

The Coalition's politics of fear a tried and true election recipe

By *Bilal Cleland*

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In a statement obtained by the ABC, Clive Palmer said his United Australia Party (UAP) ... amassed enough votes to substantially help the Libs and Nats through preference flow...

Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek told the ABC News panel that she believed UAP had, in some way, influenced the election through its preference deals.

The politics of fear and division, with assistance from small parties, was used to keep the conservatives in power for two decades by Menzies, and has now been successfully recycled, writes [Bilal Cleland](#).

Protecting the ruling Liberal Party

Many voters were surprised at the wide variety of racist, white supremacist and Islamophobic parties offering themselves for the May 2019 Federal Election.

They have all directed their preferences to the Liberal-National Coalition.

One Nation and the UAP of Palmer were open about their role — to [garner votes which might go to the ALP and direct them to the Coalition](#):

Palmed off. <https://t.co/fNUrEkULGW>

— PEDESTRIAN.TV
(@pedestriandaily) [May 18, 2019](#)

The Murdoch press also [reported](#) that

'One Nation and Clive Palmer's United Australia Party gathered enough votes to help the Coalition retain power through their preferences...'

This use of fear campaigns and small parties was used to keep the conservatives in power from 1949 to 1972. Fear and division were the two main ingredients of the concoction.

Fear of bank nationalisation

The Liberal Party which former PM [Robert Menzies](#) founded came into its own in the 1949 Election with the great hysteria which was worked up over bank nationalisation.

In a speech in Sydney Town Hall within days of the announcement of the policy, [Menzies said](#) it was part of "the Chifley pattern" of "coming dictatorship in Australia".

The banks, big business – supported by prominent Catholics like [Archbishop Duhig](#) in Brisbane who preached that a vote for the "socialist" ALP was inconsistent with Catholic doctrines – combined to bring Menzies to power.

This [barrage, combined with fear of the Communists](#), frightened many lower-middle-class voters who may well have voted Labor in 1943 and 1946.

Fear of Communism

Similar to the "[War on Terror](#)" of the 2000s, the "[Communist Threat](#)" was dominant in this period.

As the belief was that there would soon be another world war, Menzies

and the Liberals said that civil rights would have to take second place.

In the atmosphere of fear with the coming of the [Korean War](#), militant unions demanding higher pay and better working conditions were typically attacked as communists and a threat to national security.

Menzies in September 1950, forced an [anti-communist Bill](#) through the House of Representatives. Then in March 1951, the High Court declared the Act invalid, so in April, the Liberals held a Referendum asking for Constitutional powers to ban communism. The intended legislation required "named" communists to prove their innocence, a reversal of the most basic principle of British law.

The Referendum was [narrowly defeated](#).

The creation of fear of the ALP

The Labor Party was thought to be close to winning the 1954 Election when [Vladimir Petrov](#) and his wife defected from the Soviet Embassy in Canberra.

Menzies claimed that there was evidence of a Soviet spy ring in Australia, including members of the Leader of the ALP [Dr Evatt](#)'s staff. Dr Evatt became quite sure that the whole incident had been manufactured by Menzies to help the Liberals win the May 1954 election.

The right-wing Catholic section of the ALP consequently split from the Party and established the anti-communist [Democratic Labor Party](#).

By hiving off a section of working-class voters, with the support of a

section of the Catholic Church and [The Catholic Social Studies Movement of B A Santamaria](#), the DLP preferences kept the Liberals in power for almost two decades. The political propaganda of the period portrayed the ALP as being in bed with Communism and undermining national security.

The end of the Cold War and the decline of the DLP after Gough Whitlam's victory in 1972, led to many of the Catholic supporters of "The Movement" joining the traditionally Protestant Liberals. [Tony Abbott](#) was one of the most prominent of these members.

In case you missed it - Abbott, Santamaria and Catholic Liberals - Eureka Street <http://t.co/fWDOhKq9QJ>

— silver (@silverscenes) [May 24, 2014](#)

A sound technique

The division created in the working class supporters of the ALP by stoking fears of world Communism and suspicion of the Labor Party itself delivered decades of rule to the Liberal Party in Australia.

A section of conservative opinion is today stoking fears of refugees, Muslims and African immigrants to do the same job.

One Nation has transformed from stoking fear of Asian immigrants swamping Australia 20 years ago, to the

current anti-Muslim rhetoric of the American white supremacist swamps.

The ABC [reported](#):

'A Facebook account in the name of United Australia Party (UAP) candidate Tony Hanley made posts calling Saudi Arabians "tea towel heads" and said the children of taxi drivers were "future terrorists".'

Although [Palmer criticised this as "not acceptable"](#), his "Make Australia Great" Trumpianism focused on distrust of politicians and addressing economic hardship by cutting taxes and raising spending, was typically populist.

The fear factor has worked for conservatives for many years. It is a tried and true recipe.

We must try to make it fail this time, although it seems to have worked this May.

The Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison government has blood on its hands.

It has, over the years, whipped up fear and hatred - using it as a political tool. There are consequences. The emotions they stir up feed the hatred and bigotry of the lowest amongst us.

[#ElectionNow #auspol pic.twitter.com/F02snfj](#)

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— [\[redacted\]](#)
[\[redacted\]](#)
(@sbcbooks) [March](#)
[16, 2019](#)

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If the words are
his, he should
take a flying
leap at his own
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Federal
election 2019:
Facebook
page linked to
Clive Palmer
party candidate
Tony Hanley
mocked
women,
Muslims before
deletion
[https://t.co/1Du
U02OApT](https://t.co/1DuU02OApT) via
[@abcnews](#)

— [\[redacted\]](#) Karen
Joyce (@photo
ntrace) [May 3,](#)
[2019](#)