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## The Question

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and their legitimacy in the eyes of the affected constituencies, on the other.” Overall, the two books do an estimable job of delineating programmatically what states seeking to counter terrorism can and need to do. In so doing, they also invite more specific and granular analyses of precisely how to do it.

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Alleg, Henri. *The Question*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2006. 74pp. \$16.95

During France’s Algerian War (1954–62), the French journalist Henri Alleg sided with the insurgents. Arrested by French authorities in June 1957, Alleg was detained and tortured. During his confinement he managed to write and smuggle out an account of his experiences. Originally published in 1958, *The Question* was quickly banned by the French government, the first such action France had taken since the eighteenth century. The book nonetheless became a sensation.

Reissued after half a century, this new edition retains its preface by French novelist and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, now supplemented with a foreword by author Ellen Ray, an introduction by author James D. Le Sueur, and a new afterword by Alleg himself.

The book’s title euphemistically refers to torture. In calm and lucid prose, Alleg describes his fate at the hands of his captors. Held for a month in Algeria’s El Biar prison, Alleg was tortured by French *paras* (paratroopers) before being transferred to another prison, where he composed *The Question*. His “interrogations” ranged from beatings

to electric shock and water boarding. He was even administered Pentothal, or “truth serum.” Despite these outrages, Alleg refused to break, earning him both wrath and grudging respect from his tormentors. He escaped from prison in October 1961, just months before the war ended.

Fifty years later, Alleg’s voice remains as reasoned and penetrating as ever. He laments that France’s political elite have attempted to purge the Algerian War and its attendant horrors from the country’s official memory; many military men responsible for these crimes, he notes, have received not only amnesty but promotion and praise. Only in 2000 did the French government admit that it had perpetrated widespread torture and other abuses during this period. Ironically, one former torturer proudly admitted to his actions in a 2001 book, causing such a backlash that he was punished, albeit lightly. However, Alleg insists that even this slap on the wrist signals a shift in official French thinking.

The accompanying essays deserve mention. Ray minces no words, accusing the United States of pursuing a “strategy that incorporates racism, torture, and murder” in its current conflicts. Seeing America as headed down a moral slippery slope, she wonders if it might go the way of the French Fourth Republic or whether “Americans might be the defendants in future war crimes trials.”

Le Sueur provides background on Alleg’s experiences and the debate that *The Question* aroused in France. He argues that present-day France has yet to come to grips with its sordid conduct. In fact, the French parliament passed a law in February 2005 enjoining educators to teach the “positive role” of

French imperialism and to recognize the “sacrifices” made by France’s armed forces in the Algerian War.

Sartre is biting in his psychological dissection of both torturer and victim. He maintains that torture stems from racial hatred and that only by believing an individual to be less than human can one justify torture.

We should be grateful for this timely republication of *The Question*, as it reminds France of a chapter in its history it has tried hard to forget. It is also evidence that fighting terrorists by sacrificing one’s humanity ensures not just a long war but an endless one.

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Evans, Michael. *The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia’s Strategic Culture and Way of War, 1901–2005*. Duntroon, ACT, Australia: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2005. Available online at [www.defence.gov.au/army/LWSC/Publications/SP/SP\\_306.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/army/LWSC/Publications/SP/SP_306.pdf).

In this excellent monograph, Michael Evans argues that Australia has a distinctive way of war that focuses on continental defensive strategies. These strategies, for most of its history, have been abandoned by statesmen upholding Australia’s extended vital interests in a favorable regional and world order. In other words, Australian military strategists instinctively think about homeland defense, especially of the air and sea-lanes connecting Australia to the world, but their political leaders inevitably require them to adapt their strategies to intervening around the world as a member of coalitions of like-minded liberal democracies. In the

United States, we call this a “policy-strategy mismatch,” but Evans calls it the “tyranny of dissonance,” with the interventionist tradition of Australian foreign policy pulling one way and the more isolationist official Australian military strategy pulling another. In that respect, Australia resembles Britain and the United States, which have also been torn between “splendid isolation” and foreign intervention in different periods of their histories.

Evans is as relentless as a fly at a picnic in the Australian outback in demonstrating his thesis, which makes his style sometimes just as annoying. He might have limited his analysis to a few archetypal case studies and so made his point with greater power in fewer words. He does prove, however, that both the geographical position and unique political culture of Australia have inclined its military leaders to treat their continent as an Anglo-Saxon island in the middle of Asia, one that needed to be isolated from the rough-and-tumble of regional and global conflicts. Time and again, however, Australia’s dependence on great powers (first Britain, then the United States), as well as the broader vision of Australian political leaders, compelled it to adopt a coalition strategy of “limited liability.” Both to avoid overextension and to demonstrate their bona fides to Australia’s allies, statesmen “down under” have consistently made limited commitments to imperial, later international, security in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Like more unilateral interventions in East Timor and the Solomon Islands, these expeditions demonstrate that official Australian defense strategy is often out of sync with Australian foreign