
Some Notes on Republicans and Torture

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The logical efficiency of torturing terrorists is compelling. If you arrest just two people from the names obtained from each terrorist you torture, the first yields two more who give you four more who give you eight and in the course of just three rounds of torture you have rounded up 15 terrorists from which to extract all the information you want. And who could doubt they are all terrorists? Virtually all have confessed, and those who have not have been implicated by those who have.

The practical efficiency of torturing terrorists is not so compelling. Torturers don't start the process with people who are terrorists. They start with people they *think* are terrorists. As a result they inevitably end up torturing an unknown number of innocent people—people whose only crime is their inability to defend themselves against the torturers—who can only give the torturers made up information and the names of more innocent people to torture. ([Mayer](#))

Even when the torturers get their hands on an actual terrorist the information they get is just as apt to be false as true, and the names they get are just as apt to be of innocent people as of terrorists. What's more, when they do get the name of an actual terrorist it is among the names of so many innocent people, and in the midst of so much false information it is virtually impossible to tell which is which.

This is the way a policy of torture works in the real world. Torture provides little useful information compared to what can be obtained by professional means, and innocent people are inevitably tortured *en masse* while the population that is vulnerable to the whim of the torturer is subjected to a reign of terror. At the same time, the system is self reinforcing as the torturers accumulate a mass of

evidence—some true, but most erroneous—that feeds their delusion of being effective, and in the end the entire sordid process is horrific. ([Mayer](#))

This is why torture is banned by international treaties throughout the civilized world and why it is against the law in the United States, and this is why the Bill of Rights and the prohibition against “cruel and unusual punishment” are such integral parts of our Constitution, and why from the very inception of our country, the United States has, until the Bush/Cheney Administration, stood without reservation against torture.

Issues in the Torture Debate

Those who are responsible for this policy of torture want to debate their right to torture people. They wish to bully their opponents into accepting the issues as they, the torturers, frame them. They start by trivializing the idea of torture, using euphemisms such as ‘enhanced interrogation techniques,’ and then blatantly deny these techniques are torture. They challenge the integrity of anyone who objects to their policy of torturing people by asking whether it is permissible to torture someone when there is a ticking bomb somewhere in the belief that answering this question in the affirmative justifies their policy of torturing and terrorizing innocent people. They claim it is permissible to torture “high-value” detainees who might have “high-value” information that is “likely to save lives.” ([Krauthammer](#))

With this kind of twisted logic they try to keep their opponents off balance and keep them from asking questions of substance—questions like what does a hypothetical example of torturing an imaginary terrorist and saving an imaginary world have to do with torturing and terrorizing innocent people in the real world in violation of our most sacred beliefs? Are we supposed to believe all the people they tortured were “high-value” or knew about ticking bombs, that no innocent people were tortured, and that it was all worth it just because they say so?

The people who defend their right to torture look us straight in the eye and tell us their enhanced interrogation techniques aren’t torture even though there is no question in the

mind of anyone who has looked at these techniques they are torture. ([Mayer](#)) These are the same people who looked us straight in the eye and told us they believed in smaller government and then increased the size of government when they came to power. They told us they were going to cut taxes on ordinary people and then funneled virtually all of their tax cuts to their wealthy friends. ([Krugman](#)) They told us deregulating the financial markets would lead to economic growth and prosperity. The result of their deregulation was wide spread fraud and corruption, hundreds of billions of dollars profit for their friends, and a worldwide economic catastrophe for the rest of us. ([Primer Blame](#)) They told us we have to invade Iraq because Saddam had WMD and connections to al Qaida and 9/11. After we invaded Iraq we found there were no WMD or connections to al Qaida or 9/11, and the result of their invasion was tens of thousands of American casualties, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi casualties, trillions of dollars wasted, and more billions of dollars of profit for their friends. ([Mayer](#) [N Klein](#) [Chandrasekaran](#) [Isikoff](#) [Ricks](#) [Miller](#) [White](#) [Krugman](#))

In other words, these people have lied to us over and over again. They cannot be trusted to tell us the truth about anything, let alone about their torture program.

Those who brought us to this point tell us they have kept us safe and that if we just declassify a few reports all of the good their program of torture yielded will be proved. This is, no doubt, a good place to start. These reports should be declassified and carefully examined.

The first thing we must look at is the actual regimen of torture applied to their victims. We know what the torturers say they did. What did they actually do? Next we must find out how much of the evidence for the good the torturers claim to have accomplished is verified only by people they tortured, and how much of their evidence can be established independent of the testimony they tortured out of their victims. We must then find out how many innocent people they tortured to obtain the results they claim to have found. Was it in the hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands? ([Mayer](#))

After we have established these facts we must examine to what extent their torture program has provided a recruitment engine for religious extremist throughout the world,

and how much this has made the situation in Iraq and throughout the region worse. And, yes, we must also examine whether the same or better results have been obtained without torture. These are only a few of the gut wrenching facts that must be established to put this matter to rest.

How Republicans Defend Torture

Republicans who defend their right to torture people see all of this as irrelevant and believe there is no need to establish these facts or answer these questions. They tell us their policy of torturing people is justified because the world is a dangerous place, and to survive in a dangerous world we have to fight fire with fire. If we don't torture people we won't be safe. We can't let terrorists have rights or they will attack us again. We have to be tough and make the hard decisions necessary to keep us safe. Fuzzy minded liberals are soft and weak and don't understand that it's a hard, tough world out there, and we have to be just as hard and tough as our enemies in order to survive.

They have been telling us this sort of thing for over forty years now, and when I hear them using this drivel to justify their torturing people it turns my stomach. It just reeks of Himmler's infamous oration at Posen where he praised the SS for becoming "hard" and at the same time remaining "decent" as they went about their sordid tasks of torture and murder and piled up bodies by the millions. ([Himmler](#)) The men of the Third Reich who piled up those bodies along with the other despicable men of history who have resorted to torture and murder to achieve their ends did not become "hard" as they thought themselves to be, they became callous and they did not remain "decent," they were and remained sadist.

None of the great leaders of our country—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, Eisenhower—believed in torture. Churchill did not believe in torture. Even George S. Patton did not believe in torture, and none of these great men resorted to torture. Who are the men who have resorted to torture? Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, the militarists in Japan, Franco, Pinochet, the military junta in Argentina The list of despicable people who resorted to torture goes on and on.

Are those who turned our country into a nation of torturers suggesting we should ignore the great men of history listed above and follow the lead of the despicable men who have resorted to torture? Not only are they suggesting we do this, they actually did this and in the course of doing so violated international law, United States law, the Constitution of the United States, and they are now in the process of vehemently defending their right to having done this. None of this should be a surprise to anyone who knows anything about the rise of National Socialism in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, and has been observing the rise of the Republican Party in the United States for the last forty years. ([Shirer](#) [Bullock](#) [Altemeyer](#) [Frank](#))

Virtually all of the Germans of the Nazi era either claimed they didn't know what was going on, they were just following orders, or they knew but there was nothing they could do about it. These were the “Good Germans” of that era, many of which were held accountable for their actions in spite of these defenses, and all of which were devastated in the end when the Nazis took control of their country and destroyed their entire society. ([Shirer](#) [Altemeyer](#) [Bullock](#))

The true believers within the Nazi Party, however, did not resort to these defenses. Instead, they defended the “decency” of the Third Reich and their right to murder and torture people to the very end. Why is it surprising that the true believers in the Republican Party who are willing to ignore international law, domestic law, and the Constitution, torture innocent people and terrorize entire populations to achieve what they consider to be a greater good—namely, to keep America safe—are willing to defend their right to do so to the very end? Why would we expect Republican true believers to *believe* in their cause any less than the Nazis *believed* in theirs? ([Mayer](#) [Altemeyer](#) [Westen](#) [Krugman](#) [Hayek](#) [Mises](#) [Friedman](#))

Their willingness to defend their right to torture to the end is not the only parallel that can be drawn between the true believers of the Republican and Nazi Parties. The Nazis blamed all of Germany's troubles on the unions, communists, intellectuals, foreigners, and Jews, and they waged a massive propaganda campaign to demonize people they identified with these groups. Once their propaganda machine had inflamed the anger of

the public toward these scapegoats the Nazis then dismissed all opponents by accusing them of being a member or supporter of the scapegoat groups in order to turn the anger of the public toward their opponents. ([Shirer Bullock](#))

The true believers in the Republican Party also blame all of our troubles on a group of scapegoats—unions, socialists, intellectual elitists, liberals, foreigners, politicians, and blacks—and have waged a massive propaganda campaign to demonize and inflame public anger toward the people they identify with these groups. They also dismiss their opponents by accusing them of being a member or supporter of these scapegoat groups in an attempt to turn the public anger against their opponents. [1] ([Lakoff Westen Altemeyer Krugman](#))

Scapegoating wasn't just a political ploy the Nazis used to gain power. They did this because they truly *believed* they were the saviors of Germany and that the people they chose to scapegoat were the cause of all Germany's problems. Since they truly *believed* this, the conclusion that anyone who opposed them must be a unionist, communists, intellectual, foreigner, or a Jew was inescapable. Furthermore, because of their deep, abiding, absolute faith in the rightness of their cause, what they saw as the irrefutable logic of their analysis led them to the inescapable conclusion that to save Germany it was necessary to crush all of the people in the group of scapegoats they identified. (For those who doubt the sincerity of the Nazis in their beliefs, and the inescapable logic of their conclusion I invite you to read [William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the third Reich*](#) and try to provide an alternative explanation as to how the men who ran the Nazi death camps and who were ultimately responsible for the deaths of upwards of fifty million people could in the midst of their carnage proclaim their decency and then defend their cause to the very end.)

Like the Nazis, scapegoating was not just a political ploy the Republicans used to gain power; *they truly believe they are the saviors of our country and the world, and they truly believe the people they scapegoat are the cause of all our problems*, and since they truly believe these things, the conclusion that anyone who opposes them is a member of one of these groups is as inescapable for them as the similar conclusion

was for the Nazis. And as with the Nazis, what they see as the irrefutable logic of their analysis can only lead them to the logically inescapable conclusion that to save our country and the world it is necessary to crush all of the people in the group of scapegoats they have identified. ([Mayer Frank Westen Krugman Hayek Mises Altemeyer Friedman](#))

In addition, like the Nazis, true believers in the Republican Party are champions of law and order, attack the fundamental rights of individuals, believe in crony politics and capitalism, reward their friends and punish their enemies with a vengeance, tell such outrageous lies people are afraid to question their veracity, ([Krugman](#)) value loyalty to themselves and their party above all else, ally themselves with the corporate interests in society—the [Military-Industrial Complex](#) Eisenhower warned us about—and, like the Nazis, the true believers in the Republican Party believe they have a right, indeed, a duty to use the economic power and military might of our government to force their system of economic and political beliefs, not only on us, but on the rest of the world as well.

Furthermore, just as the Nazis appealed to racial prejudice through their anti-Semitic attacks on Jews, Republicans also appeal to racial prejudice through their racist attacks on blacks, and just as the Nazis saw themselves as part of a revolutionary movement with the objective of destroying the institutions of their government—the Weimar Republic—Republicans see themselves as part of a revolutionary movement with objective of destroying the institutions of the American government. ([Krugman](#))

And as with the Nazis, the Republican ideology is based on a utopian fantasy that in their minds is so pure, elegant, beautiful, intellectually brilliant, and so logically irrefutable they cannot even conceive of the possibility their utopian vision is not in tune with the Mind of God. For the Nazis the fantasy was that of racial superiority wherein the Teutonic race was destined to bring prosperity, peace, and harmony through the superior qualifications of the Teutons to rule the world. For the Republicans the fantasy is the free market system of economic organization where in free markets are destined

to bring prosperity, peace, and harmony through market discipline and the superior qualifications of entrepreneurs to rule the world. ([Shirer](#) [Bullock](#))

Finally, the true believers in the Republican Party justify their actions in the same way the Nazis of the 1930s justified their actions, namely, that their cause of saving the world from Socialism and spreading the blessings of Free Market Capitalism at home and abroad is so noble their ends justify their means even if that means they must institute a reign of torture in violation of every principle of human decency known to man. And just as the Nazis' attempt to bring racial fantasy to fruition led to a catastrophe—World War II and the utter destruction of the German society and most of Europe—the Republicans' attempt to bring their Utopian Capitalist fantasy to fruition has led to a catastrophe—a worldwide economic disaster that threatens the very existence of millions of people and the economic wellbeing of billions more. ([Shirer](#) [Bullock](#) [N Klein](#) [Frank](#) [Chandrasekaran](#) [Isikoff](#) [Kuo](#) [Ricks](#) [Miller](#) [White](#))

The Republican Attack on Government

For over forty years the true believers in Republican Party have been attacking our system of government. They say they hate big government and want to make it smaller, but we know this is a lie since whenever they gain control of the government they inevitably increase its size by expanding the Defense Department, government contract work to their friends, and corporate subsidies to their supporters. No, it's not big government they hate. And they don't hate government in general. Whenever they get control they use government with gusto to punish their enemies and reward their friends, and to further their Utopian and Crony Capitalists' ends in any way they can. It's not government in general they hate.

What they hate is *our* government, that is, they hate your government and my government—the government of the United States of America as embodied in the Constitution of the United States—and they have been doing everything within their power to destroy our government for well over forty years now. This is no secret. All you have to do to confirm this is listen to the ravings of Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, Grover Norquist, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, and countless other rightwing fear

and hate mongers that spew forth the propaganda that instills fear and hatred into the souls of those who make up the base of the Republican Party. What is it these fanatics are ranting about?

It's our government as embodied in what they call the welfare state they are ranting about. They are ranting about taxes on the wealthy being used to provide for the general welfare of society as a whole. It's Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Aid to Dependent Children. It's the Food and Drug Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Consumer Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, public education; it's any government service or agency that is designed to provide benefits to, or to protect ordinary people from the ravages of a free market economy and the people who rule this economy. What they rant against most is paying the taxes necessary to provide these benefits and protections to ordinary people, especially the taxes on income received from the ownership of property, that is, taxes paid by the wealthiest members of our society—the taxes they pay. ([Frank Mayer](#) [Frank Westen](#) [Krugman](#) [Hayek](#) [Mises](#) [Friedman](#))

In *their* government there would be no taxes on property income, all taxes would be levied on ordinary people, and there would no benefits or protections for ordinary people. In the delusional fantasy of the Utopian Capitalist there is no need for government benefits or protections for ordinary people because all of that would be taken care of by the discipline imposed on ordinary people by unregulated free markets, and even in those minor situations where markets fail these are simply the trivial price we have to live in their utopian world compared to the price we have to pay to live in a socialist society.

After all socialists force us to pay for Social Security and Medicare and all of the other socialists programs they force on us for the benefit ordinary people—they are tax and spend liberals—and their regulatory regime seriously limits the freedom of the Utopian Capitalist to amass fortunes polluting our environment, poisoning our food, selling dangerous drugs and other consumer products, and manipulating markets to make speculative gains on changing asset prices. And there are no trial lawyers in the

delusional world of the Utopian Capitalist as envisioned by the Republican Party to pester them with trivial lawsuits in response to their negligent and fraudulent practices as they amass their fortunes.

This is not the only way their government is different from our government. Most Americans view the Constitution as sacred. The Constitution *defines* America. It is our founding document. It provides the basis for all law and social order in our society. It lies at the very core of our concept of democracy. It is the one thing that we all have in common. It is the one thing that the vast majority of the people in our country believe in.

The true believers of the Republican Party do not view the Constitution as sacred. Like the Nazis, the only thing they see as sacred is their cause—free market capitalism and the unrelenting struggle against socialism. The true believers see the Constitution, international treaties, the rule of law as sacrosanct only when these institutions can be used to further their own ends—they are not ends in themselves. When they cannot be used for this purpose the true believers in the Republican Party see these institutions as obstacles to be either over come or ignored. And most important, they do not believe in the Bill of Rights.

For over forty years they have waged a war against the rights of criminals in our society, where by “criminals” they do not mean people who have been proved in a court of law of have committed a crime. They mean people who have been *accused* of having committed a crime. When they take away the rights of people who have only been accused of committing a crime and not been proved to have done so, they are taking away the rights of everyone, since anyone can be accused of committing a crime. You can be *accused* of committing a crime. They are taking away your rights and the rights of all of your family and the rights of all of your friends. Taking away the rights of people accused of committing a crime is the first step down the road to tyranny, and why would such champions of freedom want to take away the rights of people who are accused of committing a crime? Because they want to take away the rights of anyone *they* accuse of committing a crime because it enhances *their* power to achieve *their* goals.

The true believers who want to take away the rights of criminals tell us that if we give rights to criminals they will go free on technicalities. What are these technicalities they are talking about? One of the technicalities they are talking about is the right to not be convicted on the basis of confessions and testimony that is obtained by torturing people.

The Republicans have been terribly secretive about the nature of their torture program, and have tried to keep the facts about this program hidden. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that their torture program is the main obstacle faced in attempting to convict the detainees they have accumulated at Guantanamo and in other prisons throughout the world.

Specifically, it seems obvious that virtually all of the evidence they have accumulated against the detainees they hold without charge consist of confessions and statements obtained by torturing those they accuse and the witnesses against them. If this weren't so they would have had no problem convicting these detainees in a court of law. What other explanation could there be for their inability to try these detainees in anything but a kangaroo court? ([Finn](#))

True Believers in the Republican Party

The Obama Administration seems to think that simply declaring to the world we are not going to torture people anymore is enough. That we should move forward to a better world and not look into the past to bring out the truth and hold those who turned us into a nation of torturers accountable for their actions. Obama seems to think he can deal with this situation by calming it down, appeasing the Republicans, and pursuing a bi-partisan approach to solving our problems. He has absolutely no chance of succeeding at this.

Obama seems to think those who turned to torture just made a mistake, and if we put the past behind us this problem will be forgotten and go away. The people who turned us into a nation of torturers did not do this by mistake. When someone makes a mistake they own up to it. The Republicans are defending their right to torture innocent people to the end. They truly believe in their right to torture people just as they truly believe the

unions, socialists, intellectual elitists, liberals, foreigners, and blacks are the cause of all of our problems. They truly believe that the economic catastrophe the world is facing today—a catastrophe caused by a bunch of rich, white Republicans—was caused by a bunch of poor, black Democrats in spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

(Utopian Blame)

What's more, they truly believe they are the saviors of the world and that they have a right to use the economic power and military might of the United States government to force their system of economic and political beliefs on us and the rest of the world. And they truly believe their cause is so pure, so just, so noble, so humane, and so elegant that they can't even conceive of the possibility they may be wrong. And they truly believe their ends justify whatever means they use to accomplish these ends no matter how corrupt and inhumane their means may be. They hold nothing sacred save their cause, certainly not the truth, and they are dangerous. If we try to just put the past behind us without holding them accountable for their actions they will be back, and if they are not held accountable for their flagrant defiance of the law we will have set an extremely dangerous precedent for them to follow in the future.

We live in perilous times. The disastrous domestic and foreign policies we have followed in pursuit of the Utopian Capitalists' dream over the last forty years has led to a worldwide economic catastrophe and gotten us involved in a senseless military conflict that is fanning the flames of religious fanaticism throughout the world. Even the most inveterate optimist knows things are going to get worse before they get better. Our disastrous foreign policy has strengthened al Qaeda to the point that another attack on the United States is virtually inevitable, and as the economic situation at home worsens—as more people lose their jobs, their homes, their life's savings, lose everything they have worked for their entire lives—anger is going to grow, and this anger must be directed toward those who are responsible for the mess we are in today. If this is not done those who are responsible for this mess are going to direct this anger toward those who are trying to clean it up.

In spite of the disastrous consequences of their policies, Republicans are sticking to the party line that all our problems are caused by their scapegoats—unions, socialists, intellectual elitists, liberals, foreigners, politicians, and blacks. Their relentless attack on our government is continuing unabated, and their defense of torture and their get tough tactics is becoming more vicious.

At the same time, Congressional Republicans are voting in a block against any proposal the Democrats put forth to deal with our problems, positioning themselves to say “I told you so” when things get worse in the hope of regaining power when things get bad enough to turn the public against the Democrats. Meanwhile, the [Rightwing Propaganda Machine](#) is running at full speed to generate talking points, slanderous emails, and false facts and information to feed the fear and hate mongers such as Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, Grover Norquist, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, and the nut-cases at Fox News in an attempt to focus the anger on their scapegoats.

It is worth remembering that all it took was a third of the vote, the Great Depression, and a fire in the Reichstag for the Nazis to take total control of Germany in 1933. ([Shirer Bullock](#)) It is also worth noting that the only protection we have against a fascist takeover in this country is the Bill of Rights and the willingness of the Judiciary to enforce these rights. For twenty of the last twenty-eight years all of the appointments to the federal bench have been made by Republicans, where the litmus test was supposed to be about abortion, but in fact all of the judges appointed by Republicans have been hard line judges when it comes to the rights of people accused of committing a crime.

The Republicans need only one more appointment to the Supreme Court to have a solid hard line majority, and there is no reason to believe these judges hold loyalty to our country above loyalty to their party. This was made clear in 2000 when five Republican Supreme Court justices defied the popular vote, refused to allow the recount to continue in Florida, and handed the presidency to George W. Bush in what can only be described as blatant hypocrisy in the face of everything they had previously stood for. ([Cohen](#)) Michael Mukasey’s retirement from the federal bench to become the Attorney General is no more encouraging. Mukasey’s tenure at the Justice Department led to a blatant

cover up of illegal behavior in the Bush Administration with regard to torture and the firing of US attorneys. ([Lichtblau](#))

These people cannot be appeased or calmed down as Obama seems to think they can, they must be stopped, and the place to stop them is when they start torturing people. There is only one legitimate response to those who torture and wish to debate the issue as well as to those who wish to defend the right of their friends to torture people:

We are Americans. Americans don't torture people. Torture is clearly defined as criminal behavior in both international law and the law of the United States. The rule of law requires that those who torture as well as those who are responsible for implementing a policy of torture must be held accountable for their criminal acts.

For anyone who believes in the fundamental principles on which our country was founded this is where the discussion of torture must begin, and this is where the discussion of torture must end. That torture is wrong is a self-evident truth that is non-debatable for anyone who holds our institutions dear, and no clearer line can be drawn between those who believe in what America stands for and those who do not.

The place to debate the finer points of torture is in a court of law where there is some hope of the truth coming out, not in the public square where the fear and hate mongers can inflame the mob and bully their opponents into submission. After all, today's Republicans aren't ordinary people. They torture innocent people, and they think they have a right to do so. Think about that.

It's time for men and women of good will to wake up. This isn't rocket science we are talking about. This is very simple stuff: *Republicans torture innocent people, and they think they have a right to do so!* Red flags don't come any redder than that. It's not as if we have to wait until they lie to get us into a war, loot the federal treasury to profit themselves and their friends, convert our nation from the largest creditor nation in the world to the largest debtor nation in the world, destroy the manufacturing sector of our economy by sending our high paying jobs abroad, create a financial crisis that brings the world financial system to its knees and threatens to destroy the world's economy,

arrest and hold people without charge, wiretap without warrants, ignore the law and the Constitution whenever it gets in their way, and start torturing people before we can make up our minds. They have already done these things.

The time to stop them is now, before it's too late. It is time to stand up and speak out against these people.

