

# Adopt policy of inclusiveness

**Leaders from the main political parties profess to abhor racism. But this cherished bipartisanship is in danger of fracturing**



GEORGE MEGALOGENIS

As Australia faces the global virus of xenophobia, the country's early history provides a warning of the social and economic costs of isolation.

Australia was one of the richest settlements on earth when it was a British colony with open borders in the 19th century. But it retreated when it became an independent nation in 1901, and it endured almost half a century of economic stagnation before it opened its doors again to mass immigration after World War II.

The leaders of the main political parties continue to support an expansive immigration programme and profess to abhor racism. But this cherished bipartisanship is in danger of fracturing.

A set of controversies involving race threatens to make the next federal election — due later this year or early next year — the most

divisive in a generation. The conservative government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has been exploiting racial disharmony in a bid to shore up its older, whiter electoral base.

But the political benefits for the conservatives of a racially charged campaign are not as clear-cut as they once were. The Labour Party would probably win an election fought along racial lines because of demographic trends: More than half the population is made up of immigrants, their children and indigenous Australians. The younger, more ethnically diverse electorate tends to lean toward Labour.

So Labour has a strong incentive to make the coming campaign season an explicit contest between diversity and nativism. And in facing down the conservatives on race, Labour has the opportunity to reaffirm Australia's position as a global model for openness.

Immigration has been responsible for more than half the nation's population growth between 1996 and 2016. Last year, immigrants accounted for 63 per cent of growth. This boom prompted the first of three big controversies over race.

Immigrants are being blamed by

**One strategic goal for Labour would be to win over Chinese-Australian conservatives. The Turnbull government would likely lose power if a handful of cosmopolitan electorates in Sydney and Melbourne, where the Chinese-born cluster, swung to Labour.**

grants already here and encourage potential immigrants to bypass Australia and settle in more welcoming nations like Canada and New Zealand.

When it comes to refugees, the second issue touching on race, the government is seeking to exploit divisions on the Labour side between the pragmatists in Parliament who want to wait until after the election to close the Pacific Island detention camps and the party members who want to bring the refugees home immediately.

The third controversy is not of Australia's making but could damage social cohesion if it is mishandled. The whole country is wary of Beijing's attempt to influence political and academic debate in Australia, and politicians are working on bipartisan legislation against foreign interference. The challenge for the main parties is to assure Chinese-Australians that they are not being targeted; on the contrary, political leaders should make clear that these measures are for the benefit of all Australians, including those of Chinese descent. Australia's argument is with the Communist Party of China, not the Chinese people here.

The Labour incentive matters here. Australia's electorally increasingly a full attack about race. Labour to refugee p... tant, keepi... migrants, e... the most v... economica... The lead... Shorten, sh... to resettle... been stranc... Nauru for... The refuge... supposed... arrivals. Bu... their well-... internation... If Shorte... on refugee... he would... the divisi... ment on th... program, ... those like... the curren... want to sh... of new arr...

CIVILIAN'S TRIBUNE

## Address your problems first



European Parliament doesn't have any right to comment on Bahrain. In the first place, they should find solutions to the problems they face. Now all European countries are fighting over the migrant issue with no signs of reaching a solution. Many migrants are leading a sub-standard life in temporary camps and nothing is being done to address their problems. They too have human rights and they too have right to decent living. Now Italy is fighting with Spain where as Austria and Hungary are totally indifferent on the migrant issue. German government is showing some generosity but people are not very happy to welcome refugees. This situation should change. The rich club with a total GDP of close to

\$20 trillion can do a lot to rescue refugees from the current ordeal. America and Europe should realize that the existing problems in Mideast and other parts of Asia were caused by themselves. The origin of present issues can be traced back to colonial exploitation carried out in these countries. So European parliamentarians, instead of making comments on other nations do something for refugees. You are the people, who cheated Turkey on migrant issues and hence don't have any credibility to speak to nations outside the EU on human rights records. Please stop this practice and concentrate on your problems.

Saad Ullah

## 'Stopping barbarians'

*They are singled out for rebuke by the Chinese gov*



YI-ZHENG LIAN

More than two dozen of Hong Kong's young pro-democracy activists have been convicted of minor offences in recent weeks, and some have received lengthy jail terms. Most are being put away for their involvement in the so-called Fishball Revolution, a spontaneous protest that turned violent on the first night of Chinese New Year in 2016 in the popular shopping district of Mong Kok.

On June 11, Edward Leung, the charismatic former spokesman of a young party that has called for Hong Kong's independence from mainland China, was given a six-year jail sentence for mere skirmishes with the police. He is one of the leading figures among those known here as "localists": activists, many of them separatists, who cut their political teeth during the 2014 "Umbrella Movement."

That night in early 2016 Leung and colleagues from his party, Hong Kong Indigenous, rose to the defense of street hawkers selling fish balls and other delicacies to New Year revelers as food inspectors tried to clear them out, in front of police officers standing by. In April, during a hearing at his trial, Leung said that he had confronted an officer who was manhandling a

female protester.

He was arrested and charged with attacking the police, rioting (two counts) and, a far more serious offense, instigating a riot. (He also pleaded guilty to hitting and kicking an officer.) In the end, Leung was found guilty of one count of rioting, even though witnesses say that his skirmishes with the police happened before the rioting proper even began.

More problematic still is the government's abusive application of the law against him and other localists. To my knowledge, Hong Kong courts had not heard one case of politically motivated rioting since 1967. That year, a minor labour dispute in a factory quickly ballooned into full-blown chaos as communist unionists, students of communist-controlled schools and employees of communist media, banks and trading companies took to the streets against the British colonial government. Local Maoist radicals seized on that moment to try to bring the Cultural Revolution to Hong Kong — with terrorism. During the roughly six months that the riots lasted, some 1,100 bombs (and many more fake ones) were planted throughout the city. More than 50 people died and some 800 people were injured.

Leung was convicted of rioting under the 1970 Public Order Ordinance, a holdover from colonial days that defines a riot very broadly, as an "unlawful assembly" that leads to a "breach of the peace." Reacting to Leung's sentence on June 11 — which he called "extreme" — Chris Patten, Hong Kong's last governor before the British



Many top leaders of Umbrella Movement

handed the city to China complained that the colonial had amended the ordinance in the 1990s to limit the risk that applied abusively. But, Pat Chinese government rev changes soon after the hand... That these provisions ar... wielded against localists i... of how vexing recent calls... autonomy for Hong Kong l...