



bionic mosquito

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Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Not Surprised

Walter Block has co-written an editorial: [The Moral Duty to Destroy Hamas; Israel is entitled to do whatever it takes to uproot this evil, depraved culture that resides next to it](#). It is behind a paywall, so unless you have a Wall Street Journal subscription, don't bother clicking.

Often titles of editorials do not convey what it was that the author is writing. In this case, the title offers an understatement.

Walter begins with his usual one-sided and ignorant read of the history of Israel and the region (I have previously dealt with this here). He calls for total, unrestrictive support for Israel, that Israel is entitled to do whatever it takes – a libertarian calling for state to state support for unrestricted war.

Hamas needs to be destroyed, just as the Nazis were – the Walter Block libertarian campaign for carpet bombing Dresden. A complete, total, and decisive victory – regardless of the level of force necessary to accomplish this.

Of course, such a war would engulf, at minimum, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. A few hundred million people – no big deal, not too big a price to pay. But, I wonder, once this is done, how many billion more people will feel hatred toward Israel – and the United States. This path will lead to about 7.5 billion people dead, and the rest dying. But you go for it, Walter. Whatever it takes.

And it will entirely be the fault of Hamas – all those tens-of-thousands or tens-of-millions or several billion dead. Hamas started it (they didn't, but this is Walter's lie), so everything that follows is on their head.

Let's measure this against Walter's supposed thin libertarianism. Let's measure it against any version of thick libertarianism. It falls far short on either scale – in fact, precisely the opposite. Murray Rothbard, Walter's supposed mentor, must be spinning in his grave.

And it isn't enough just for Israel to win. They must win so conclusively that they will never have to face another war – a war to end all wars. Where have we heard that one before? How did that work out?

What an ignorant statement to cap off a masterful full-neocon editorial.

Conclusion

Can we finally give up the pretense that Walter is a libertarian – further, can we quit pretending that he has a single ethical bone in his body? This may be one of the more unhinged pieces of writing I have read on this topic.

What is actually quite surprising to me: this editorial is almost three weeks old, yet I have not seen a single comment, let alone denunciation, regarding it at any of the sites that I might have expected to see it – sites with which Walter is quite well affiliated, sites whose mission is completely opposite of that which is expressed by Walter in this editorial.

I grant, I don't read everything, so maybe something was said. It came to my attention only [due to a post at the Unz website](#) regarding an alternative view of the purposes of Ayn Rand:

Featured Post

A New Blog

I have decided to start a new blog (and still will continue with this one). The most immediate reason is that the workings of blogger ...

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RMB: I'm more in the camp saying, "inflation is a government policy" than "inflation c ...

Randian Walter Block's recent Wall Street Journal article describes Palestine as a "depraved culture" which will solely bear full responsibility for any civilian casualties caused by Israel's retaliation. Because the Hamas-Nazis deserve it too.

I have been clear about my position on this conflict; it is the position that I find consistent with libertarian political theory, but it strikes me as the most appropriate position to take for any human being with an ounce of decency in him or her: a pox on all political leaders on both sides of this conflict, as well as a pox on the political leaders of those states that support and have allowed this conflict to fester for seventy-five years and more.

The only people getting hurt, on all sides, are the common people, just wanting to, or struggling to, get on with life. [I have written about this here.](#)

Epilogue

Walter has asked me several times to work with him on different projects, etc. I have even had people take me to task for not taking advantage of such a noble offer from Walter. First, I have always been cautious about linking my work with that of another. Second, specifically with Walter, while we agree on the ninety-five percent of minor topics, I find him completely and dangerously wrong on the five percent of important ones.

But this editorial? It really is unconscionable. I thank God nowhere do Walter and I share a byline. As mentioned, I am not surprised.

This is Walter Block.

Posted by [bionic mosquito](#) at 12:02 AM



Labels: [war](#)

33 comments:

Anonymous November 1, 2023 at 6:39 AM

I know he's described as "sweet" and "kind" by many in the libertarian world, but I can't stomach him. "Sweet" and "kind" are not appropriate descriptors for supporting things like evictionism and Zionism. The best I can say is that he is morally confused. The worst...well, there are other words I'd use to describe one who supports the murder of innocent children and Palestinians.

I know it's often said that every libertarian gets one deviation, but that's a bit hard to swallow when the deviation is the slaughter of innocents.

Dave

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito November 1, 2023 at 7:57 AM

The slaughter of innocents being the violation of the entirety of the non-aggression principle.

[Reply](#)



RMB November 1, 2023 at 12:20 PM

He is not a dispensational premillennialist so libertarians won't tear into him for this like they do for my misguided co-ideologues. Tom Woods and Scott Horton have been very nasty about it. Rightly so in some sense but misguided themselves on the whole topic.

But it makes sense that Block holds this view. It follows much the same logic and path as his view on abortion. He overly simplifies the subject, cuts out all context, and sides with the person he most identifies with personally.

The antidote is Rothbard in The Ethics Of Liberty. Justice must follow the concepts of directness of threat, seriousness of threat, and proportional/retributive punishment. Justice only exits when punishment goes to the specific wrong-doer/criminal or person who plausibly threatens wrong-doing/violence. The punishment always must be proportional. In his logic redemption of what was taken plus a penalty of equal value to what was taken. For example if you steal \$1000, you owe \$2000, and sometimes an added small % on top for prevention sake. Block is nowhere near the target on this one.

<https://thecrosssectionrmb.blogspot.com/>

bionic mosquito: "Now, I view Revelation as applying specifically to the Jewish society and the city of Jerusale ... [>](#)

Roger: "But look: the Dow, the S&P, and the Nasdaq are all at record highs! So things are great!" [>](#)

Anonymous: I continue to read your writings. Sensible and enjoyable. Thank you. Peg [>](#)

Roger: Thank you. I will take a look. [>](#)

Deacon Patrick: Christ is Risen! Hi Roger, I have been watching videos on the site www.youtube. ... [>](#)

Roger: "That optimism is quite at odds with the postmillennial obsession with things getting increasin ... [>](#)

bionic mosquito: I don't know what else a Christian could do other than work to improve the world via Christ, and ... [>](#)

bionic mosquito: I always appreciate your work. [>](#)

Deacon Patrick: Recently, I have been following the website, "Eschatology Matters". It is an Evangelical s ... [>](#)

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Reply

Replies

bionic mosquito November 2, 2023 at 9:37 AM

Always a caution on Rothbard's book, and I know you know this: he does go very wrong on abortion and, as I recall, a parent's obligation to their children. But his framework overall is sound.

As to the punishment as described, I think that can work if the aggression involved property. If it involves the body, it gets a bit trickier and more complicated.



RMB November 2, 2023 at 11:46 AM

Oh yeah. I disagreed clearly on those 2 topics by appealing back to natural law.

Rothbard sticks with his logic and advocates equivalent physical punishment. I don't think he adds more on top of that. He also opens up the possibility of forgiveness in each case and giving the authority to the victim in dictating it.

Reply

David Martin November 1, 2023 at 3:10 PM

Block is a regular at LewRockwell.com, which I visit regularly, and I have long since learned to avoid everything he writes. Mainly, I thought he was just boring, pedantic, and trivial. Now I see that it goes much deeper than that. He is clearly a person who should be shunned by anyone who pretends to be civilized.

Reply

Replies

bionic mosquito November 2, 2023 at 9:38 AM

Yes and amen.

Reply



A Texas Libertarian November 1, 2023 at 3:24 PM

Rothbard was clear that it is not justified to kill or harm innocents in the process of retaliating against an aggressor.

Walter, on the other hand, came up with a tortured justification (negative homesteading theory) of killing "human shields" held captive by aggressors because the captives effectively homesteaded the misery of being kidnapped.

Reply

Replies

bionic mosquito November 2, 2023 at 9:40 AM

Add to this, when you read his reasons why Jews are entitled to Palestine, he makes the unbelievable argument that Jews who haven't lived there for 2000 years and have no documentation to title have a stronger claim than the Palestinian who was living there in 1946.



A Texas Libertarian November 13, 2023 at 11:17 AM

Yes it is absurd. Walter's compatriot (forgot his name) made this very argument in his debate on the Tom Woods Show.

Reply



Tony November 1, 2023 at 5:56 PM

Legendary investment adviser Doug Casey delivered a couple of choice quotes in a recent LewRockwell.com article:

"Our main interest is keeping the United States out of this thing. We're 330 million people. About 7.6 million are Jews, and 3.6 million are Arab. The rest of us don't want to have anything to do with what amounts to a Biblical domestic dispute that could easily

turn into World War III."

My guess is Block would argue Casey's position is anti-Semitic. Only hate-filled Americans are free to decide they have no dog in any fight involving Israel. AIPAC must have its way!

Then there's this gem:

"Let's not be too sanctimonious about terrorism. Bombing cities, which are by definition full of civilians, is just state terrorism, tarted up, justified, and rationalized with legalities and rhetoric."

Yikes. That means America's "greatest" presidents--e.g., Lincoln, FDR, Truman--were terrorists. Sherman's March to the Sea; the firebombing of Dresden, Cologne, and Tokyo; and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki all targeted innocent civilians. So much for the homicidal humanitarianism of America's Two Good Wars.

No doubt Block would say that, on some level, the collaterally damaged Southerners, Germans, and Japanese had it coming. I'm sure al-Qaeda said the same about Americans working at the World Trade Center on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. It's not as if Presidents George H. W. Bush and William Clinton had refrained from perpetrating all manner of mayhem on Iraq and Palestine through the 1990s, is it?

Targeting civilians doesn't stop being terrorism just because "the good guys" do it. Block should take a deep breath, step back, and look at it. Not just in the cold light of reason, however he twists it, but in the warm glow of humanity. He might then ask himself: What kind of a good guy targets civilians?!

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito November 2, 2023 at 9:41 AM

Yes, what the US has done to most of the Middle East and what Israel is doing right now today can certainly be classified as terrorism. At minimum, and without a doubt, these are war crimes.

[Reply](#)

Roger November 2, 2023 at 5:16 AM

Walter does not allow the "milk of human kindness" to enter into his calculations. Instead, his positions are derived from an absolute position of adherence to the truth as he sees it, no matter who gets hurt.

Should a child be shot in the back for stealing an apple? Should a drowning person be prohibited from entering the safety of a boat? According to the dogmatic principle of "100% ownership of private property", those actions are permitted.

Thankfully, most people do not go that far. If they did, all of us would be in danger.

Block is mistaken in that he holds that the right to private property is the "highest good" and that anything which endangers that standing must be destroyed, even if it means that disproportionate punishment is dispensed. He does not allow any room for love or compassion to enter his argument. Everything that he says is devoid of these, probably because his conclusions would fall apart if they were introduced.

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bionic mosquito November 2, 2023 at 9:42 AM

See my reply to ATL above. Even Walter's argument re private property on this issue is convoluted beyond all reason.

[Reply](#)



Brian November 2, 2023 at 7:08 AM

Since the beginning of the Israeli response, if you express compassion for both sides (oddy enough, both are human), someone is going to tell you that you're evil.

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[Replies](#)

Eric Morris November 2, 2023 at 4:43 PM

You're evil!

[Reply](#)

Anonymous [November 3, 2023 at 8:21 AM](#)

"I have not seen a single comment, let alone denunciation, regarding it at any of the sites that I might have expected to see it – sites with which Walter is quite well affiliated, sites whose mission is completely opposite of that which is expressed by Walter in this editorial."

One possible explanation for this lack of comment or criticism of the WSJ editorial could be because Block's usual colleagues are both embarrassed and shocked by his call for what amounts to genocide.

It's noteworthy that neither has there been an outpouring of sentiment supporting his view. On the contrary, there has been certain indirect criticism by several LRC authors.

It's understandable that some will feel reluctance to vocalize opposition; perhaps they are still getting used to this surprising stand taken by Dr. Block?

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[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito [November 3, 2023 at 10:45 AM](#)

As noted above in the comments, Block's editorial was touched on by Tom Woods, but not meaningfully.

Beyond this, I find it a failure that this editorial was not loudly denounced at the expected sites. At minimum, you would think the sites with which Block is affiliated would want to distance themselves from this.

[Reply](#)

Jeff Deist [November 11, 2023 at 6:30 AM](#)

Many people have been ruined by Rand. This is the ultimate negation of Walter's dictum "culture schmulture"— turns out Palestinians really are inferior subhumans in the Blockean mind. Also the notion of collective self defense against collective aggression might just be a tad at odds with The Ethics of Liberty. And I will add the late Bob Wenzel tried to address out the huge problem of proportionality, which is a nonissue for the blinkered Block.

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito [November 13, 2023 at 3:16 AM](#)

Jeff, it is nice to hear from you. Your voice is missed at the Institute by many people.



A Texas Libertarian [November 13, 2023 at 11:00 AM](#)

Yes. Jeff, you are a titan of the liberty+ movement. Always appreciate your take on current events and ideas.

Collective defense against collective aggression is a thorny issue when considering strategy from a libertarian point of view in a non-libertarian world. The problem of democracy comes to mind. But there is something different between defensive voting to reduce state depredations and justifying killing 'human shields' to destroy terrorists. I'm not sure, however, if Block is equipped with any sort of mental restrictions on applying the reductio ad absurdum argument.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous [November 12, 2023 at 4:46 PM](#)

Perhaps it's time to cut Block some slack on this topic of his WSJ article of October 11. It's likely that the article was written in the heat of passion, which can be a danger to anyone who exposes their thoughts to the public. Block and his co-author Futerman, both being Jewish, were perhaps motivated not only by rage, but by an impulse to protect their own, which is understandable enough considering the horrendous nature of the October 7 attack. I could be mistaken, but perhaps not.

However, to use the words, "do whatever it takes," to eliminate the threat was completely unworthy of the authors, who would have been well advised to step back and give it more thought before setting pen to paper. Did they really intend to imply that exacting retribution, with the possible consequence of eliminating all life on earth, was an acceptable price to pay?

It doesn't seem reasonable that Block would purposely make a mockery of his life's work with that truly awful WSJ opinion article. Peg

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[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito November 13, 2023 at 3:20 AM

Cutting someone some slack for calling for genocide, when that person supposedly swims in the waters of libertarian individualism and the non-aggression principle is a bridge way too far.

In any case, someone recently forwarded me a post from Walter - he continues as recently as today to defend his editorial. The heat of his moment has lasted well more than a month, it seems.



A Texas Libertarian November 13, 2023 at 11:06 AM

This plus his earlier justification of killing human shields (circa 2006) seems to identify his actual views on the matter well.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous November 13, 2023 at 8:07 AM

I was attempting to apply a little Christian compassion to Block's hate-filled attitude toward Hamas and Palestinians, but I concede that the heat of the moment, as I suggested, apparently played no role.

Duffy's weak criticism of Block was ineffective, witness Block's ineffective rebuttal. Bouncing their arguments off Rothbard begs the question.

Jeff Deist made the correct call. Peg

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito November 13, 2023 at 10:46 AM

My Christian compassion goes to the Palestinians being genocided.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous November 13, 2023 at 2:38 PM

It has occurred to me that getting emotionally involved over Israel/Gaza is playing perfectly into the hands of state apparatus.' "Us" versus "them" has been effective for centuries.

Journalists embedded with the October 7 attackers gives credence to my suspicions.

If war is indeed the health of the state, have we libertarians fallen hook, line, and sinker for this new "front?" The Ukraine fiasco isn't working out quite as our state overlords had hoped, hence this new entanglement.

Just a thought. Peg

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

bionic mosquito November 13, 2023 at 5:50 PM

Peg, I am not sure where you are going with this. In the face of injustice, what is a proper response?

Even if it is all a game among and between different state gangs - as I have basically assumed - there are hundreds of thousands of people who are just trying to figure out how to get by in life caught in the crossfire - in this case, both literally and figuratively.



A Texas Libertarian November 13, 2023 at 8:27 PM

Peg,

The people noticeably falling hook, line, and sinker in the Israel/Palestine situation are those on the right getting behind Israel with the "whatever it takes" mindset (following Nikki "Dick-Cheney-in-3-inch-heels" Haley) and abandoning their growing anti-interventionist views which were on display during the Ukraine/Russia conflict. It's as if Ukraine/Russia did not facilitate the American war machine enough to satisfy the Deep State (didn't quite get both parties on board), so they found a more familiar avenue into the freshly dissident hearts of American conservatives: the Jews and the fear of being labeled Anti-Semitic. Or perhaps its Christian Zionism or the aftereffects of its dilution into Southern culture? Ben Shapiro? I'm not really sure why Israel has the American Right by the balls to be honest.

But this was the big financially motivated puppeteering masterclass that just took place, not getting libertarians to worry about a genocide in Palestine. Though this conflict is pushing the radical left (pro-Hamas) into the same rhetorical camp with libertarians who are just pro-peace and against the deaths of innocents on both sides (and reject the 'anything goes' defense strategy of the IDF), and this should be watched.

bionic mosquito November 14, 2023 at 4:20 AM

ATL: "...and this should be watched."

I have long ago made peace with the reality that the far left - even socialist left - is perhaps the best group to understand and address the evils of empire. That the venn diagram therefore captures a huge commonality with those who are principled about the NAP no longer concerns me.

On this topic, and perhaps no other, can I watch or read someone like Norman Finkelstein, for example.

[Reply](#)

bionic mosquito November 14, 2023 at 4:14 AM

To my point in the original blog post, that I had not, at that time, seen any push-back at all from any of the sites with which Block is affiliated (since updated by a very soft post by Duffy at LRC), I just came to learn that about a week after this editorial Block was a speaker at a major Mises Institute event. The talk was unrelated to this topic of genociding Palestinians.

Do with this what you will.

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

Anonymous November 14, 2023 at 7:17 AM

I'm not sure, Bionic, but man has been beastly to man probably as long as there has been man.

Anecdote: A few years ago, I was driving with my son and as we approached a stoplight, I changed lanes to get in the lane with fewer cars. My gentle son said to me, "Mom, are you jockeying for position?" It was one of those edifying moments and I've remembered it.

Where I'm going is that people have been jockeying for position via theft and slaughter as long as human existence.

The Palestinians have been badly treated by the Israelis, to put it mildly, for so long that it's not shocking that they sometimes bite back. But I don't doubt if the shoe were on the other foot, the Palestinians would behave no better. We have witnessed it.

It's all so disheartening. Peg in Oregon

Anonymous [November 14, 2023 at 7:05 PM](#)

<https://mises.org/events/supporters-summit-2023>

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