



Democracy's Blameless Leaders: From Dresden to Abu Ghraib, How Leaders Evade Accountability for Abuse, Atrocity, and Killing

Neil James Mitchell

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From the American and British counter-insurgency in Iraq to the bombing of Dresden and the Amristar Massacre in India, civilians are often abused and killed when they are caught in the cross-fire of wars and other conflicts. In *Democracy's Blameless Leaders*, Neil Mitchell examines how leaders in democracies manage the blame for the abuse and the killing of civilians, arguing that politicians are likely to react in a self-interested and opportunistic way and seek to deny and evade accountability.

Using empirical evidence from well-known cases of abuse and atrocity committed by the security forces of established, liberal democracies, Mitchell shows that self-interested political leaders will attempt to evade accountability for abuse and atrocity, using a range of well-known techniques including denial, delay, diversion, and delegation to pass blame for abuse and atrocities to the lowest plausible level. Mitchell argues that, despite the conventional wisdom that accountability is a 'central feature' of democracies, it is only a rare and courageous leader who acts differently, exposing the limits of accountability in democratic societies. As democracies remain embroiled in armed conflicts, and continue to try to come to grips with past atrocities, *Democracy's Blameless Leaders* provides a timely analysis of why these events occur, why leaders behave as they do, and how a more accountable system might be developed.

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