

Australian establishment seizes on Paris attacks to justify war and police state measures

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The alleged Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attacks in Paris last Friday have been seized upon by the Australian political and media establishment to justify the country's involvement in the US-led wars in Iraq and Syria and the abrogation of democratic rights at home that has taken place on the pretext of combatting terrorism.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in Turkey for the G-20 Summit, gave his official sanction to a frenzy of fear-mongering and anti-Muslim xenophobia. In his initial statement, he declared that the terrorist attacks were “truthfully the work of the devil.” On the weekend, he asserted that, while there was no evidence, “attacks in this environment are likely to happen in the future” in Australia.

Turnbull lauded the sixth tranche of anti-terrorism legislation which includes sweeping measures to strip dual citizens of their Australian citizenship if they are deemed to have been involved in terrorist -related activities or display a lack of “allegiance” to Australia. Control orders—state restrictions on peoples' movements and contacts, up to outright house arrest—can now be imposed on children as young as 14.

Related measures have been legislated by the New South Wales (NSW) state government to allow the detention and interrogation of suspects for as long as 28 days without any charges. NSW acting police commissioner Nick Kaldas told journalists on Tuesday that his officers had been ordered to be armed at all times and to shoot-to-kill, rather than seek to negotiate, with alleged terrorists.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten stressed the Labor Party's bipartisan, unconditional support for giving the “law enforcement agencies and security... the resources

they require.”

At a press conference with Barack Obama yesterday in Manila, Turnbull declared that Australia, which is contributing the second largest military force to US operations the Middle East, would “continue shoulder to shoulder with the United States and our allies in the fight against this type of extremist violence, this type of terrorism.”

Endorsing war abroad and repression at home, Monday's editorial in Murdoch's *Australian* declared that “Western civilisation” was threatened by “extreme Wahabist Sunni Islam.” The newspaper demanded even greater police-state control and censorship within Australia. It advocated “vigilance on many fronts—education in our schools, engagement in our communities, military strength overseas, security resilience at home, intelligence alertness and orderly immigration controls.”

The media as a whole has been dominated by morbid fascination with every detail of the Paris killings, combined with lurid speculation about the dangers of domestic attacks and what “action” is needed internationally and within Australia to win the “war” against ISIS and “Islamic terrorism.”

Popular programs on commercial television Channel Nine provided a platform for anti-immigrant bigot Pauline Hanson, of the One Nation party, to denounce the Islamic faith, demand that Muslim refugees be banned from entry into the country and declare that Muslims who oppose terrorism should prove it by converting to other religions.

While Hanson was criticised by some quarters of the media, the greatest venom has been reserved for a handful of public figures who have refused to go along

with the official script and blame the Paris attacks on inexplicable “evil.”

Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, the Grand Mufti in Australia, issued a considered press release on Tuesday in which he stated: “These recent incidents highlight the fact that current strategies to deal with the threat of terrorism are not working. It is therefore imperative that all causative factors such as racism, Islamophobia, curtailing freedoms through securitisation, duplicitous foreign policies and military intervention must be comprehensively addressed.”

The mufti did no more than state the incontrovertible. The Paris attacks, and terrorist incidents elsewhere, including recent events in Australia, can only be understood in the context of the utter devastation of the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan’s tribal belt, Libya, Yemen and Syria, caused by the US and its allies, as well as their support for brutal and corrupt regimes in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and Egypt.

Decades of US-led wars and intrigues in Central Asia and Middle East are the principle factor behind the emergence of extremist networks such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. The small number of disorientated youth who have enlisted with terrorist groups have been radicalised by anger over the suffering that imperialism has caused along with institutionalised police persecution, discrimination against Muslim minorities and general social alienation at home.

The mufti’s comments were nevertheless widely condemned by politicians and in the media. The *Australian* labelled them “a classic case of blaming terrorism on alleged grievances about Western treatment of Muslims.” A former candidate for the Australian Greens, Mohammed El-leissy, denounced the mufti for promoting a “victims’ mentality” and asserted he should have advised youth who are angry over the US-led crimes in the Middle East to “move... beyond this.”

Every effort is being made to mystify and cover up the underlying causes of “radicalisation” and terrorism. In line with Turnbull’s invocation of the “devil,” the *Australian* editorial asserted on Monday that Islamic extremism was the irrational outcome of a “violent wish upon our liberal societies” and “unabashed intolerance.”

The efforts to delegitimise any probing of the

atrocities in Paris stem from deep fears in ruling circles of the popular opposition to its foreign and domestic policies.

Australia has played a virtually continuous role in the occupation of Afghanistan since 2001. It was part of the “coalition of the willing” that illegally invaded Iraq in 2003 on the basis of lies over “weapons of mass destruction,” in defiance of mass opposition. The Australian military is back in the Middle East, carrying out air attacks on alleged ISIS targets in both Iraq and Syria.

Australia’s participation in the wars has been, and remains, the *quid pro quo* for the strategic and military alliance with the US, which has placed the country on the frontline of Washington’s “pivot to Asia” and steady escalation of military provocations and threats against China. A decade-and-a-half of wars, along with the attack on civil liberties, has provoked widespread concern and opposition that finds no voice in the political establishment.

The deluge of propaganda surrounding the events in Paris, particularly the vicious condemnation of anyone who even mildly questions or challenges the “war on terror,” is aimed at intimidating and suppressing the broader opposition, and justifying police-state measures that will be used against any resistance to falling living standards, social inequality and war.



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