the will to intervene.

As Romeo Dallaire and Frank Chalk write in the Preface, “this book was born in hope” – hope that leaders can be persuaded to act to prevent mass atrocities from happening again. Both of these men have good reasons to want to prevent mass atrocities – Dallaire because of his experiences in Rwanda, and Chalk because many members of his family perished in the Holocaust. I want to feel this hope. I want to love this book and, indeed, parts of it are excellent. The sections about how important it is to create the political will to intervene and that it is in the national interest to intervene are well argued and the case studies are very interesting. But I fear most of the recommendations will die at birth – unfortunately, prevention is not something at which we excel. Governments can easily create committees and issue executive orders deploring mass atrocities, but when push comes to shove, they still won’t act. The media certainly aren’t going to focus on prevention. After all, no one buys newspapers or watches the news to read/see a story about something that didn’t happen. I hope I’m wrong, I hope that *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene* is a hugely successful call to action. And, if so, the Canadian Navy may receive some calls to action in the near future. ✱

The Battle of Leyte Gulf: The Last Fleet Action, by H.P. Willmott, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005, 398 pages, ISBN 978-0-253-34528-6

Reviewed by Commander Mark R. Condeno

Two days after the allied landings in the Philippines on 20 October 1944 the largest and last naval battle in history was fought in the waters adjoining the island of Leyte between the naval forces of Japan and the United States and its allies.

The battle of Leyte Gulf was marked as Japan’s last ditch attempt to turn the tide of defeat as the fall of the archipelago would sever the Japanese Southern Strategic line. In a pincer movement strategy, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) formed three task forces from four different locations that comprised its remaining fleet aircraft carriers, six battleships and scores of heavy cruisers and destroyers. Their task was to lure into a trap the US Third and Seventh Fleets and disrupt the allied landing force in Leyte Island. One of the latest additions in the literature of this enormous campaign, *The Battle of Leyte Gulf* incorporates material untapped previously.

