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Spring 2002

### Book Review (reviewing Sven Lindquist, A History of Bombing (2001))

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#### Recommended Citation

Jonathan Masur, "Book Review (reviewing Sven Lindquist, A History of Bombing (2001))," 15 Harvard Human Rights Journal 342 (2002).

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In response, he proposes what he calls a “moral contract”—a reciprocal agreement of mutual recognition between presently dominant and subordinate groups in the world, such that all people everywhere may legitimately feel that they are equal participants in the emergence of a “common civilization,” that they are reflected in it and reflect it in turn. Within a given society, the moral contract would take the form of an agreement between members of the majority culture and those of minority cultures to treat each other as equals, and to take seriously the constitutive nature of the other’s culture. To this end, each must be prepared to give up his claim to cultural purity. Majority members must not predicate full-fledged membership on a complete abandonment by minority members of their cultural heritage; rather, they must be prepared to accept them as full members in light of—indeed, in celebration of—their cultural (or ethnic or religious) difference. For their part, members of minority cultures must be prepared to adapt, at least minimally, to the basic rules and values of the majority culture, even if this means abandoning some of their cultural practices.

It is difficult to try to define the concrete principles according to which a moral contract to be applied within a given society might be structured. What constitutes a “minimal” adaptation by members of cultural minorities to the basic rules and values of the majority culture, for example? How much can legitimately be required of them? And how much can be required of members of the majority culture vis-à-vis minorities? Even more difficult is conceptualizing the structure of Maalouf’s proposed moral contract between the West and the Rest. What would it look like? And, sadly, what hope is there for such a contract given current geo-political realities?

Maalouf makes no pretense to even know how to begin to address these important questions. But this is, ultimately, of little consequence, for the book’s principal merit lies in that it raises these questions—and many others—in the first place, and does so in a way that invites his readers to continue to think hard about the seemingly intractable problem of identity-based violence in the world today. His book is certainly not the place to end one’s inquiry, but it is a useful place to start.

—Sandra J. Badin

*A History of Bombing.* By Sven Lindqvist. Translated by Linda Haverty Rugg. New York: The New Press, 2001. Pp. 186. \$24.95, cloth.

*A History of Bombing* is both a straightforward exegesis on the development and growth of aerial bombardment and a well-argued indictment of its means and mechanisms. Lindqvist’s history begins with the invention of the hot air balloon and the airplane at the turn of the century, and the nearly immediate recognition by the creators of these machines that they could be

used as weapons. However, early aerial bombardments were neither terribly accurate nor tremendously destructive. They could only be utilized effectively against large accumulations of people or structures, and functioned primarily as a means of spreading panic and terror. The European nations with the capacity to bomb thus first deployed this weapon in the context that best exploited its capacity to terrorize: beginning with the first bombs dropped by Italian fighters near Tripoli on October 26, 1911, European nations bombed their colonies.

The principle thrust of Lindqvist's argument is that the European decision to bomb the indigenous peoples they were attempting to colonize is not an accident of history. Rather, he situates the advancement of bombing as a military technique squarely within the greater social context of racial stratification and ethnic fears that characterized European colonial movements. Native peoples were seen as sub-human and uncivilized—the Italians originally justified their bombing of civilians by claiming that their mission of bringing “civilization” to the colonies superceded all other human rights laws. Throughout his history, Lindqvist weaves in descriptions of contemporary works of literature that invoke such racially violent fantasies: he cites numerous examples of novels, even before the advent of heavier-than-air flight, that foretold of a menacing “Yellow peril” and of a world overrun by hostile Chinese and rescued only by airships that dealt indiscriminate death across Asia. Lindqvist's narration drips with irony when describing the decision by the World War I belligerents to forbid aerial bombing of each others' forces during the War, at the same time as they continued to bomb civilians in Africa and the Middle East.

Within this context, the turning point in Lindqvist's history is not the infamous decimation of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War, when Europeans first witnessed the terrible destructive power of bombing on their own continent, but rather a similar raid against Chechaouen in Morocco by the Spanish more than a decade earlier. It was then that the “taboo” against annihilating a defenseless civilian city from the air was broken and European war-planners came to fully understand what bombing might do to a civilian population's capacity to wage war. Lindqvist thus understands the famous bombings of World War II as the exemplification of an imported tactic; an outgrowth of the imperialist racial killings that were bombing's spawning grounds. He points to the American refusal to engage in broad area bombing with the intent of killing or displacing civilians only in Germany. In Japan, of course, the Air Force perpetrated many of the most terrible civilian massacres known in the history of warfare, in particular the firebombing of Tokyo. He locates the causal motive in Americans' deep racial animus toward Japanese and the “Asian other.”

Lindqvist's historical explanation begins to break down, however, in his analysis of the British firebombing of Germany. Prior to World War I, Britain and Germany were economically intertwined, and Chamberlain and the British saw Hitler and the Germans as equal partners in negotiations. Nev-

ertheless, it was with little compunction that British bombers set fire to Hamburg and Dresden, massacring 150,000 people with no objective other than to kill and derail the German industrial machine. The idea that the dehumanization of victims, a necessary predicate to civilian bombing, can arise not from *ex ante* racial antipathy but simply because they have become the enemy is nowhere broached. Whereas Lindqvist saw racism as the catalyst for the desire to bomb, in Britain it was the need for bombing that expediently triggered racial dehumanization.

Lindqvist does not see aerial bombing as simply another mechanism for waging war. Rather, he states as his thesis that bombing is by nature a fundamentally different activity than other types of warfare. Bombing is distinguished by its area-wide effect and usefulness against targets that cannot be separated from the civilians that surround them; to be used in ways that violate international human rights norms and slaughter noncombatants is the bomb's birthright. In the age of destructive bombing and "total war," warfare no longer concerns only the leaders or armies that have chosen to wage it—its ravages are more demonstrably visited upon the women, the children, the elderly, the unengaged civilians.

The potential use of nuclear weapons marks the apotheosis of this threat. Nations have constructed enough bombing power to end life on earth hundreds of times over, and so great is the destructive force of these weapons that even their foremost advocates hardly dare use them. In the last section of the book, Lindqvist describes the International Court of Justice's decision not to impose a legal ban on nuclear weapons and argues persuasively for a worldwide moratorium on the possession or use of all such weapons.

Though Lindqvist's imagery and the bleak picture he paints of a nuclear future are compelling, he fails to acknowledge even the small potential that bombing and nuclear deterrence might hold as a means of ameliorating the human rights situation worldwide. During his discussion of World War II, Lindqvist berates the Allied Powers for not having used bombing to end German concentration camps and suggests even that Britain might have been able to bargain a cessation of civilian bombing for an end to Nazi genocide. No such utilitarian possibility is raised in his later discussion of nuclear weapons. Additionally, despite causing the world to hover over the edge of a "nuclear abyss" for over fifty years, nuclear weapons are credited by many historians for having prevented a devastating war between the NATO and Warsaw powers. Though he does not address the question specifically, it may be that Lindqvist has already balanced these concerns and decided that nuclear abolition holds the only possibility for salvation. Having read his history of the human rights calamities already wrought by bombing, it is difficult to disagree.

—Jonathan Masur