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Explaining Abu Ghraib: A Review Essay

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Abstract:

Four books written by social scientists and published in 2007 are reviewed: *The Trials of Abu Ghraib: An Expert Witness Account of Shame and Honor*, by Stjepan Mestrovic*; The Lucifer Effect*, by Philip Zimbardo; *Torture and the Twilight of Empire : From Algiers to Baghdad*, by Marnia Lazreg; and *Torture and Democracy*, by Darius Rejali. Prior research on torture has left unsettled the question of the importance of training and direct orders as causes of torture, and the role of liberal democratic institutions in preventing torture. The four books demonstrate that the Abu Ghraib torturers did not act on their initiative, but were encouraged to commit torture by their superior officers and by the effects of their social environment. The torturers did not receive formal training in methods, but did receive informal instruction from CIA and Guantanamo interrogators. While democratic states use torture less frequently than non-democratic ones, they nevertheless do use torture sometimes when faced with severe threats to security. Of the four books, Rejali's *Torture and Democracy* stands out for its depth of research and quality of analysis.

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LAZREG, Marnia. (2007) *Torture and the Twilight of Empire : From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

MESTROVIC, Stjepan. 2007. *The Trials of Abu Ghraib: An Expert Witness Account of Shame and Honor* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm).

REJALI, Darius. (2007) Torture and Democracy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

ZIMBARDO, Philip. (2007) The Lucifer Effect (New York: Random House).

The use of torture by the United States in its conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the "global war on terror," has created much controversy and debate in the news media and political circles. Many books have been published on the scandals, including two first person memoirs by interrogators (Mackey 2004; Lagouranis and Mikaelian 2007), an account by a lawyer for a Guantanamo inmate (Margulies 2006), a number of books by investigative journalists (Danner 2004; Hersch 2004; Rose 2004; McElvey 2007), a compilation of government documents (Greenberg and Dratel 2005), several histories of CIA involvement in torture (Harbury 2005; McCoy 2006; Otterman 2007), and a book on the complicity of medical professionals (Miles 2006).

Most of the academic publications on Abu Ghraib have come from lawyers and philosophers, who debate whether torture can be legally or morally justified (for a review, see Bagaric and Clarke 2007; Twiss 2007). There has been less of a response from social scientists, and this lack of response is unfortunate. Most people agree that torture is morally wrong, and are concerned less with legal and moral debates over its use

than with the question of how to prevent it from occurring. As social scientists have expert knowledge on the causes of human behavior, they could greatly help in understanding the causes of torture and formulating policies to prevent it.

Four recent books (all published in 2007) have taken up this challenge. The books and their authors are *The Trials of Abu Ghraib: An Expert Witness Account of Shame and Honor*, by Stjepan Mestrovic*; The Lucifer Effect*, by Philip Zimbardo; *Torture and the Twilight of Empire : From Algiers to Baghdad*, by Marnia Lazreg; and *Torture and Democracy*, by Darius Rejali. The authors represent a wide range of disciplines. Mestrovic is a clinical psychologist and sociologist, Zimbardo is a social psychologist, Lazreg is a sociologist, and Rejali is a political scientist.

All four books refute the Bush administration position that the torture at Abu Ghraib was the work of a few "bad apples," or criminals who acted on their own initiative, independent of official policy. While this is an important point, it is a point that has been made before by many observers. The more important question is what *specific* aspects of the social setting caused or facilitated torture. Only by identifying specific causes and effects can social scientists make a useful contribution to prevention.

In this review essay, I will first look at the current state of social science research on the causes of torture, and then examine how each book advances our knowledge. I begin with Mestrovic and Zimbardo's studies of Abu Ghraib, move to Lazreg's study of Algeria, and conclude with Rejali's comparative study. While all four authors have something to offer, Rejali's work stands out for its breadth of scope, depth of analysis, and quality of research. *Torture and Democracy* refutes many of the existing theories of torture, confirms others, and contributes a number of original ideas. *Torture and*

Democracy is essential reading for all scholars of human rights, and promises to be the foundation for the next generation of research on torture.

The causes of torture:

Research on torture focuses on causal factors that operate at three levels: the psychology of individual torturers, the social psychology of groups and organizations, and the broader social, political and cultural context. Individual-level psychological studies have found little evidence that torturers are in any way sadistic, criminally inclined, or mentally ill. Most were normal, psychologically healthy individuals before being recruited and trained to be torturers (Haritos-Fatouros 2003). Accordingly, most scholars have focused on the role of the social setting in facilitating torture, specifically upon training and the role of obedience to orders. Scholars have also examine the role of the social and political system, and have paid particular attention to the question of whether liberal democratic systems are effective in preventing torture.

Training: The most extensive study of training to date is that of Haritos-Fatouros (2003), who interviewed military policemen who had been convicted of committing torture under the orders of the military junta that ruled Greece in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The Greek military put these men through months of brutal training designed to break down their individuality and moral sense, inure them to violence, and retrain them to a new role and identity as torturers. This training began in boot camp, continued at a special camp for elite military police, and concluded with on the job training, working directly with experienced torturers.

While Haritos-Fatouros' study found that torturers went through extensive special training, studies in Brazil (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo 2002) and Uruguay (Crelinsten 1995) found that torturers only went through ordinary military or police training before being assigned to units that performed torture. These recruits were equally willing to commit torture as the Greek soldiers, despite the fact they had received less preparation. While there have not been enough studies to decide the issue, the evidence from Brazil and Uruguay suggests that extensive training is not necessary to turn ordinary people into torturers. Ordinary military and police training, combined with on the job apprenticeship to experienced torturers, seems to be adequate.

Researchers also disagree on whether torturers need to be instructed formally in torture methods. Nearly all studies of real-life torturers indicate that they had instruction in methods, and this casts doubt on Bush administration claims that the Abu Ghraib torturers improvised torture on their own. However, Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo 1973), showed that college students in a simulated prison setting were able to improvise punishment techniques somewhat similar to those used at Abu Ghraib, drawing upon their knowledge of physical punishments used in school settings and fraternity initiations. Thus, while it appears that most torturers do receive training in methods, it also seems at least possible for interrogators and guards to improvise torture methods on their own.

Authority: Most researchers agree that authority and obedience to orders play a role in the commission of violence, but there is some disagreement on whether direct orders are necessary to induce people to commit violent acts. The experiments of Stanley Milgram (1974) have shown that many otherwise normal individuals will perform violent

acts when given orders by a person who they perceive to be a legitimate authority figure. However, Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo 1973) showed that direct orders are not always necessary. In prisons and prison-like social settings, indirect encouragement, combined with a lack of preventative monitoring, may be all that is needed for abuse to happen.

Studies of real-world atrocities have found similar variation in the importance of orders. Obedience to orders was found to be an important cause of violence in studies of doctors who worked at Nazi concentration camps (Lifton 1986), and studies of torture in Greece (Haritos-Fatouros 2003), Brazil (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo 2002), and Uruguay (Crelinsten 1995). However, a study of a reserve police battalion who killed Jews in occupied Poland found that obedience to orders was not an important cause (Browning 1992). While the police did have orders to kill Jews, these orders did not come from a person the men considered to be a legitimate authority. They had little respect for their commander, and little fear that they would be punished if they failed to carry out his orders. Nevertheless, the men did carry out the orders to kill Jews, even those who considered the killings to be morally objectionable. Browning concluded that unit cohesion and peer loyalty explained their actions. The reserve policemen viewed killing Jews as an unpleasant job that had to be done, a task shared by the entire unit. While some individuals felt sorry for the Jews and wanted to spare them, they felt that doing so would be a type of shirking, which would leave the dirty work for a fellow officer to perform. In this perverse moral calculus, killing Jews was "good," as it meant doing one's duty, while saving Jews was "bad," as it meant betraying one's peers.

Adams and Balfour (2004) offer a nuanced analysis of the role of orders in their theory of "administrative evil." Where Milgram focused on dyads of order givers and order takers, Adams and Balfour focus on the multiple levels of authority that exist in the military and other large bureaucracies. As decisions are shared by numerous individuals, a decision can be made to carry out torture or killing without any one individual feeling morally responsible. In a later article, Adams, Balfour, and Reed (2006) applied the theory of administrative evil to Abu Ghraib. They argued that the overlapping and confused nature of authority at the prison, and the lack of clarity in rules regulating the treatment of prisoners, explains why torture occurred.

Political systems and democracy: Scholars agree that non-democratic states are more likely than democratic ones to engage in torture, but disagree on how democratic institutions prevent torture and how effective they are in doing so. Political scientists have found a correlation between liberal democratic systems and respect for human rights in general (Howard and Donnelly 1986; Cingranelli and Richards 1999; Henderson 1991), and a correlation between democracy and respect for personal integrity rights in particular (Poe and Tate 1994; Poe, Tate, and Keith 1999). However, while liberal democratic institutions seem to protect against torture, they do not prevent torture from ever occurring (Einolf 2007). Scholars have documented the use of torture against criminal suspects in the United States (Conroy 2000), on rebellious colonial subjects in British-occupied Kenya (Anderson 2005; Elkins 2005) and French-occupied Algeria (Maran 1989; Vidal-Naquet 1963), and against terrorist and revolutionary movements in Ireland (Conroy 2000) and Israel (Ron 1997).

In summary, current scholarship on torture agrees that social environments, not flaws in individual psychology, explain torture. Training and orders play some role in causing torture, but may not be absolutely necessary for torture to occur. Liberal democratic states rarely torture their own citizens for political reasons, but do sometimes use torture on criminal suspects, colonial subjects, and suspected terrorists.

The scholarly disagreement over the causes of torture has a parallel in media and political debates over Abu Ghraib. Journalists, popular commentators, and politicians have disagreed on whether the torturers at Abu Ghraib had been trained to commit torture, and whether they acted on the orders or encouragement of superiors. They have also expressed shock and confusion that the United States, a liberal democracy with a tradition of valuing human rights, could be responsible for torture. The rest of this essay assesses how well each of these four books answers these questions.

Stjepan Mestrovic, *The Trials of Abu Ghraib*:

Stjepan Mestrovic is a clinical psychologist and sociologist, who served as an expert witness in the trials of several of the Abu Ghraib defendants. In both the courtroom and his book, Mestrovic argued that the social setting, not the criminal impulses of the defendants, was the main reason torture occurred. Mestrovic proposes no new causal theories of violence, but relies upon existing social psychological research to make his case.

Mestrovic successfully demonstrates that the terrible social setting of Abu Ghraib caused the tortures there. His detailed account of the stressful, dangerous, and chaotic environment of the prison will lead even the most unsympathetic readers to feel some

compassion for the guards. Even Lyndie England, who participated widely in the abuses and is famous for posing with a leash around the neck of a naked prisoner, comes across as more pathetic than sinister.

Mestrovic's account of the trials is unsatisfying, however, for two reasons. First, he never stops advocating for the defendants. His portrayal of them is so positive and sympathetic that his account seems non-credible. Second, he recounts the events of the trial almost entirely from his own perspective. He says little about the legal issues involved in the case, and gives us little insight into the legal and moral views of the judge and the prosecutor.

The book therefore only partially succeeds as a memoir. Does it succeed as social science? Here, the answer is again only a qualified yes. Mestrovic successfully connects the existing social science literature to the conditions at Abu Ghraib, and shows how chaos, fear, indiscipline, and dehumanization set the conditions for abuse. He draws upon this research to propose a sensible and practicable program of reforms. However, his solutions are similar to those proposed by human rights groups, military lawyers, and policy makers outside of the Bush administration, and few of them require any special insight from social science. Overall, *The Trials of Abu Ghraib* succeeds in applying existing social science knowledge to the Abu Ghraib case, but does little to advance our knowledge of the causes of torture and its prevention.

Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*:

The Lucifer Effect is quite long (488 pages, plus notes), and is really two books. The first 323 pages give a detailed account of the Stanford Prison Experiment, the

famous prison simulation that Zimbardo presided over in 1973. This part of the book has great value to scholars. Its account of the Stanford Prison Experiment is more detailed than earlier published accounts, and Zimbardo's analysis incorporates the insights that he has gained through three decades of debating his findings with other scholars.

This essay focuses on the last third of *The Lucifer Effect*, in which Zimbardo applies the lessons of the Stanford Prison Experiment to Abu Ghraib. This part of the book resembles Mestrovic's work, and follows a similar structure. First, Zimbardo recounts his role as an expert witness for the defense team of one of the torturers. He then argues that situational forces, not individual moral failings or criminal impulses, explain what happened at Abu Ghraib. In a final section, Zimbardo makes recommendations for change.

Zimbardo uses the Stanford Prison Experiment to argue that the Abu Ghraib torturers were not inherently "bad apples," but were good people corrupted by an evil social setting. As in the Stanford Prison Experiment, the guards at Abu Ghraib punished prisoners with nudity, insults, isolation, forced exercise and stress positions. While the punishments at Abu Ghraib were more severe, Zimbardo explains that this is to be expected, given the more severe nature of the social environment. He gives a long list of causal factors that led to the abuse, which include the dangerous and chaotic environment of the prison, the poor food and shelter given to both prisoners and guards, stress from long shifts on duty, lack of training and supervision, deindividuation and dehumanization of prisoners and guards, emotions of anger, fear and revenge, and voyeuristic and exhibitionist sexual interactions among the guards.

Zimbardo examines how training and authority caused torture to occur at Abu Ghraib. While the guards were not given direct orders to commit torture, the military interrogators encouraged them to do so by asking them to "set the conditions" for successful interrogation. When the guards used torture methods, interrogators praised them, commenting that the prisoners were much more compliant during interrogation sessions after the late-night sessions of prisoner abuse. While the guards were not given formal instruction in methods, they did learn torture methods informally from visitors who had used these methods in Guantanamo. The Guantanamo interrogators in turn had adapted their methods from the armed forces' Survival, Evasion, and Resistance (SERE) program, a program that submits officers to physical and psychological abuse in order to prepare them to resist torture if captured. Just as the students in the Stanford Prison Experiment drew upon their knowledge of fraternity initiations and school punishments, the interrogators at Guantanamo drew upon experiences from the SERE program in innovating methods of torture. The Abu Ghraib torturers learned methods from visitors from Guantanamo, and probably also from CIA interrogators. They then improvised improvements on these method on their own.

In a concluding chapter, Zimbardo praises the heroism of those who resisted abusive situations, particularly Christina Maslach, the graduate student who convinced Zimbardo to end the Stanford Prison Experiment, and Joe Darby, the soldier who blew the whistle at Abu Ghraib by giving copies of the torture photos to superiors outside the chain of command. One of Zimbardo's solutions to torture is to encourage individuals to resist evil group influences. He outlines a "ten-step program" for readers, with

admonitions like "I am mindful," "I am responsible," and "I respect just authority but rebel against unjust authority" (451-4).

Zimbardo also recognizes the need for institutional reform, and he consulted with the army officer responsible for reforming Abu Ghraib after the scandals. This officer improved training and discipline at Abu Ghraib, established the same standards for health and safety as those at American prisons, promulgated clear, written rules for guards and interrogators, held frequent unannounced inspections, ensured good record keeping, and videotaped interrogation sessions (440-2). Zimbardo states that these efforts succeeded in preventing further torture at Abu Ghraib.

Like Mestrovic, Zimbardo succeeds in demonstrating how social context can lead otherwise moral individuals to commit immoral acts, and outlines a set of plausible policy recommendations for preventing torture. However, his analysis is limited by the fact that he only studied a single case. The next two books illuminate the Abu Ghraib case further by comparing it with other incidents of torture by democratic nations.

Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire*:

Lazreg, a sociologist, has written two books and numerous articles on Algerian history and society. Most of her book is devoted to a detailed analysis of the French army's use of torture in Algeria. Lazreg draws upon archival sources, published works, and interviews to provide a detailed account of the war, and a profound and subtle analysis of why and how the French army came to use torture and other terror tactics. In a final chapter, she compares the Algerian case with the U.S. use of torture in Iraq.

Lazreg argues that the French use of torture in Algeria was not an incidental excess, but was "central" to the defense of France's declining colonial empire, "part and parcel of an ideology of subjugation" through state terror (3). She generalizes this argument to the use of torture by other democracies. "In situations of political crisis, genuine or imagined, the avowedly democratic state reaches deep into its reserve of pure power, breaking loose from the usual restraints on its capacity to eliminate resistance through the infliction of physical pain" (253). In the Algerian case, the legacy of defeat in World War Two and Vietnam made the French army even more willing to embrace extreme violence, as the French officer corps viewed a victory in Algeria as essential to regaining their lost honor.

One of the best and most original aspects of Lazreg's book is her analysis of the connections between sexuality and torture. While she devotes attention to the sexual assault and rape of female prisoners, she also describes the use of sexual torture against men, a badly neglected subject in the literature on torture. Recent medical research has shown that many male torture survivors have blunt trauma injuries to the genitals, and that men are commonly tortured through the insertion of objects into the anus and humiliation through forced nudity (Carlson 2006; Zawati 2007). Lazreg argues that sexual torture of men is common, but rarely reported, because men are particularly shamed by the experience and reluctant to talk about it. Torturers not only use sexual assault and humiliation on prisoners, but also talk about non-sexual torture in sexualized ways. Lazreg quotes one torturer's comparison of torture to sexual intercourse, with the prisoner's confession taking the place of orgasm. These insights help illuminate one of the stranger aspects of Abu Ghraib, the fact that the guards not only photographed torture

victims but extensively photographed themselves in exhibitionist sexual stunts and activities. While the relationship between sexuality and torture remains unclear, Lazreg's careful documentation of their connection indicates that this is an important area for future research.

Other chapters analyze how governmental structures, military doctrine, and contingent historical events contributed to the use of torture, and how the civilian government, the church, the intelligentsia, the media, and the French public reacted to torture. Her rich, deep analysis resists a simple summary, but makes for rewarding reading.

The final chapter of the book makes direct comparisons between the French experience in Algeria with the U.S. use of torture in Iraq. After the sophisticated analysis of the rest of the book, this chapter is something of a disappointment, as she overstates the similarities between the two cases and glosses over the differences. Her key point, however, is that democratic institutions use torture when presented with a severe threat, real or imagined, to their security. This argument explains torture not only in Algeria and Iraq, but also in other cases, such as the Israeli use of torture against Palestinians and the British use of torture against the Irish Republican Army. While I felt that her last chapter was weak, its deficiencies do not detract from the overall value of the book. Human rights scholars will find much of value in her detailed case study, and can draw their own comparisons with other cases.

Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*:

While Lazreg compares Abu Ghraib with a single other case, Rejali analyzes the use of torture by all democracies during the twentieth century, and discusses the use of torture by non-democratic nations as well. *Torture and Democracy* is a tour de force, both for the creativity of its analysis and the extensiveness of its research and documentation. It represents a major advance in our knowledge of torture, and promises to be the foundation for the next generation of research on the subject.

All researchers of torture face a nearly insurmountable problem with data. Since torture is illegal, governments go to great lengths to conceal it, and the lack of accurate data makes comparative study difficult. Rejali solves this data problem a creative way. Instead of attempting to quantify the prevalence of torture, Rejali documents the exact nature of torture techniques, and their variation over time and among societies. He shows that torturers often use a set of specific techniques together, which he calls "clusters," "styles," or "regimens" of torture. By documenting the dates that specific torture regimens are first reported in different places, Rejali can trace the origin of torture methods and their diffusion from country to country.

Rejali draws upon his extensive research to refute a number of commonly held beliefs about torture. First, he shows that the "stealth" or "clean" torture methods, which leave no marks upon the body, were not developed by the Nazis or the Soviets, as is commonly alleged. Totalitarian governments were not concerned that their use of torture would be detected, and they used simple, brutal methods that left scars. Officials of democratic governments had to hide their actions from public criticism, and they developed non-scarring techniques as a way of concealing torture from domestic monitors. James Ron (1997) has made this point before in his research on Israel, but

Rejali shows that what occurred in Israel has occurred in other democratic countries as well. He further shows that in recent years, the rise of international human rights monitoring has caused even non-democratic countries to make increasing use of non-scarring methods.

Rejali disproves the widely held belief the CIA and the KGB developed non-scarring torture methods through scientific research. While both agencies did engage in scientific research on interrogation, the results were not successful, and they turned instead to methods that domestic police officers had developed years before by trial and error. Rejali also refutes the claims of Chomsky and Herman (1979) that clean torture methods spread through the world due to formal instruction by the CIA and other agents of the United States. Rejali shows that torturers actually learn methods from one another in an informal way, through a "craft apprenticeship" system (28). While the U.S. is partially responsible for the spread of clean torture methods, France, Britain, and a number of other states have acted as sources.

Like Lazreg, Rejali argues that threats to national security can cause democratic states to abandon their usual restrictions against the use of torture. In conditions of threat, officials within security bureaucracies may decide that the democratically elected legislatures fail to understand the nature of the threat. In these conditions, "bureaucrats can overwhelm democrats," and use torture without the democratically elected officials' permission. In this analysis, the U.S. seems to represent an aberrant case. Some elected officials (the President and members of the Executive Branch) and some bureaucrats (the CIA) supported torture, while other elected officials (the majority of Congress) and other bureaucrats (the FBI and many military officers) opposed it.

A concluding series of chapters demonstrate why torture does not work. Rejali rebuts the arguments of defenders of torture by showing that the "ticking bomb scenario," upon which most of these arguments depend, is based not upon historical evidence but upon fantasy. Rejali examines the success record of torture by looking at a number of historical cases, including the Nazi use of torture against partisans, the French use of torture in Algeria, the U.S. use of torture in Vietnam, and the CIA's use of torture against Al Qaeda. Rejali uses these cases to show that produces no information of value. Instead, it produces false confessions and fabricated evidence about imaginary threats, overwhelming interrogators with a flood of useless information. Furthermore, torture alienates and angers people with genuine information, upon whose good will and cooperation accurate intelligence gathering depends. As an example of effective interrogation, Rejali cites the example of the five men who were alleged to have planted bombs on public transportation in London in 2005 (459). They were apprehended after their own neighbors and family members turned them in. If the British government had used torture against Muslim suspects, would these informants have been willing to step forward?

Rejali then demonstrates why governments continue to use torture, despite the fact that it does not work. Since torture is illegal and conducted and secret, its effectiveness is never held up to close scrutiny. Police and intelligence officers who use torture come to believe in it, and their self-serving accounts of how torture "works" are often accepted as fact. Academics can fall into the same error. A recent book-length argument in favor of torture by two legal scholars (Bagaric and Clarke 2007) argues that torture should be used because it saves lives. As proof of this claim, Bagaric and Clarke

cite the claims of torturing governments that torture is effective. It is difficult to imagine anyone continuing to make this argument after reading Rejali's systematic and well-documented demonstration that torture does not provide accurate intelligence.

Conclusion:

The four books in this essay help illuminate the role of training and orders in facilitating torture, and the role of democratic institutions preventing it. Mestrovic and Zimbardo show that the Abu Ghraib torturers received neither formal training nor direct orders to commit torture, but that the political and military leadership nonetheless bear primary responsibility for the fact that torture occurred. As in the Stanford Prison Experiment, the guards did not have direct orders to abuse the prisoners, but did have the indirect encouragement of their superiors, and worked in an environment where abuse would not be punished.

The Abu Ghraib guards did not receive formal instruction in torture methods, but received informal instruction from Guantánamo interrogators and improvised their own improvements to the Guantánamo techniques. Zimbardo's work shows that people are capable of improvising abusive punishments if given incentives to do so, and Rejali shows that informal, one on one instruction is the typical way that torturers learn their trade. Rejali and Lazreg both show that democratic governments can be tempted to use torture, despite human rights norms and internal monitoring, when they perceive an extreme threat to their security.

Now that the contributions of these books are analyzed, the final question is where should scholars focus their future research efforts. In regards to training, Rejali has

established that formal, scientific instruction in torture methods is rare, and informal person to person instruction is the norm. It is unclear whether the extensive innovation in torture methods found at Abu Ghraib is typical, or an unusual feature of that specific case. Further research would be helpful in resolving this question.

In regards to orders, these and other studies reveal a wide range of practices. In Algeria and many other cases, torturers have acted under direct orders, while at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere they have received only indirect encouragement. Future research is needed to further explore whether direct orders, indirect encouragement, or Adams and Balfour's (2004) model of "administrative evil" best explains how torture happens.

In regards to the broader social and political context, Lazreg and Rejali show that liberal democracies are less likely than non-democracies to use torture, but nevertheless do commit torture in some situations. In times of crisis, democratic governments are tempted to overturn liberal restrictions on the use of torture and other types of violence. Domestic and international monitoring can discourage torture, but can also channel it into forms that do not leave physical evidence. How to detect and prevent torture despite the spread of stealth methods is perhaps the most important task that now faces researchers.

The one encouraging aspect of the Abu Ghraib scandal is the fact that the U.S. government used stealth methods, but nonetheless failed to keep torture secret. Photos from Abu Ghraib, testimony from victims, leaked documents, and reports by the military's own investigators brought torture to public attention. Even the use of torture by the CIA at secret "black detention" sites has come to light, although the full extent of this torture is still unknown. Also encouraging is the fact that Abu Ghraib has caused a truly bipartisan reaction within the legislature which has limited the use of torture, and which

will probably lead to a complete ban on torture after the current administration leaves office. By studying the social settings that cause torture, and the institutions that help prevent it, social scientists can design systems to prevent torture from occurring. As the political environment in the United States and elsewhere changes, social scientists will likely have more opportunities to put these recommendations into effect.

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