

unconstitutionally in suspending the writ, Lincoln responded as Nero or Caligula might have done. Not only did he ignore Taney's ruling, he determined to have the Chief Justice himself arrested and imprisoned. (Fortunately, the arrest order was never served.)

Our author's forthright condemnation of Lincoln in this matter may be usefully contrasted with the comments of Allen Guelzo in his recent exercise in hagiography, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Eerdmans, 1999). Professor Guelzo finds Taney's resolute defense of liberty "ridiculous"; it expressed "tedious Jacksonian constitutionalism" (Guelzo, pp. 281, 283). (Fittingly, Mr. Guelzo's tome is dedicated to Jack Kemp.)

Can we not, though, credit Lincoln for at least one highly beneficial outcome? As a result of the war, slavery came to an end. Even if Lincoln would

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have maintained the *status quo* to keep the Union together, does he not deserve credit for his later role as the Great Emancipator?

As always, Mr. Adams has at hand an observation of devastating effect. Much

Northern opposition to slavery stemmed from what he terms "Negrophobia." Lincoln, like most people from his region, did not like slavery and did not like blacks. "Like Jefferson, Lincoln did not believe in racial mixing, not in the ability of the races to live with one another in harmony. The solution? Expulsion" (p. 132).

I have had to leave out much of interest in Mr. Adams's outstanding work, e.g., his account of Fort Sumter and his discussion of Reconstruction. Suffice it to say that Mr. Adams touches nothing that he does not illuminate. ♦

IN DEFENSE OF UNJUST WAR

*Vietnam: The Necessary War.
A Reinterpretation of America's
Most Disastrous Military
Conflict*

MICHAEL LIND

THE FREE PRESS, 1999, XIX + 314 PGS.

Almost everyone today thinks that America's war in Vietnam was a mistake. Whether leftists who revere Uncle Ho, rightwing hawks who regret that America was not allowed to win, or noninterventionists who think Vietnam not worth the bones of a single American soldier, all converge on a common conclusion. Given the conditions

of limited war under which we were constrained to fight, America should have stayed out.

Mr. Lind dissents. To him, Lyndon Johnson was a veritable Sir Lancelot, bravely defending the cause of freedom. After World War II, Soviet Russia, aided by China, embarked on an ambitious program of worldwide expansion. The creation of as many communist regimes as possible was the order of the day, for reasons both of ideology and power politics.

But an obstacle confronted Stalin and his successors. Owing to the abundant stock of atomic weapons possessed by the United States, the Soviets shrank from a direct military assault on Europe. An analogous constraint prevented a resolute strategy to “rollback” Communism, in the style of James Burnham and Stefan Possony. As Mr. Lind explains: “Because the threat of nuclear escalation prevented all-out conventional war between the superpowers, the Soviet–American contest was fought in the form of arms races, covert action, ideological campaigns, economic embargoes, and proxy wars in peripheral areas. In three of these—Korea, Indochina, and Afghanistan—one of the two

superpowers sent hundreds of thousands of its own troops into battle against clients of the other side” (p. 4).

The question at once arises: why should the United States have engaged in proxy wars of the type indicated? Did this not violate the traditional policy of nonintervention, urged by Washington in the Farewell Address? If isolation is abandoned, do we not fall into Wilsonian dreams of spreading to the world by fire and sword the blessings of democracy?

Mr. Lind thinks not. He is no starry-eyed Wilsonian, he tells us. Quite the contrary, he declares himself a hardheaded realist. But how can that be? Does not a realistic foreign policy counsel that force be used only in defense of strictly limited interests, with careful attention to risks and costs? Small wonder that the leading exponents of realism at the time, Walter Lippmann, George Kennan, and Hans Morgenthau, opposed the Kennedy–Johnson installment-plan war. How can Lind defend involvement in so peripheral an area as Vietnam to American interests while remaining a realist in good standing?

Our author replies with a distinction. Realists of the Morgenthau–Kennan stripe were minimalists. “According to minimal realism, any state that seeks to accumulate too much power will more or less automatically provoke a balancing coalition of other states seeking to check the expansion of its influence. It follows that a great power can lose many peripheral struggles with little or no danger to its reputation as a great power” (p. 50).



Our author readily acknowledges that on minimal realist premises, the case for American intervention in Vietnam lacked substance. But a better variety of realism dictates quite other conclusions. "Maximal realists . . . stress the extent to which the world of interstate politics is organized as a hierarchy of power and function . . . [they] believe that it is not only possible, but likely that a single superpower or great-power alliance will dominate the hierarchical, specialized global system" (pp. 50–51).

Mr. Lind's argument, in brief, is this. If an aggressive power like Soviet Russia is left to proceed unchecked, other powers will bandwagon to its side. Far from joining forces to balance the hegemonic state, as minimalists fondly hope, the state system will accommodate itself to its new master.

Given an aggressively-minded Communist bloc, what was the United States to do? Nations inclined to favor the United States must firmly believe that if the United States promises to come to their aid in defense against Soviet-sponsored incursions, it will back up its commitment with force. Credibility, for Mr. Lind, is the be-all and end-all of an apt foreign policy.

Our author has anticipated an objection to his argument. Supposing the bandwagon effect operates in just the way sketched out. Why need this pose any danger to the United States? Mr. Lind answers: "A world dominated by Nazi Germany or by the Soviet Union . . . would have been a world that reflected Nazi or Soviet preferences in the rules of world order—rules of war,

diplomacy, trade, citizenship, and so on. Because the winner would write the rules for the world, for a generation or longer, World War II and the cold war were not ordinary great-power conflicts, but hegemonic wars, in which the very character and future of world civilization were at stake" (p. 223).

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One point in Mr. Lind's argument so strikes at common opinion that it deserves reiteration. He does not argue that because Vietnam held intrinsic strategic significance for the United States, the area had to be defended by force. Quite the contrary, he acknowledges: "Why was it [Vietnam] of strategic importance? The answer has less to do with sea lanes than with symbolism" (p. 62). For Mr. Lind, areas of the world become important because they occasion conflict: they need not be important in themselves to justify conflict.

What are we to make of all this? Suppose (as I am sure our author will grant), that the chief factual premise of the argument is correct. If the United States had declined to prosecute the cold war, the bandwagon effect would have led to Soviet dominance of the international system. Certainly, this is not an appealing prospect; but even in such circumstances, America's geographic position and nuclear arsenal rendered us invulnerable to Soviet assault. Nor is it likely that our foreign trade could be cut off: for the Soviets to attempt this would deprive them of resources vital to their own economy.

And this raises a more telling point. Even those who think Soviet hegemony in the international system sufficiently bad to justify war need to ask themselves a key question. Given the weakness of socialism as a method of economic organization, were the Soviets in any position to maintain world hegemony? Does not Mises's socialist calculation argument suffice to show that no scheme of Soviet world dominance could work?

But, you may say, suppose the Soviets shifted to capitalism. Could they not threaten us with a hegemonic non-socialist system? In such a case, though, the ideological imperative that Mr. Lind uses to ground his case that the Soviets sought world dominance collapses. Absent Marxist-Leninist fanaticism, is not Russia simply an ordinary state?

Mr. Lind nowhere addresses Mises's argument directly, but one passage indicates his likely response. He suggests that plunder from conquered

countries would enable the Soviets to keep their empire indefinitely intact. "In fact, conquest can be profitable, if the costs of repressing the conquered are outweighed by the additions to the resource base of the conqueror" (p. 53). But how long could this expedient last? Eventually, a socialist system must collapse into chaos.

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Mr. Lind's attempt to show that the United States faced disaster unless it engaged in "proxy wars" thus fails. And in any case we have so far conceded to him too much. If a nation makes commitments it does not keep, it will lose credibility. With this precious asset in tatters, other nations will bandwagon to the opposition. So runs his argument, but is there not a glaring problem in its logic?

The bad consequences that the argument foresees arise only if we make commitments in the first place. If we do not, we display no weakness and forfeit no credibility. Could not an America without foreign entanglements

credibly threaten prospective invaders with retaliation?

Mr. Lind might reply with an endeavor to separate the credibility and bandwagon strands of his case. Even if the United States made no foreign commitments, and thus lost no credibility, would not countries be apt to join ranks with an aggressive Soviet Union?

But why would they? The whole "bandwagon effect" is a mere theory devised by Mr. Lind's maximal realists. The examples given in its support (e.g., British foreign policy in the 1930s) gain their force through invoking lost credibility. Without this, the argument rests on nothing.

We may I think go further. Imagine that you were the foreign minister of a medium-sized country right after US withdrawal under Richard Nixon from Vietnam. Given the loss of life in Vietnam, and the attendant physical destruction of the country, in which of these two ways would you reason? "I don't want my country to be destroyed! I had better distance myself as far as possible from the United States"; or, "Wonderful! Considering the years of struggle the US exerted in Vietnam, I know that a commitment from it cannot be broken. Of course, the US did withdraw, and South Vietnam fell to Communism. But as Michael Lind has explained in his great book, this is the best that could be done, given the constraints of American domestic politics. I shall break down the door to ally with the US!" The choice is yours. ♦

CONSUMED BY ARGUMENT?

The Trouble With Principle

STANLEY FISH

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I expected to dislike this book. Stanley Fish, the author of distinguished books on Milton and George Herbert, long ago found the world of literary scholarship too confining. He obtained a law degree and frequently comments on public affairs, usually from a leftist point of view.

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With characteristic open-mindedness, I have abandoned the prejudice I brought to the book. It is impossible to dislike someone who writes: "As far as I am concerned, any positive reference to Habermas in the course of an