

King Lear demands, she allows fewer; whatever he agrees to, she reduces further still. Just so, contrary to the bitter complaints of our separationists, has our social standard governing exactly what babies and children can demand of us veered in the direction of less.

Once upon a time parents and experts worried about whether five-year-olds needed a mother in the house; now, when kindergarten has become full days and after-school programs abound, that worry has gone the way of the buggy whip. Not so long ago, parents and experts wondered whether two- and three-year olds could thrive if they were at preschools or day care all day, but when packing them off became routine and subjecting them to a rotating set of strangers became thought of as a head start, adults with other things to do decided that that problem had been pretty much solved, too. Having so efficiently shrunk the pool of children we might need to worry about, we now reduce ourselves to scholastic nitpicking over the few who are left: infants and toddlers. What real need does a five-year-old have of his mother or home? What need does a three-year-old have? A babe in arms?

King Lear has a famous answer to questions like those: "Oh, reason not the need." What the ideological devotion to day care finally amounts to is just that—reasoning the need, ruthlessly trying to square what for the youngest children will always be a circle with many orbits but only one center. ■

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The Dec. 21 attack at the U.S. Army's Mosul base mess hall by a suicide bomber that resulted in 20 deaths was preceded by a Saudi intelligence warning

three hours before the event that the FBI was unable to relay to the military. The Saudis had discovered from an al-Qaeda penetration that a Saudi *jihadi* had volunteered to carry out a suicide attack against the American base in Mosul. The Saudis were able to provide the name of the attacker and also learned that the timing of the attack was "imminent." The Saudis' counterintelligence service, acting on an admittedly short time fuse, notified the FBI liaison office in Riyadh of the information. The FBI representatives told the astonished Saudis that it would not be possible to pass the information directly to the U.S. Army command, as there was no mechanism established to do so. FBI headquarters in Washington would have to pass it to the Pentagon. The Saudis present were visibly upset by the news and became agitated, remonstrating that the information was considered reliable and should be delivered urgently to someone who could respond to it, but the FBI was unable to be of more assistance. Three hours later the suicide bomber struck. The Saudi warning was never conveyed to military commanders in Mosul.



The U.S. is adopting a harder line in Lebanon, largely based on uncorroborated claims by Israeli intelligence.

U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman has been pressuring Beirut to crack down on Hezbollah, saying that if Hezbollah's actions against Israel are not curtailed, the U.S. would consider sanctions against Lebanon. The American position relies on Israeli-generated intelligence indicating that Hezbollah is responsible for 20 percent of recent Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel claims that Hezbollah, funded and guided by Iran, contributed \$9 million to Palestinian militants last year, controls a militant group called Tanzim that is part of the Fatah movement, and also directs 51 separate terror cells in the West Bank and Gaza. Tel Aviv also asserts that Hezbollah is actively recruiting Israeli Arabs to serve as suicide bombers and terrorists. (Israeli Arabs carry Israeli passports and documentation and are able to move about more freely than their West Bank and Gaza compatriots). None of the Israeli assertions regarding Hezbollah have been confirmed by U.S. intelligence.



Sources at the Pentagon are indicating that a new wave of Abu Ghraib revelations, dubbed Abu Ghraib 2, is about to surface.

The new information—consisting of e-mails, phone logs, and memos—is being leaked to the press by disgruntled Defense Department staff. The documents reportedly demonstrate that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his immediate staff, as well as a number of senior officers in the field, were intimately involved in the establishment and management of controversial interrogation procedures at America's military prisons worldwide. According to the sources, Rumsfeld was also involved in the damage control that has sought to blame the prison abuse on a few bad-apple guards.

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The Truth About Torture

A historian in the future, or a moralist, is likely to deem the Bush administration's enthusiasm for torture the most striking aspect of its war against terrorism.

This started early. Proposals to authorize torture were circulating even before there was anyone to torture. Days after the Sept. 11 attacks, the administration made it known that the U.S. was no longer bound by international treaties or by American law and established U.S. military standards concerning torture and the treatment of prisoners. By the end of 2001, the Justice Department had drafted memos on how to protect military and intelligence officers from eventual prosecution under existing U.S. law for their treatment of Afghan and other prisoners.

In January 2002, the White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales, who is soon to become attorney general, advised George W. Bush that it could be done by fiat. If the president simply declared "detainees" in Afghanistan outside the protection of the Geneva Conventions, the 1996 U.S. War Crimes Act—which carries a possible death penalty for Geneva violations—would not apply.

Those who protested were ignored, though the administration declared it would abide by the "spirit" of the conventions. Shortly afterward, the CIA asked for formal assurance that this pledge did not apply to its agents.

In March 2003, a Defense Department legal task force concluded that the president was not bound by any international or federal law on torture. It said that as commander in chief, he had the authority "to approve any technique needed to protect the nation's security."

Subsequent legal memos to civilian officials in the White House and Pentagon dwelt in morbid detail on permitted torture techniques, for practical purposes concluding that anything was permitted that did not (deliberately) kill the victim.

What is this all about? The FBI, the armed forces' own legal officers, bar associations, and other civil-law groups have protested, as have retired intelligence officers and civilian law-enforcement officials.

The United States has never before officially practiced torture. It was not deemed necessary in order to defeat Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan. Its indirect costs are enormous in their effect on the national reputation, their alienation of international opinion, and their corruption of the morale and morality of the American military and intelligence services.

Torture doesn't even work that well. An indignant FBI witness of what has gone on at the Guantanamo prison camp says that "simple investigative techniques" could produce much information the Army is trying to obtain through torture.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Bush administration is not torturing prisoners because it is useful but because of its symbolism. It originally was intended to be a form of what later, in the attack on Iraq, came to be called "shock and awe." It was meant as intimidation. We will do these terrible things to demonstrate that nothing will stop us

from conquering our enemies. We are indifferent to world opinion. We will stop at nothing.

In that respect, it is like the attack on Fallujah last November, which—destructive as it was—was fundamentally a symbolic operation. Any insurgent who wanted to escape could do so long before the much-advertised attack actually began. Its real purpose was exemplary destruction: to deliver a message to all of Iraq that this is what the United States can do to you if you continue the resistance. It was collective punishment of the city's occupants for having tolerated terrorist operations based there.

The administration's obsession with shock and awe is a result of its misunderstanding of the war it is fighting, which is political and not military. America's dilemma is a very old one.

It is dealing with politically motivated revolutionaries in the case of al-Qaeda and nationalist and sectarian insurgents in the case of Iraq. It has a conventional army, good for crushing cities. But the enemy is not interested in occupying cities or defeating American armies. Its war is for the minds of Muslims.

Destroying cities and torturing prisoners are things you do when you are losing the real war, the war your enemies are fighting. They are signals of moral bankruptcy. They destroy the confidence and respect of your friends, and reinforce the credibility of the enemy. ■

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