

# Australian Academics Witch-hunted for Challenging US Lies on Syria Attack

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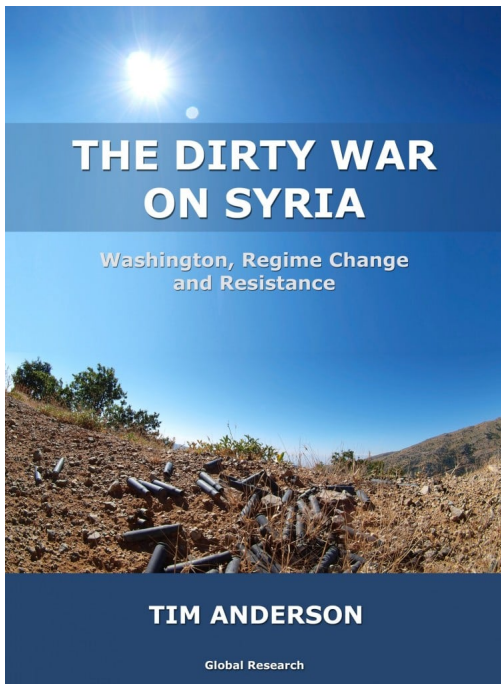
*Amid a media barrage to try to drum up public support for US-led military attacks on Syria and North Korea, the corporate media and the Turnbull government have launched an extraordinary vilification campaign against academics seeking to expose the lies behind last week's US cruise missile strike on Syria.*

The witch-hunt is an open attack on basic democratic rights, above all free speech—accompanied by demands that the University of Sydney censor, discipline or sack staff members for even calling into question the pretext for the illegal attack ordered by US President Donald Trump.

Clearly, there are deep fears in ruling circles about the publication of any information or criticism that lays bare the false justification for the US aggression and points to the record of similar fabrications concocted by the US and its allies, including Australia, to justify their endless predatory wars in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's government has been one of the most vociferous global defenders of the US attack. Turnbull declared there was no doubt that "the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad committed a shocking war crime against the people of Syria, with a chemical attack ... that called out for a swift response."

For decades, Australian governments have endorsed every such lie perpetrated by Washington, including the "weapons of mass destruction" fraud used to invade Iraq in 2003.



The initial target of the political witch-hunt has been University of Sydney economics and international politics lecturer Dr Tim Anderson and other academics associated with his online Centre for Counter Hegemonic Studies. After the missile attack, Anderson posted social media comments pointing out there was no independent evidence, or plausible motive, to accuse the Syrian government of conducting the alleged April 4 sarin gas attack that killed 87 people in the town of Khan Sheikhoun.

To order [Tim Anderson's book directly from Global Research click front cover](#)

Anderson suggested that the gassing was more likely to be another “false flag” atrocity committed by US-backed, Al Qaeda-linked outfits. They have previously made similar attempts to trigger US intervention to oust Assad, such as the 2013 Ghouta chemical weapons attack that was later systematically exposed by veteran American journalist Seymour Hersh.

Significantly, the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) spearheaded the demonisation of the academics. Its “Media Watch” television program last Monday accused Anderson of spreading “disinformation and discord.”

Backed by denunciations of Anderson issued by ABC and *Guardian* journalists, the program sought to discredit him by making an amalgam between his postings and others by extreme right-wing sites and mouthpieces for the Syrian and Russian governments.

Rupert Murdoch’s media outlets, such as the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, blazoned the accusations against Anderson over their front pages, under headlines depicting him as an “Assad-loving boffin” and his associates as “uni loonies.” The *Australian*, Murdoch’s national broadsheet, attacked the University of Sydney for refusing to act against them.

Turnbull’s Education Minister Simon Birmingham, who is responsible for university funding, told the *Daily Telegraph* the university should investigate Anderson’s comments.

“Although universities are places where ideas should be contested, that’s no excuse for being an apologist [for the Assad regime],” he insisted.

The clear logic of this declaration is that anyone who questions any aspect of US or Australian foreign and military policy is guilty of supporting war crimes and should therefore be sacked, or even prosecuted under war crimes or anti-terrorism legislation.

Fairfax Media extended the offensive to the University of Sydney itself. "One of Australia's most prestigious universities" was at the centre of a "pro-Assad push," the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Michael Koziol declared.

There are signs that the barrage may backfire. The ABC's smears provoked outrage among its viewers. One typical comment posted on "Media Watch's" web site denounced the program for emulating other media "megaphones" in producing "not one shred of evidence to back the claim that this event was perpetrated" by Syria.

Another viewer warned:

"What is interesting about this sordid witch-hunt is that it accuses all who dare disagree with obvious lies of being stooges of Assad and Putin. The accusation of 'treachery' and 'treason' will not long be delayed."

In his own response to "Media Watch," Anderson rejected its allegation that he was "misleading public understanding." As an academic, he said,

"I have a responsibility to educate the public, especially in face of the constant misinformation from Australia's corporate and state media."

The WWSW has fundamental political differences with Anderson, a longtime supporter of bourgeois nationalist regimes such as Assad's. Nevertheless, we unconditionally defend his right, and the right of all academics, political activists, workers and students, to oppose the drive to war and to exercise freedom of political expression.

Anderson told the WWSW the corporate and state media "feel the imperative to back a new war drive against Syria" and wanted to "shout down any dissenting voices on this dirty war." He said the "fake news" operation "does frighten some people, but we have also received a great deal of public support in the past few days."

Independent federal parliamentarian Andrew Wilkie this week also questioned the US charges against Assad. In 2003, Wilkie resigned from the Office of National Assessments, a top-level intelligence agency, in an attempt to expose the "weapons of mass destruction" and other lies being used to justify the US-led invasion of Iraq and Australia's involvement in it.

"Frankly I don't trust the Trump administration," Wilkie told reporters. "From first principles it just seems so unlikely that President Assad would have used sarin gas on his own people at this particular time, for a whole range of reasons." It was "a very unlikely choice of weapon when you know it's going to attract such a strong military response from the United States."

Speaking from an Australian nationalist standpoint, Wilkie said:

“It’s regrettable that here we are again just instantly agreeing with whatever the Americans are saying, instead of taking an opportunity to be a little more independent ... We have been stuck in the Middle East quagmire since 2003, again on account of allegations of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons.”

In reality, rather than being duped, successive Australian governments have willingly joined one “false flag” US-led war after another in order to secure Washington’s backing for Australian imperialism’s own mercenary operations in the Asia-Pacific.

The witch-hunt against the academics is part of a broader attempt to suppress anti-war sentiment. Last week, the Turnbull government [revoked](#) the visa of a prominent Palestinian activist, Bassem Tamimi, to prevent him from addressing public meetings in Australia.

The bid to silence public discussion is a warning. More than 15 years after the declaration of the “war on terror,” the unending war drive by US imperialism is entering a potentially catastrophic stage. Having already devastated much of the Middle East, Washington and its partners are planning even more aggressive actions, posing the danger of direct military conflicts with nuclear-armed Russia and China.

The building of a global anti-war movement of the working class, armed with a socialist perspective, is the only way to prevent a disastrous conflagration.

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✘ *The Dirty War on Syria has relied on a level of mass disinformation not seen in living memory. In seeking ‘regime change’ the big powers sought to hide their hand, using proxy armies of ‘Islamists’, demonising the Syrian Government and constantly accusing it of atrocities. In this way Syrian President Bashar al Assad, a mild-mannered eye doctor, became the new evil in the world.*

*The popular myths of this dirty war – that it is a ‘civil war’, a ‘popular revolt’ or a sectarian conflict – hide a murderous spree of ‘regime change’ across the region. The attack on Syria was a necessary consequence of Washington’s ambition, stated openly in 2006, to create a ‘New Middle East’. After the destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, Syria was next in line.*

*To order Tim Anderson’s book directly from Global Research, [click here](#) or click front cover of book.*

Five years into this war the evidence is quite clear and must be set out in detail. The terrible massacres were mostly committed by the western backed jihadists, then blamed on the Syrian Army. The western media and many western NGOs parroted the official line. Their sources were almost invariably those allied to the ‘jihadists’. Contrary to the myth that the big powers now have their own ‘war on terror’, those same powers have backed every single anti-government armed group in Syria, ‘terrorists’ in any other context, adding thousands of ‘jihadis’ from dozens of countries.

Yet in Syria this dirty war has confronted a disciplined national army which did not disintegrate along sectarian lines. Despite terrible destruction and loss of life, Syria has survived, deepening its alliance with Russia, Iran, the Lebanese Resistance, the secular Palestinians and, more recently, with Iraq. The tide has turned against Washington, and that

will have implications beyond Syria.

As western peoples we have been particularly deceived by this dirty war, reverting to our worst traditions of intervention, racial prejudice and poor reflection on our own histories. This book tries to tell its story while rescuing some of the better western traditions: the use of reason, ethical principle and the search for independent evidence.

Reviews:

*Tim Anderson has written the best systematic critique of western fabrications justifying the war against the Assad government.*

*No other text brings together all the major accusations and their effective refutation.*

*This text is essential reading for all peace and justice activists. -James Petras, Author and Bartle Professor (Emeritus) of Sociology at Binghamton University, New York, Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization.*

*Tim Anderson's important new book, titled "The Dirty War on Syria" discusses US naked aggression - "rely(ing) on a level of mass disinformation not seen in living memory," he explains.*

*ISIS is the pretext for endless war without mercy, Assad the target, regime change the objective, wanting pro-Western puppet governance replacing Syrian sovereign independence.*

*There's nothing civil about war in Syria, raped by US imperialism, partnered with rogue allies. Anderson's book is essential reading to understand what's going on. -Stephen Lendman, Distinguished Author and Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Host of the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network.*

*Professor Anderson demonstrates unequivocally through carefully documented research that America's "Moderate Opposition" are bona fide Al Qaeda affiliated terrorists created and protected by the US and its allies, recruited and trained by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, in liaison with Washington and Brussels.*

*Through careful analysis, professor Anderson reveals the "unspoken truth": the "war on terrorism" is fake, the United States is a "State sponsor of terrorism" involved in a criminal undertaking. Michel Chossudovsky, Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization, Professor of Economics (Emeritus), University of Ottawa.*

*Anderson's excellent book is required reading for those wanting to know the true story of the imperialist proxy war waged on Syria by the U.S. and its Western and Middle Eastern puppet states. This account could also be titled "How to Destroy a Country and Lie About it". Of course Syria is only one in a long line of countries destroyed by Washington in the Middle East and all over the Global South for more than a century.*

*Anderson's analysis is particularly useful for dissecting the propaganda war waged by the U.S. to hide its active support for the vicious Islamic fundamentalists it is using in Syria. In*

*spreading this propaganda the U.S. has been aided not only by the West's mainstream press but also by its prominent so-called human rights organizations.* Asad Ismi, International Affairs Correspondent for The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Monitor.

To order this book directly from Global Research, [click here](#).

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