



FROM FRIEND AND CO-AUTHOR TO MAD CRITIC

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Abstract

DiLorenzo (2024A) is not a “more in sorrow than in hate” criticism of the present author. It is if anything the very opposite: “more in hate than in sorrow.” He charges that I am no longer a libertarian in good standing due to the fact that I champion Israel not in spite of its genocide, war crimes, apartheid, etc., but because of these very rights violations. This author is very strong on making such accusations. He is very weak on backing them up with empirical evidence, with direct quotes from my writing or public speaking. Instead, he contents himself with misinterpreting the actual record insofar as I am concerned. He is guilty of concocting straw men arguments and then deriding them. The present paper is an attempt to refute these unwarranted charges on the part of this old friend of mine. He makes such preposterous claims, and more than just a few others of a similar ilk. He does so in order to buttress his charge that I am no longer a libertarian, at least not with regard to important, or “macro-libertarian” issues.

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1 FROM FRIEND AND CO-AUTHOR TO MAD CRITIC¹

DiLorenzo (2024) starts off his mad critique² of yours truly on a very positive note, recalling our past friendship. Even here, he errs. He says he co-authored “an article with me.” In point of fact, there were four such publications: Anderson, 2001; Block and DiLorenzo, 2000, 2001; DiLorenzo and

Block, 2001. Sloppy, sloppy. I am also grateful to his friendship for more decades than either of us can fully remember and his support during my imbroglia with the New York Times: DiLorenzo, 2014, 2015, 2018. Unhappily, I cannot say the same for his recent outbursts.

He also omits that not only was he a friend of mine, but he was also a family friend. My wife and I met him with our then young daughter, several times, and he was a mentor to her when she was studying at Johns Hopkins University and he was

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¹ I would like to thank the following for editorial help on what follows. Needless to say, but I will say it anyway, all errors herein are my own responsibility, not theirs:

Jim Davies, Mike Holmes, Christopher Cantwell and Marc Victor

² Mad in both senses: very angry, and also, troubled. As well, error-ridden, as I demonstrate.



a professor at Loyola University Maryland, both located in Baltimore.

But enough of our happy past. These are sins of omission on his part, not commission. Let us now consider some more serious difficulties with his several publications about Israel versus Hamas and my analyses of the war between them.

He (2024A)³ starts off on a very condescending note by describing me as “indeed very libertarian when it comes to such topics as the legalization of drugs and prostitution, ride sharing, privatization of government-run soccer fields and swimming pools, rent control, and myriad other mundane topics.” But I have hardly been limited, in my long libertarian career, to such “mundane topics.” Au contraire, I have attempted to apply the libertarian philosophy to a myriad of less mundane, more complicated and controversial⁴ topics such as abortion (Block, 2021), immigration (Block, 2011A, Gregory and Block, 2007), reparations (Alston and Block, 2007; Amos and Block, 2022; Block and Yeatts, 1999-2000; Crepelle and Block, 2017; Nouveau and Block, 2020), inalienability and voluntary slavery (VandenBerg and Block, 2022), argumentation ethics (Block, 2011B), anarchism and libertarian theory (Block, 2010).

He states that I “used to be very libertarian on the issue of war as well, emailing a number of us at the outset of the Iraq War that ‘this will separate the men from the boys,’ with the ‘boys’ being faux libertarians who would support the bombing, invasion, and occupation of Iraq.”

He continues: “But in the past eight months Walter Block has abandoned the principles of libertarianism with regard to war with his full-throated support of the *war crimes* committed by the Israeli government by intentionally targeting and killing tens of thousand (sic) of civilians, including women, children, and babies in Gaza.”

There are very severe problems here. First of all, my support for Israel dates far longer than merely “eight months ago.” My coauthored book Block and Futerman (2021) was published three long years ago. Why is this “severe?” It is so, because when you launch a bitter attack on someone you

are morally⁵ obliged to base it on the best he has to say, not a mere op ed in a newspaper. In this case that would be that 2021 book of which he is completely ignorant.

Even more egregious, he does not offer any proof, not a scintilla of evidence, to the effect that I am guilty of these outrageous charges. Where did I ever say or write that the Israeli government intentionally targeted civilians? I might well have implied such claims in his fevered imagination, but I certainly never articulated them, either in writing nor in my numerous publications nor interviews nor debates on this issue. If I actually even implied any such thing this author is obligated to specifically mention and cite such statements of mine. He does no such thing.

Not only is Professor DiLorenzo a world class historian, he is also an eminent Austrian economist. In this former capacity of his he should have known that scholars who make such condemnations must back them up with evidence. In his latter role he should have known that intentionality cannot be demonstrated by mere actions; for all we know, *if* the IDF engaged in such actions,⁶ they need not necessarily have been purposeful; they could have been accidental, for all he knows.

Speaking of the U.S. war against Iraq, it is a straightforward libertarian position to oppose this foreign adventurism. For the latter country never invaded the former. Iraq never came within a million miles⁷ of attacking the U.S., so that nation cannot possibly justify its foreign war on libertarian grounds. It was an invasive, offensive war on the part of the U.S., not a defensive one, and thus cannot be justified on the basis of the libertarian philosophy. Matters are the exact opposite of course in the Middle East. On October 7, 2023, a day that will live in infamy forever, Hamas invaded Israel, not the other way around.

Now consider the specifics of my supposed “full-throated support of the *war crimes* committed by the Israeli government by intentionally targeting and killing tens of thousand (sic) of civilians, including women, children, and babies in Gaza.” The Israeli government does not at all

³ Unless otherwise specified, all references to his publications will be in regard to this one essay of his. Ditto for all quotes lacking any source.

⁴ On the part of libertarians

⁵ Not legally

⁶ They did no such thing and DiLorenzo offers no evidence that they had done so

⁷ Well, 10,000 miles

“intentionally target” civilians. The very opposite is the case. Rather the IDF does more than perhaps any other military in the entire history of warfare to save children and civilians. Which other country drops leaflets first, warning of later bombings? Not too many others, if any. In contrast, does Hamas do any such thing? To ask this is to answer it.

Next, my learned friend states: “A real American libertarian would argue that Israel’s war, and Ukraine’s war with Russia, are none of our business, period.” In my view, it all depends upon who the “our” is, in this claim. If it is the U.S. government, he is entirely correct. From the libertarian perspective if this organization exists at all⁸ its sole function internationally should be to ensure our country is not invaded by foreign armies, period.⁹ This conclusion would emanate from the viewpoint of a more moderate interpretation of this philosophy, such as minarchism or classical liberalism (Block and Futerman, 2021)

But if the “our” refers to scholars such as the two of us, not only is he wrong, he is wrong out of his own mouth. For the good professor, too, and quite properly so, has made the Israel – Hamas war part of his own “business.” He writes about it, does he not, in the very essay I am now criticizing. Indeed, it is the obligation of intellectuals such as ourselves to comment on the events of the day. Based on his own words, if he wanted to be a “real American libertarian,” which I presume he does, he should have, instead, maintained a dignified silence about the occurrences in the Middle East, since they are “none of our business.”

It is simply false, not only contradictory to his own libertarian principles¹⁰ to say that “real libertarians” are somehow precluded from studying, commenting upon, discussion, *anything*. Everything under the sun, and above it too, at least potentially, are “our business.”

The president of the Mises Institute supports McMaken’s (2024A, 2024B) claim¹¹ that I am

“sound” on micro libertarian issues¹², but when it comes to “... the big, paramount issue of war he has become an outspoken advocate of *war crimes* committed by the Israeli government. Walter Block has always been ‘pro-Israel’ and no one at the Mises Institute, named after the son of a Jewish Rabbi and co-founded by Murry (sic) Rothbard, a New York Jew, ever gave it a second thought. He is no longer an unpaid senior fellow at the Mises Institute *not* because he is ‘pro-Israel,’ as some uninformed or dishonest commentators have asserted. It is because the Mises Institute cannot be associated with such a well-known, prolific, public advocate of the intentional targeting and killing of Palestinian women, children, and babies” (DiLorenzo, 2024A).

Does he quote me as saying any such appalling thing, perhaps in an interview or a public speech? He does not. If his charges were true, he should have been able to do this with ease, since, after all, I am a “well-known, prolific, public advocate.” Does he quote me as writing any such abominable statement, perhaps in an op ed or a law review or maybe even in a refereed scholarly journal, of which I have many? He does not. If his charges were true, he should be able to do this with ease, since, after all, I am a “well-known, prolific, public advocate.” Where oh where did I ever come out and maintain that the Israeli “intentional targeting and killing of Palestinian women, children, and babies” actually occurred, and that I favored this. Nowhere, that is where. I defy Mr. DiLorenzo to proffer an actual quote from me where I say that. He cannot do so, he did not do so, because this accusation is totally false.

This is not kosher. This is not acceptable. This is not reasonable. This is a disgraceful charge made by an eminent scholar who should have known better. Did I not support the libertarian analysis of libel and slander, namely that these despicable acts should nevertheless be legal, I would sue him for making this statement.¹³ When an eminent

⁸ It would not, from the perspective of the strictest version of libertarianism, anarcho-capitalism. See on this Rothbard (1973, 1982); Hoppe (1993, 2001).

⁹ At present, the U.S. government has some 800 military bases located in roughly 140 foreign countries (the numbers keep changing) and has the temerity to characterize this as “defense.” See on this: http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/BSR_2007_Baseline.pdf

¹⁰ Which I share

¹¹ I respond to McMaken in Block (2024D)

¹² Such as the minimum wage law, rent control, free trade, welfare, victimless crimes, etc.

¹³ I did sue the New York Times for writing that I supported slavery but did so since I claimed there were part of the ruling class, and all bets were off insofar as they were concerned. But my old friend Dr. Tom

academic such as he makes such “Mad” charges, it is incumbent upon him to document his claim, if he wishes to adhere to the principles of scholarship. He utterly fails to do so.

How would he feel if I publicly claimed that Tom DiLorenzo was guilty of making such an egregious statement? I would not quote him as saying or writing any such thing. I could not honestly, of course, do any such thing because he has never even come close to averring such a despicable statement. But I bruit this about anyway. He would not be a happy camper.

My renowned debating partner¹⁴ graciously acknowledges that Israel has the right to defend itself. But never, ever, with no exceptions allowed, if this self-defense involves collateral damage to innocent persons. He is insisting that if even one civilian is killed in collateral damage as a result of acting on the basis of this right, that would constitute a war crime.¹⁵ How can Israel or any other country for that matter, defend itself compatibly with libertarian theory under such stringent conditions. None can do so. DiLorenzo’s view in this regard thus constitutes pacifism, which would constitute mass suicide for Israel.¹⁶

Next out of the batter’s box is this statement:

“Israel has every right to defend itself against future barbaric attacks by the gang of murderous thugs known as Hamas— and anyone else — but that’s an entirely different matter than having a ‘right’ to commence a campaign of genocide against the *civilian* population of Gaza, as has been occurring in recent months — accompanied by the almost apoplectically enthusiastic support of Walter Block. Walter ‘justifies’ the mass killing

of civilians by invoking a theory of collective punishment, something that was outlawed by the Fourth Geneva Convention.”

The same applies here. I do not “invoke” any such thing. If I did, I have no doubt my critic would have mentioned it. He cannot, because I never came within a million miles of justifying “the mass killing of civilians” on the basis of “a theory of collective punishment.” A critic ought to be ashamed of himself for falsely attributing to an intellectual opponent material of this sort for which he is not at all responsible. Very much to the contrary, I and my co-authors have been intent to demonstrate the very opposite: that Israel undertakes all reasonable efforts, and some unreasonable ones¹⁷, to protect the lives of Gazan civilians. It bends over backwards to attain these ends, and does so successfully, in the main.

States Spencer (2024): “The Israel Defense Forces conducted an operation at al-Shifa hospital in the Gaza Strip to root out Hamas terrorists recently, once again taking unique precautions as it entered the facility to protect the innocent; Israeli media reported that doctors accompanied the forces to help Palestinian patients if needed. They were also reported to be carrying food, water and medical supplies for the civilians inside. None of this meant anything to Israel’s critics, of course, who immediately pounced. The critics, as usual, didn’t call out Hamas for using protected facilities like hospitals for its military activity. Nor did they mention the efforts of the IDF to minimize civilian casualties.”

Here is yet another gem emanating from my former colleague’s word processor:

DiLorenzo, happily for him, cannot be characterized in this manner. See on this Block (2014).

¹⁴ Well, this is only partially true. I challenged him to a public debate. He has not condescended to even reply to this challenge. Our “debate” consists, only, of our alternating publications: DiLorenzo (2024A, 2024B, 2024C) and my responses: Block (2024A, 2024B); Block & Futerman (2024); Futerman & Block (2024A).

¹⁵ At this point it behooves me to quote him making such a nonsensical claim. I shall not do so. Why not? Because he never said or wrote any such thing! However, were I to follow the pattern he follows in his unfair lambasting of my views, I should leave matters as they appear in the text at this point, and not write the present footnote. If I merely wanted to excoriate him, that is exactly what I would have done. But my goal, mawkish as it sounds, is to get to the truth. This cannot be accomplished by falsely attributing straw men

arguments to one’s intellectual opponents, and then making fun of them. The entire paragraph to which this footnote refers is thus illicit, illegitimate, improper. I dedicate this paragraph to Tom DiLorenzo. How far he has slipped, intellectually since the time he and I were co-authors.

¹⁶ This entire paragraph constitutes a good disparagement of anyone foolish enough to have offered this as his view. However, it is an invalid for the minor detail that he never said this, to the best of my knowledge. Would that he would treat me in the same manner: only attributing to me views I actually hold, or held, instead of making up stupid, crazy, weird, “mad,” foolish ones, and then attacking me for supposedly uttering them. His critique must constitute a new low in false attribution.

¹⁷ At the cost of the deaths of all too many of its own soldiers!

“Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, he and a coauthor lectured us that ‘The West’ must support ‘an overwhelming, unprecedented use of military force’ and that ‘ Hamas is and will be responsible for any civilian casualties.’ It’s not the bombs supplied by the U.S. government to Israel and dropped on civilian-populated areas that are responsible for civilian deaths, they write, but Hamas. Israel must do ‘whatever it takes,’ to defeat Hamas, and their subsequent writings prove beyond all doubt that that includes the war crime of targeting and killing civilians.”

Apart from the very last sentence¹⁸ he accurately quotes something I actually wrote. But this claim of mine about who is responsible for the bombing (Block and Futerman, 2023) is actually true. Hazlitt (1946) has taught us, if he has taught us anything, to look beneath surface appearances. I fear that my erstwhile colleague, DiLorenzo, has not yet fully incorporated this “one lesson” of this eminent economist, Hazlitt. Yes, from a superficial surface appearance, Israel is indeed “responsible” for civilian deaths in Gaza. It cannot be denied that the IDF, after all, is the one who is indeed dropping bombs on that beleaguered territory.¹⁹ However, let us dig a bit deeper beneath these surface “realities.” If Hamas had not engaged in its atrocities of October 7, 2023, the IDF would not now be dropping any bombs on Gaza. If Hamas surrendered today, and released all its hostages, one minute later there would be no more deaths, civilian or otherwise, in Gaza.²⁰ If Hamas did not use Gazan civilians as shields, there would not have been virtually any civilian deaths, except on a collateral basis, which invariably occurs in modern warfare.

DiLorenzo takes umbrage at this statement of ours (Block and Futerman, 2023): “The West, they say, has a ‘moral duty’ to ‘support Israel’ in its effort to ‘do whatever it must to finish this war in the fastest way possible, with minimum civilian and military casualties *on its side*” (emphasis added). That is, minimum *Israeli* civilian casualties, but to hell with

worrying about Palestinian civilian casualties. This is moral?”²¹

My critic is a native speaker of the English language. It is thus more than passing curious that he so erroneously misinterprets this quoted material. Is it not an entirely justified goal on the part of Israel to minimize civilian deaths on its own side? Does pursuing this objective logically imply that Israel would not also “worry” about such deaths on the part of its enemy? We all worry about our own children.²² This is just how we are built. Does this mean we do not give a damn about the progeny of other parents? That we will run roughshod over all of them? Yes, if you acquiesce in DiLorenzo’s failure to understand plain English. No, if you embrace ordinary logic.

Here is yet another philosophical howler, which again stems from this author’s failure to understand ordinary English. He states as follows:

“Walter has written several belligerent articles on an Israeli Web site called Israel Hayom. One is entitled ‘Open Letter to the “²³Children of Gaza’ in which he conflates the Hamas murderers with ALL parents in Gaza. ‘Your parents,’ he writes, ‘launched a despicable, unwarranted . . . attack on October 7’ where ‘Many Israeli children were mangled, just as you now are; many more have been slaughtered, the fate of all too many of you Gazan children.’ In saying this he sheds an ocean of crocodile tears.

“Of course, it is complete nonsense and a lie to say that ALL parents in Gaza participated in the murderous attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. It is heartless and cruel and sociopathic to tell these children that it is not Israeli/American bombs that are maiming and killing them but their own parents. In a ‘moral, just society’ writes Walter Block, our new self-appointed pope of morality and justice, ‘you would be taken away from your evil mothers and fathers.’”

Consider the following sentences:

¹⁸ Which “subsequent writings” He does not say.

¹⁹ Well, a not insignificant number of these deaths are due to the misfiring of Hamas rockets aimed at Israel, but which explode in Gaza, but we can safely ignore this phenomenon. Most other commentators do so, why not me?

²⁰ In sharp contrast, if Israel surrendered to Hamas, there would be no Israelis. October 7 would have been multiplied until there were none left.

²¹ Who says DiLorenzo never directly quotes us? Not !! Here, again, is a rare occasion upon which he does exactly that.

²² Well, virtually all of us. I do not want to be further criticized for making such an outrageous statement. See the next section of this paper.

²³ Sic on this misplaced quote

“Children nowadays don’t respect their parents.” Does that mean that *all* children are disrespectful? Of course not. That claim is certainly compatible with referring to most children, or an overwhelmingly high proportion of them.

Here is another one: “Men are taller than women.” Does that mean that *all* males have greater height than *all* females? Of course not. It is of course true on average, but there are indeed exceptions to this general rule.

I could go on forever in this vein, but please excuse just one more example on my part. I don’t know how else to drum it in that DiLorenzo is off base here, way off base:

“Your parents love you,” said to an auditorium full of children. Does the author of this claim quite literally mean that every last parent of all those children, without a single solitary exception, love their progeny? Of course not, unless he is an irrational.

In like manner, DiLorenzo to the contrary notwithstanding, when I asserted to the Gazan children that “your parents” have abused you by using you as shields (Block, 2024C), it is only by a heroic and utterly mistaken interpretation that this author can accuse me of maintaining that this applies to *all* such parents. Why would he make such an obvious rookie mistake, way below his often-demonstrated acuity for language? He is suffering from Israel Derangement Syndrome (Futerman and Block, 2024B) is my best guess as to an explanation.

Moreover, it would appear that Dr. DiLorenzo did not read the entire op ed to which he refers, short as it was. For this appears in the midst of it:

“Parents should put the lives of their children ahead of their own. To say the least, this is not at all the way your parents treat you. Rather, they mistreat you.

“This of course does not apply to all Gazan parents. Many I have no doubt love their children just as much as do good parents all around the world. However, under totalitarian Hamas rule

they are not free to protect their progeny (they may get killed if they tried to do so).”

How DiLorenzo can conclude from Block (2024C) that I maintain that *all* Gazan parents are shield-using child abusers is simply incomprehensible. Evidently, he did not read this material. Had he done so, presumably, he would not have lashed out at me for being so cruel and heartless as he did in fact do.

Nor is it at all “heartless and cruel” to tell the truth. It is, rather, “sociopathic” to tell lies to children.²⁴ It is absolutely true that it is child abuse on the part of Gazan parents, all too many of them if not all of them, to use them as shields, as they do. Of that, there can be no question. Is truth no longer a defense against error? Unfortunately, virtually all if not all Gazan parents hate the Israelis more than they love their own children. The latter are maimed and killed in Israel’s defensive war against Hamas. If that is not child abuse, then nothing is child abuse. Yes, of course, the bombs used to obliterate these poor children are launched by the IDF. But whose fault is this? Who is ultimately responsible for this carnage? Hint: it is not the Israelis.

And what is it with these “crocodile tears?” Does DiLorenzo offer even the slightest evidence, even a scintilla of support, for such an outrageous claim? It is not incumbent upon an exceptionally brilliant scholar such as this author to limit criticisms to those for which he has some backing? Note, I do not return the “favor.” I have no indication that he does not greatly regret the depredations of Hamas against innocent Israelis on October 7. Thus, I launch no such underhanded attack upon him.

My many times co-author characterizes me as “our new self-appointed pope of morality and justice...” This sarcastic name calling is inappropriate for an intellectual of his undoubted accomplishments. However, let me run with this for a bit. First, I would have appreciated “rabbi” instead of “pope.” Second, someone associated with the Mises Institute²⁵ has to step up and counter the relentless support of Hamas and

²⁴ Not, of course, in all cases. Surely, there are some occasions in which child welfare can best be promoted by doing the very opposite. Sorry, I had to say this, lest DiLorenzo come after me with further misinterpretation of the English language.

²⁵ I am no longer a Senior Fellow at this institution, but I am still associated with it at least as of the present date. I still publish there; I still am invited to give speeches for the Mises Institute.

attack upon Israel that emanates from that quarter. Someone has to counter this undoing of that hitherto fine institution. I know of no other person than myself who can be considered, at least for a time, a long time, part of its inner circle, who has come forward to try to save the Mises Institute from itself. When the history of this war, and the participation in it of this institution is fully written, it will show that at least one person, yours truly, at least attempted to do so.

I stand by my “Open Letter” (Block, 2024C) to the effect that were there any justice in the world, all children whose parents treat them as shields would be forcibly taken from them and given to better parents. DiLorenzo responds: “Yes, and placed under the tender loving care of the IDF and the Mossad in a concentration camp built just for you.”

Let us take seriously this sneer of his. Where, indeed, would Gazan children be better off? Under the “tender loving care” of Israel, or, right where they are now, being maimed and killed by IDF bombs, which, in turn, are being released in Gaza solely due to October 7, to Israel’s need for self-defense, to ensure that the Hamas Covenant (1988) to murder all Jews wherever they are, is not carried out. Note that when there was peace, Israeli hospitals, some of the best in the entire world, were open to needy Arabs. Note that this country, the only almost fully civilized one in the Middle East, is known for its generosity, its soft-heartedness. Yes, it has the death penalty on its books, so, at least so far, it has executed only one person, Adolf Eichmann. No, it is not at all a stretch to think that youngsters in Gaza would be better off, far better off, under the “tender loving care” of Israel, then with their²⁶ despicable parents.

Yes, if I were a Gazan child, and I wanted to be safe, I would certainly entrust my safety to the

“tender mercies” of the Israelis rather than to my own (mostly) abusive parents. The proof is in the pudding. As of this writing, sadly,²⁷ many innocents, including children are being seriously injured or killed. This is all due to the heinous actions of not all but most adult Gazans.

Professor DiLorenzo claims it is “despicable” to address such comments to children. First of all, the title of the essay was “Open letter to children.” But the readership targets were of course not youngsters, as he full well knows. How many twelve year olds read essays of this sort? Second, for children old enough to read such material,²⁸ do we or do we not owe them the trust, the absolute truth and nothing but the truth?²⁹ If that is “despicable” I welcome this characterization of his of me.

DiLorenzo conflates “collateral damage” with “the intentional killing of children.” The two are as alike as are chalk and cheese, oil and water, fish and bicycles. On the basis of this false equation, my critic claims “Walter then writes that ‘Your injuries and deaths are what is called collateral damage. This is vey (sic) regrettable, but is the only way Israel can defend itself’ and is therefore justified in the mind of Walter Block. Walter Block is therefore an enabler of the worst kind of war crimes: the intentional killing of children.”

But he shows no evidence that the IDF is guilty of “the intentional killing of children” nor that I support any such acts. I now in like manner, with just as much claim to truth, accuse this author of being a Nazi, a Communist, and not only a killer of small children but a torturer of them.³⁰

If I am a supporter of “the intentional killing of children” then so is anyone else, up to an including Tom DiLorenzo himself, who supports *any* war. For *all* wars, at least in the modern era³¹ involve collateral damage. If this is indistinguishable from “the intentional killing of children” then only

²⁶ No, not *all* Gazan parents are child abusers (I have to spoon feed language to some people); but all too many of them precisely fit this bill

²⁷ Here come my supposed “crocodile tears.” Why all these low blows? What evidence does DiLorenzo have that I do not greatly regret and sorrow over this loss of life?

²⁸ Are youngsters aged 16 still children? When I was of that age, comic books were more my style

²⁹ No, no, no, I can just hear DiLorenzo saying that I am not a libertarian since we have no legal obligation to always tell the truth; lying is not always a crime.

³⁰ He is so literal, upon occasion, that I hasten to assure him that this “charge” of mine against him is merely arguendo. In actual fact I of course do not mean this seriously. I am merely demonstrating, replicating, the extreme intellectual hysteria of which he is guilty. This is my attempt at a *reductio ad absurdum*.

³¹ During the era of knighthood, these soldiers would fight each other and rarely if ever was any civilian physically harmed.

pacifists can escape this type of condemnation. DiLorenzo is not a pacifist, so he is tarred with the same brush.

Nor can I but note his reference to “a concentration camp.” This is a scandalous, hidden, sneaky way of saying that the Israelis are akin to Nazis. Yes, the Third Reich placed Jews in concentration camps. But the Hebrews do no less to their enemies. Therefore, these people are themselves Nazis. Nice try, Tom. Thigh slapping.

It is strange that a historian of vast learning such as this writer does not realize that war inevitably involves the killing of innocents, including children, unfortunately, amongst them. In inveighing against the very regrettable damage to youngsters in this way, calling that a “war crime” he is perhaps inadvertently, but devastatingly from an intellectual point of view, taking away his claim that Israel has a right to defend itself. To repeat, he forthrightly and quite correctly stated: “Israel has every right to defend itself against future barbaric attacks by the gang of murderous thugs known as Hamas— and anyone else...” He at the same time entertains two logically incompatible claims. One, Israel has the right to defend itself against attacks of the sort that took place on October 7, 2023; and the only way to accomplish this task is to launch its military against its perpetrators, Hamas. Two, if any Gazan children or other such innocents perish in this defensive war, Israel is guilty of war crimes.

Murray Rothbard, the mentor of the both of us, favored two wars of secession: the thirteen colonies from Great Britain, and the South from the United States in 1861. I think I speak for myself as well as my present debating partner when I say we both agree with Rothbard on this matter.³² Yet, of course, even with the best will in the world on the part of the righteous in these two wars, there was collateral damage. Children and other innocents were killed. But that does not vitiate the justice of these defensive wars of secession. In other words, DiLorenzo is guilty of a blatant self-contradiction in supporting Rothbard’s non-pacifistic position on these two wars, and, also, accusing Israel of war crimes for defending itself, as he himself concedes.

Here is another gem from DiLorenzo, which he calls a “real knee slapper” of a joke:

“And then he [me, that is] ends with the hoary Holocaust-ish line, ‘Never again,’ as though it is Israel and not Palestine that is being subjected to an attempted genocide. Good one Walter!”

I pride myself on a good sense of humor. I appreciate a joke as well as the next man. But I don’t find “Never Again” funny at all. Rather, I, along with many other Jews, take that statement very seriously. As for “attempted genocide” that is precisely what Hamas was trying to attain on October 7, 2023. Had they not been stopped, thank goodness by the IDF, that is exactly what they would have accomplished. On the other hand, if Israel were in the genocide business, there would not have been a single Gazan still alive in hours, not days, after this atrocity of October 7 had occurred.

I do not appreciate Professor DiLorenzo’s attempt to underestimate the ferocity, the despicableness, the viciousness of the Hamas October 7 attack on Israel. Talk about targeting civilians? This applies only to the former, not the latter. Did Hamas distribute leaflets amongst Israeli civilians, warning them to vacate territory that would soon be entered into by its military? To ask this is to answer it.

In the view of my disparager: “It now appears, by the way, that there is only proof of one Israeli child being killed on October 7 — in a crossfire — during the bloody Hamas attack on Israel.”

It may appear that way to this author, but, unfortunately, he provides no evidence for this claim of his, as is his wont. Why mention “in a crossfire?” DiLorenzo (2024B) also attributes several Israeli civilian deaths to “friendly fire.” This is yet another attempt on his part to lessen the guilt the must be borne by Hamas and increase that which can laid at the hands of Israel. But this will not do. Why was there crossfire or friendly fire in the first place? It was due to the Hamas massacre of October 7. If that had not taken place, if Hamas had lived up to previous peace agreements, there would have been no such occurrences.

³² When it comes to this latter war, DiLorenzo is my guide. I have learned more from him about “honest Abe” and his minions than from anyone else.

My detractor has a good belly laugh at this one, he with the great sense of humor: “Many – probably many thousands – of civilians were in fact killed in Rafah and ... a million refugees were created. Not to worry about that, however, for Walter Block has a solution! ‘[T]his country has recently come by some 40,000 tents, which hold a dozen or so people each. They can in this way house more than half a million people in refugee camps in the Negev Desert.’ The other half a million can presumably sleep in the open desert. One wonders how long 83-year-old Walter Block would last in a tent with eleven other people in the Negev Desert in the middle of summer.”

Hearty har, har. However, DiLorenzo reckons, here, in the absence of one of the major building blocks of the dismal science, opportunities forgone. Hazlitt is now spinning in his grave at this oversight on the part of this highly credentialed economist. No, this is not much of a “solution”, but it beats, by a country mile, the alternatives. What are they, in turn? One, Israel stands down and allows Hamas to win the war they started on October 7, 2023. Then, some eight million Jews are tortured and put to death in Israel, and multitudes more around the world. Two, the Gazans stay right where they are, and suffer from massive collateral damage, as Israel pursues its enemies in a defensive and hence justified war. Those are the only two other options. Contrary to DiLorenzo, moving to the Negev even during the summer renders is far better than those two other options.³³

DiLorenzo mentions cartoons that I (Block, 2024C) published. One of them featured a Hamas fighter who proffered a sign saying: “Demand: Death to all Jews.” On his lap was seated a young child, presumably his son, who looked scared. And with good reason: strapped around this boy’s body was dynamite, indicating that this child would soon be used as a suicide bomber. If that is not child abuse, then there is no such thing as child abuse. Are *all* Gazan parents guilty of this sort of abomination? Of course not. However, Hamas supports such criminal activities and is very popular in Gaza. I “should rot in a Hague jail cell for (writing things like) this” is a statement supported by DiLorenzo. “Are you beginning to

see why Walter is no longer an unpaid senior fellow of the Mises Institute?” asks the President of this organization. I cannot believe he is purposefully trying to undermine the think tank to which he has just been awarded the presidency, but it is difficult to understand these statements in any other way. Any organization that allows only one side of a debate to be represented risks embracing Randian cultishness.³⁴

Our essayist does not much like another statement of mine. He avers as follows: “Walter’s fangs really come out in another *Israel Hayom* column entitled ‘No More Pauses.’³⁵ This time he criticizes *the Israeli government* for agreeing to a humanitarian pause in all the bombing and killing. He praises the actions of the U.S. military in World War II in *not* pausing but firebombing civilian-populated Dresden, Germany, having ‘Dresdened them into smithereens,’ suggesting that that is what the Israeli government should do in Gaza. He concludes with the dogmatic demand of: ‘No more pauses. No more food. No more medicine. No more electricity. No more water.’ And much more death in the civilian population, especially infants and the elderly, apparently the fondest wish of our new self-appointed pope of morality and justice.”

Yes, I concede, this sounds horrible, on a superficial reading. But just let us suppose this policy was implemented. No more trucks, no more Biden-inspired platforms to enable US food, medicines into Gaza either. How long do you think this war would have lasted past October 8, 2023? My guess: a day or two at most. Ok, maybe three or four tops. If this policy were followed at the outbreak of the war, alright, alright, call it six days³⁶ the war would have been over by October 14. How many Gazans, innocent or not, would have perished during that time, less than a week? Very few, at least compared to the almost 40,000 deaths Hamas claims in the course of this war which has lasted more than half a year, as of the present date. Under these stringent, typical, war-time measures, Hamas would likely long ago have surrendered, and released all of its hostages, saving many more of their lives, too.

From time immemorial, starvation was the technique used to conquer an enemy. It is

³³ By the way, at the time of his writing, I was 82, not 83, and in pretty good shape for a young man of that age.

³⁴Rothbard (1987); Walker (1999)

³⁵ Block (2023)

³⁶ There is precedent for that number of days

relatively fast acting since we cannot exist for more than a few days in the absence of food. The Biden plan, supported by DiLorenzo, thus merely prolonged this war, leading to many more deaths, not fewer. Thus, I am justified in returning the “compliment” he bestows upon me: the President of the Mises Institute is guilty of supporting war crimes in opposing the starving out of Hamas. I know, I know, this sounds paradoxical; starvation is a bad thing, not a good one. But so is unnecessarily prolonging a war something that all men of good will cannot support.

If Israel stops the hostilities before Hamas is vanquished, it will be inviting one, two, three, four, more, repeats of October 7 and thus its own suicide. I speak now as the new pope of morality and justice, a title I owe, and embrace with appreciation, to Dr. DiLorenzo.

Next consider that little matter of backstabbing. My detractor states that I “complain ... bitterly about the Biden administration’s pause in sending more bombs to Israel to be dropped on the Gazan population, calling it ‘treachery.’ He therefore is fully in favor of using the U.S. government’s powers of legalized theft (aka taxation) to pay for more bombs for Israel.”

Let us focus on but one word in this quote: the “therefore.” There is more wrong with that deduction than you can shake a stick at. First of all, I oppose all U.S. foreign aid³⁷ to any and all countries and this certainly includes Israel. Would such a policy hurt Israel? Yes, but only in an absolute sense. The more money and military aid from the US this country has, the better able it will be to defend itself. And, also, Israel receives the most such US largesse of any single country in the world.

However, relatively speaking, if the US stopped all foreign aid to all nations Israel would actually benefit. This is because the Arab countries, all of them put together, receive more from the US treasury than does the one almost fully civilized country in the Middle East.

Secondly, it is one thing to oppose foreign aid. It is quite another to stop it to Israel alone, while keeping the spigot open to the enemies of this nation.³⁸ DiLorenzo opposes, only, my rejection of government transfers of funds from the US to Israel. He says nothing, not a word, about the US continuing to finance the enemies of this country. Why not take the even handed libertarian approach which would reject all such payments?

Third, it is even more egregious to stop the foreign aid that had been promised to a recipient country such as Israel. Yes, it is true, from an anarcho-capitalist point of view that all such government contracts are invalid upon their face. However, from the classical liberal perspective from which I often write about Israel,³⁹ they are valid, and the US is derelict in this regard.

Fourth, it is even a greater denigration of obligation to cut off supply in the hour of need of a client state of the US. That country has a long history of cutting and running from allies when the going gets tough and they are heavily dependent. For example, Viet Nam, Afghanistan.⁴⁰ And, now, once again, Israel.

Fifth, this cessation is counter-productive to the espoused goals of the US as articulated by Biden, and presumably agreed upon by DiLorenzo: namely to save Gazan (not Israeli!) lives. The bombs held back by the US constitutes precision weaponry. Its use can save innocent lives, on the assumption that the IDF is not purposefully targeting civilians but rather aiming at Hamas fighters cowering and skulking in their tunnels. That nation of course has other weapons. But they are less precise. In other words, the Big Satan deprived the Little Satan of a scalpel. And the latter, instead, relies upon a sledgehammer to do the necessary work.

No, that “therefore” is thus totally and completely unwarranted.

However, I must concede, there is indeed one benefit that flows from this backstabbing cessation of armaments: the US will further solidify its reputation for international unreliability. This is all

³⁷ Apologies to Bauer (1984).

³⁸ Happily, with the Abraham Accords, promulgated by Donald Trump, fewer and fewer of Israel’s neighbors can be characterized in this manner.

³⁹ For example, see Block and Futerman (2021). I do so to satisfy Rothbard’s (1967) plea to libertarians, that they not fall victims to “sectarianism.”

⁴⁰ I do not say the US should not have done so in these cases. Only that it is garnering a reputation of leaving allies in the lurch.

to the good since on net balance and here I expect my opponent will agree with me, the interference of the US in world affairs has been a detriment to peace and prosperity, and thus its limitation will be a positive. Even bitter enemies of Israel will note that the US has pulled the rug under its ally in its hour of need, and cannot but infer that the same can easily occur to them, should they be so foolish as to rely upon the US.

Here is a final statement of DiLorenzo's (2024A) to consider:

"As a final aside, Walter Block fanboy Jordan Schachtel, an internet pundit, said to me in an email that he had read everything Walter Block had written on the issue of the current Israeli war and that there was not a single instance of Walter supporting or condoning the killing of civilians. Either Schachtel has a serious reading comprehension problem, or he is lying through his teeth."

One would have thought that DiLorenzo would have followed up this statement with proof that I did indeed "support... or condone... the killing of civilians." If one thought that, one would be wrong. My detractor neither here nor anywhere else supplies any such quote from yours truly. He does not so much as even exhibit any indication that it is incumbent upon a person such as he who makes such a serious charge to back it up in any way, let alone with a direct quote from his target, that is, me, in this case, saying or publishing any such sentiment. If there is anyone in this little vignette who "has a serious reading comprehension problem, or ... is lying through his teeth" it is certainly not Schachtel (2024).

Here is a quote from the latter, addressed to the former: "Can you point me to an article or statement he has made in favor of 'war crimes and the mass killing of civilians'? This seems to be *your interpretation* of *his* words, and not his actual words. Can you also point me to where he

won't distinguish between Hamas and civilians? The same rationale seems to apply here. I've followed his writing on this issue closely, and find no such declarative statements. I fear your gross exaggerations and outright falsehoods (the accusation of 'carpet bombing') is much more 'unhinged' than Block's defense of Israel's actions against Hamas."⁴¹

Here is some historical analysis from DiLorenzo (2024B):

"By the mid nineteenth century international law had evolved to the point where everyone understood that intentionally targeting civilians was a war crime that deserved the severest of punishments, and such punishments did occur. Lincoln single handedly turned all of that on its head by waging total war on the civilian population of the South from the very beginning of his war."

I regard my famous belittler as the foremost authority on "Honest Abe," as he characterizes this sixteenth president of the United States. Certainly, he is my own guide, mentor, advisor on this issue. I have learned more from him on this historical episode than from any other scholar. It would then occasion no surprise that DiLorenzo would bring his knowledge of Lincoln to bear on the present conflagration in the Middle East. His argument in this publication is that Lincoln was a mass murderer of Southern civilians, and this applies, also, to Netanyahu in the twenty-first century. But this is not at all true. Yes, it applies to the former, but not to the latter. It would appear that DiLorenzo has Lincoln on the brain, and promiscuously analogizes the two. DiLorenzo (1998, 2002, 2006, 2007) dots his I's and crosses his T's with regard to the occurrences of 1861. He is not at all behindhand in establishing Lincoln as a war criminal. His books positively drip with evidence on behalf of that contention; he is meticulous in demonstrating the truth of his claims.

⁴¹ Schachtel (2024) reports that according to DiLorenzo: "(Block) also advocated executing people who refused to take the covid shots." This is yet another unmitigated falsehood on the part of the latter. Did I say anything like that, such that DiLorenzo could misinterpret what actually occurred? Yes. I was asking would there be any circumstances under which the proper authorities could compel people to be inoculated, under penalty of execution if they refused. I came up with the following: someone has the XYZ disease (not covid!). Every time

he exhales, he kills 1000 people. There is a perfectly safe cure for this ailment, which he refuses to take. Then and only then would it be justified to compel him to take this drug, and execute him if for some reason that goal could not be attained. For my actual analysis of this completely manufactured, artificial, hypothetical scenario, see Block (2013), which was published long before the advent of covid, with Mises Institute imprimatur (LewRockwell.com)

However, as we have seen, he provides not a jot or tittle of any demonstration that intentional targeting of civilians takes place, nowadays, on the Israeli side⁴². Rather, he confines himself to misunderstanding and misconstruing my publications on this matter and failing to provide any evidence whatsoever regarding his malicious charges against the IDF. Would that he had devoted 0.000001% of the time, effort, intelligence he utilized in the one case to the other, we would not now be having this debate.

I cannot end this essay without commenting upon DiLorenzo (2024C) which is entitled: "Jordan Schachtel Has Literally Been a Paid Pro-Israeli Government Activist." The latter author has several times insisted that your humble servant never, ever, called for, or applauded, the purposeful targeting of Gazan civilians on the part of the IDF. He complained that DiLorenzo made this charge on more than just a few occasions without offering so much as a shred of evidence in support of this claim. DiLorenzo gives the back of his hand to Schachtel, once again, in this essay. But the title says it all: it is an exercise in the ad hominem logical fallacy.

The paradigm case of that logical error is this syllogism:

1. Jones says $2+2=4$
2. Jones is a crook
3. Therefore, it is not true that $2+2=4$

Here is DiLorenzo's version:

1. Schachtel says that Block never wrote in support of the IDF targeting Gazan children.
2. Schachtel Has Literally Been a Paid Pro-Israeli Government Activist.
3. Therefore, it is true that Block wrote in support of the IDF targeting Gazan children.

Don't they have any good editors at the Mises Institute? This essay of DiLorenzo's is a disgrace,

an affront to basic logic. It never should have been published. It is also an aspect of the Decolonizers' Assault on Science (Njoya, 2024). In that view, there is no such a thing as objective truth. The door is wide open to opinions. If you do not like what reality requires, you can make thing up as you go along. If you do not like it that there is no evidence "out there" indicating that Israel engages in purposeful genetic cleansing, you can accuse this country of that atrocity in any case. If you do not like it that there is no evidence "out there" indicating that Walter Block supports such an abomination, that should not stop you from claiming the truth of this monstrous lie regardless of the facts.

It is time to conclude this essay. I confess, I am disappointed in the quality of the criticism of my position offered by Tom DiLorenzo. I expected better from a scholar of his undoubted past accomplishments. I wish for an improvement for him in his future career. My only explanation for his poor present showing is that he has been overtaken by Israel Derangement Syndrome (Futerman and Block, 2024B) and has as a result been temporarily mentally incapacitated. His critique in the main consists of his manufacturing straw men arguments, attributing them to me, and then gleefully knocking them down. Al, pathetic as it is, could have done a better job in criticizing my defense of Israel.

All throughout this essay I refer to Tom DiLorenzo in the most glowing terms I can think of. Is this sarcasm on my part? Not at all. I still regard him as a world-class intellectual, on every other issue he has ever addressed, with the exception of this one. Just because he is for some reason or other out to lunch on Israel does not detract in the slightest for his magnificent contributions in these many other areas of political economy and history. Nor do I confine these complements to "micro-libertarianism" (Block, 2024B). They apply across the board.

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⁴² There is a stupendous amount of evidence that Hamas engages in such acts, but this seems to have escaped our author.

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