

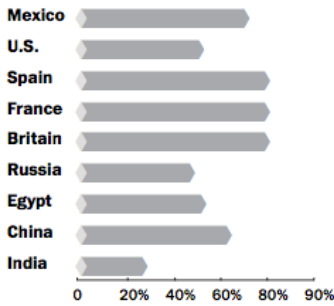
Learning to Love Torture

February 1, 2013 | by Bonnie Tamres-Moore

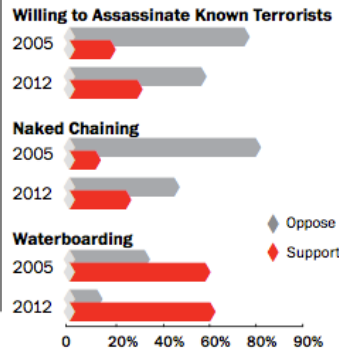
Tags: torture | Scott Horton | Amy Zegart | War on Terror | Intelligence Science Board | Obama Administration |

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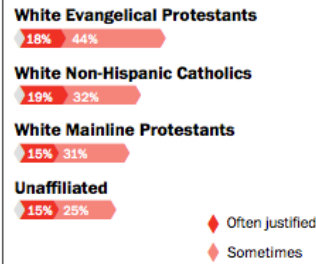
International Opposition to Torture



American Public Support



American Churches on Torture



“There can be no doubt that torture is illegal. There are no wartime exceptions for torture, nor is there an exception for prisoners or ‘enemy combatants,’ nor is there an exception for ‘enhanced methods,’” lawyer/journalist Scott Horton wrote in *Harper’s* in 2008. Prohibition of torture is jus cogens (compelling law), a principle of international law based on values so fundamental they cannot be disregarded.

Yet the American public has come to accept the torture of “suspected terrorists.” Polling that Hoover Institution fellow Amy Zegart published last year in *Foreign Policy* revealed that 41 percent of respondents said torture should be used in the fight against terrorism, with only 34 opposed. The same polling also found that Americans are comfortable with specific torture techniques.

Americans are not alone in supporting torture, although the most current polling I could find (2008) places the U.S. in a category with Indonesia and Egypt—at a significant distance from the democracies of “Old Europe.”

Public acceptance of torture is based on what I call “the higher morality of torture”—a belief that torture is the tough, but necessary thing we must do for the greater good. This belief is based on the misapprehension that torture is an effective means of eliciting accurate information, which is disputed by an Intelligence Science Board “Educing Information” report to the Defense Department.

Public approval of torture has continued to rise, even after the election of President Obama. One crucial reason for this: President Obama’s policy of zero accountability and zero meaningful investigation of torture has ceded the public debate to torture defenders and a complicit media. As Senator Patrick Leahy said “you can’t turn the page without reading the page.”

Anti-torture advocate Bonnie Tamres-Moore is producing a documentary on torture. Graph by Kevin Kreneck. Sources: Foreign Policy, PEW Research,

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