

ELECTION 2019 SOUTH AFRICA

Change and stability in South Africa's democracy

edited by Collette Schulz-Herzenberg
and Roger Southall



2019 ELECTIONS
SOUTH AFRICA

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Contents

Preface	vii
List of contributors.....	ix
Statistical note	x
List of abbreviations	xii
1. Introduction: The South African elections of 2019 <i>Collette Schulz-Herzenberg and Roger Southall</i>	1
2. South African democracy at risk? The troubled context of the 2019 general elections <i>Roger Southall</i>	12
3. Credible but flawed: The management of the elections <i>Kealeboga J. Maphunye</i>	32
4. Trends in voter participation: registration, turnout and the disengaging electorate <i>Collette Schulz-Herzenberg</i>	44
5. A campaign born of desperation: The 'good ANC' battles the 'bad ANC' in the electoral last chance saloon <i>Anthony Butler</i>	66
6. The Democratic Alliance at a crossroads: The quest for Afro-liberalism <i>Zwelethu Jolobe</i>	83
7. The Economic Freedom Fighters: Authoritarian or democratic contestant? <i>Benjamin Roberts</i>	97
8. The smaller parties: Who's in and who's out? <i>Cherrel Africa</i>	113

is interpreted as the consequence of an internal reconfiguration, necessary for an alternative liberal interpretation, ie, an African liberal agenda, then this is a temporary setback – voters who went to the Freedom Front Plus were never going to accept this version of liberalism. Events after the election suggest the party is heading for troubled waters. Jonathan Moakes, the party's campaign manager, resigned. His resignation letter portrayed the image of a party on the brink of a major internal battle. The following passage is worth noting:

'It is with great sadness that I have witnessed this sense of care being slowly eroded by some over the past number of years... The culture and ethos we once had and protected is in peril right now with care for and support of our colleagues often deprioritised by a toxic, abnormal environment. Internal fights, breaking of trust, disunity and inability to manage internal issues inside the party have become the norm.'³⁶

In many ways, this is the picture painted by Ngwenya and Patricia de Lille – of a political party in trouble. For the latter, her appointment as a cabinet minister may suggest she has won the war with the DA. Gwen Ngwenya's refusal to take up a seat in parliament speaks volumes. It suggests that the Maimane group has won the battle and are in a good position at winning the war. But it is a war in which no DA constituency has an interest.

The Economic Freedom Fighters: Authoritarian or democratic contestant?

Benjamin Roberts

The general elections of 2019 represented a critical test for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), formed in mid-2013 following the expulsion of former African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) president Julius Malema and his colleagues from the ruling party. It asked whether the party could further consolidate the impressive achievements of its electoral debut in 2014, when it won 6.35% of the national vote, 25 seats in the National Assembly and the rank of third-largest party. Subsequently, the EFF performed strongly in the 2016 municipal elections, notably in key metropolitan areas, where hung elections led to the formation of coalition administrations in which the party played a king-making role. As Election 2019 approached, opinion polls suggested that the EFF would be the only party among the big three that would increase its vote share.

Once the election campaign arrived, the EFF framed its appeal around the call for 'land and jobs now'. Armed with a book-length manifesto that symbolically conveyed a sense of purpose, the party leadership commanded extensive media attention while traversing the country filling stadiums at election rallies. A clear emphasis was placed on winning new voters in provinces with relatively low levels of support in 2014, most notably in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western and Eastern Cape.

Five years ago, the question was posed whether the 2014 results heralded the 'birth of a giant'.¹ While the 2019 outcomes were not as impressive as the party predicted, it secured significant growth and crossed the 10% threshold in the share of the national vote. Importantly, its progress was not

confined to its core bases of North West, Limpopo and Gauteng, and inroads were made in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga provinces in particular. If nothing else, the elections in 2019 demonstrated that the EFF has staying power.

Its improving electoral fortunes pose anew the question explored in this chapter as to whether the EFF's brand of populist politics constitutes a challenge to liberal democracy. On the one hand, the EFF's parliamentary campaigns challenging the predatory nature of the Jacob Zuma presidency won praise for defending the Constitution. On the other, some of the rough-house tactics it used brought disrepute to parliament, while its campaign for expropriation of the land without compensation was widely viewed as undermining constitutional values. Meanwhile, the party's commitment to democratic practice was put in question by the EFF's opaque party funding alongside its patriarchal tendencies, alleged sexual misconduct against female members, and its propensity for violence, prejudice and intimidation. How it conducts itself over the next five years will indicate whether the EFF is genuinely democratic – or authoritarian.

The establishment and ideological foundations of the EFF

The EFF was established in Soweto in late July 2013 by populist firebrand, Julius Malema. Its formation had been prompted by his expulsion from the ruling party in 2012 following his fall-out with President Zuma. Further impetus was provided by the August 2012 Marikana massacre, in which police opened fire on striking mineworkers in North West's platinum belt, killing 34 and injuring many more. This was a time of national crisis, and Malema strategically managed to position himself and his party as a champion of the poor and marginalised, and became one of the few established politicians whom the workers would listen to.² The EFF won considerable favour through gestures such as arranging legal representation and bail money for arrested mineworkers, and assisting with transport costs to attend the funerals of deceased workers.³ Upon final registration of the party in October 2013, the party held a launch in Marikana, attended by several thousand supporters.

The EFF frames itself as drawing ideologically from Marxist-Leninism, Frantz Fanon and Thomas Sankara – the revolutionary from Burkina Faso who was assassinated in 1987. However, a more local influence on the party can be found in the longstanding tradition of radical student and youth politics of Limpopo, characterised by 'a tendency to buck authority

and to engage in radical and militant political rhetoric'.⁴ This shaped the involvement of the future EFF leadership in the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the ANC Youth League (ANCYL).

Born into impoverished circumstances in Seshego, Limpopo, Malema, who was an ANC member by age nine, became COSAS provincial chair in 1997 and national president in 2001. During his tenure, COSAS adopted a brand of confrontational politics exemplified by its protest marches in Johannesburg in 2001 and 2002, when student demands for free education became violent, resulting in extensive property damage, theft and looting, drawing Nelson Mandela's condemnation. After COSAS, Malema became provincial chair of the Youth League in late 2003, and after consolidating his power base, successfully competed for national ANCYL president in 2008.⁵

The parliamentary stage

For a newcomer, the EFF was to make a remarkable impact in parliament during its first five-year term. In particular, Malema and his 24 fellow EFF parliamentarians adopted a resolute anti-Zuma stance, ensured land and education policy received critical attention, and attracted massive attention through their use of dramatic, noisy and often spectacular tactics in parliament. During the 2014 election campaign, the party leaders had promised a radical approach in the hallowed chamber, and this was undoubtedly delivered upon. As early as August 2014, the EFF embarked on a disruptive 'pay back the money' campaign in response to the public protector's report, *Secure in Comfort*, which deemed that Zuma had unduly benefited from state-sponsored security upgrades to his private Nkandla residence in northern KwaZulu-Natal. It complemented this by tirelessly demanding accountability from the ruling party through carefully planned disruptions to parliamentary proceedings (notably State of the Nation addresses), robust chanting, boundless points of order, violent skirmishes with parliamentary protection officers and joining walk-outs by opposition parties.⁶ However, because its tactics undermined the decorum and dignity of parliament, the EFF earned a reputation for being not merely disorderly and disrespectful, but as anarchic and fascist.⁷

The EFF's remarkable influence was illustrated at the ANC's December 2017 national conference. Worried about being outflanked to the left, the ruling party adopted an amended version of the EFF's demand for expropriation of land without compensation, subsequently securing support for a constitutional amendment to this effect in parliament in February

2018.⁸ In similar vein, the party claimed success for raising popular awareness of youth issues by the vigorous support it gave to the #FeesMustFall movement's appeal for free tertiary education and the crisis posed by youth unemployment. The EFF's strong focus on parliament was not without internal detractors, with claims that this had been to the detriment of extra-parliamentary, community-based engagements and mobilisation. Indeed, this led to officials breaking away from the party during its first couple of years of existence. Despite these internal ructions, the EFF maintains it has balanced its parliamentary work by progressively growing its community-based activities through local party structures.⁹

The 2016 municipal elections and its aftermath

Following its impressive debut in the 2014 election, the 2016 municipal elections on 3 August proved to be another source of celebration for the EFF. In its first local government showing, it managed to garner 8.2% of the proportional representation vote, which allowed it to play a strategic role in forging informal alliance agreements with the Democratic Alliance (DA) that saw the ANC losing control of three metropolitan municipalities. Although the EFF did not win control of any council through the vote, working with the centre-right DA to form minority governments elevated the party to the position of 'kingmaker' in key urban localities.

There was always likely to be a tense, if not strained, relationship between the EFF and DA given their appreciable ideological differences. The informal nature of these alliances meant that the minority metropolitan governments were established without commonly agreed-upon policy positions or operational rules. Robust political disagreements ensued over policy support for issues such as land expropriation, with the DA's lack of support for this in parliament leading to the EFF acting on its threats of unseating DA control of municipal governments. Most notably, it helped replace the mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay, Athol Trollip, with the United Democratic Movement's (UDM) Mongameli Bobani, a controversial figure who has since been investigated for alleged fraud, corruption and money-laundering, and has survived two motions of no-confidence since assuming power in 2018.¹⁰

The EFF leadership has proved astute in playing coalition dynamics to its advantage, and will continue to do so in coming years. While the DA has had the opportunity through opposition agreements to govern beyond the Western Cape, the EFF through its political manoeuvring appears to have

consolidated its role as a power-broker.

Leadership and internal tensions

Anthony Butler has maintained that one of central challenges confronting the EFF relates to the nature of its leadership, with a general dependence on Malema and his charisma to secure its support base.¹¹ Correspondingly, Malema's deputy, Floyd Shivambu, and national chairperson Advocate Dali Mpofu are not widely regarded as prospective successors. Party spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi certainly enjoys widespread popularity among supporters and has established a strong media profile, but lacks the campaigning heft to rival Malema. Otherwise, the two women in the top leadership, Leigh-Ann Mathys (treasurer general) and Hlengiwe Mkhali (deputy secretary-general), have played a largely background role, which speaks to broader gender dynamics within the party.

Although the party is quick to dismiss any claims of 'big leader' or cult personality surrounding Malema, the latter's dominance helped the party navigate through the inevitable trials experienced during the first six years of existence, and avoid fraught leadership contestations of the kind that have beleaguered other splinter parties, such as COPE. Even so, the EFF has experienced the factionalism that has plagued the ANC, which has contributed to a high degree of churning of its parliamentary representation. Average turnover of elected representatives in the National Assembly was 25% during the 2014–19 parliament, but for the EFF the corresponding figure stood at 64%.¹² While above average turnover could be expected due to the newness of the party, some have taken this as a reflection of the disciplinary consequences of individuals falling out with Malema. This is likely informed by several high-profile expulsions of members of parliament (MPs), and assertions that MP redeployments were political demotions rather than strategic acts aimed at strengthening provincial or local representation.¹³

Female Fighters: Roses or revolutionaries?

Given the party's distinctly militaristic and authoritarian populist character, the EFF has been accused by critics of being inherently patriarchal. The party openly acknowledges that it has struggled to attract the support of female voters. In response, in addition to adopting policy positions formally reflective of the needs of women, it has adopted a 50% 'zebra approach' to gender representation in party structures and parliamentary

deployment decisions.¹⁴ Malema has also stressed the presence of women in the senior power structures of the party. For instance, two out of seven positions in the party's central command team are occupied by female party representatives (Leigh-Ann Mathys and Hlengiwe Mkhali), while EFF Gauteng chairperson, Mandisa Mashego, is another well-known senior figure. Meanwhile, there is some evidence of a significant leadership role played by women in the lower levels of the party's structures, notably during campaigning by ward and student branches. The participation of thousands of female EFF activists during the party's Women's March against gender-based violence during the 2019 campaign would seem to testify that despite its reputation, the EFF has considerable ability to attract female party membership.

Against this, major concerns have been raised about the party's misogynistic tendencies since its formation.¹⁵ Cases of alleged abuse have surfaced, leading one female party member to state in her Master's thesis that the party has demonstrated a 'failure to hold toxic and violent forms of patriarchy to account within its own ranks'.¹⁶ This culture is said to be prevalent within the party, and complaints range from allegations of male EFF party members attempting to monopolise leadership positions, female candidates being subjected to emotional abuse on social media and the failure to adequately investigate internal accusations of sexual violence against male leaders.

These tendencies are by no means confined to internal politics. In a prominent case during the 2019 election campaign, Karima Brown, a leading journalist, opened a case of intimidation against the EFF and its leadership in the Gauteng High Court. This followed death and rape threats she received from EFF 'ground forces' after Julius Malema posted her cell phone number on his Twitter feed without her prior consent. Other verbal attacks and intimidation by EFF leaders and supporters against well-known female investigative journalists has been registered.¹⁷

Painting campuses red

Through its provincial and students' commands, the EFF has continued to place strong emphasis on targeting institutions of higher learning across the country. This has met with substantial success, resulting in the party winning student representative council (SRC) leadership elections at a range of campuses in the two years prior to the 2019 general elections. The party secured victories in seven of the country's 26 universities in 2017,

while the 2018 SRC elections witnessed decisive upsets in universities in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.¹⁸

National president of the EFF students' command, Phuti Peter Keetse, attributed these victories to a policy message that is increasingly resonating with students, namely free quality education. He maintained that the party had 'pressured universities to open their gates to students. And these (students) are the people who are voting for us now'.¹⁹ However, these SRC gains have not always endured. In Gauteng, the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA), allied to the ANC, won back the University of the Witwatersrand from the EFF in 2018, while the South African Students Congress (SASCO) reclaimed the Vaal University of Technology in 2019.²⁰ Nonetheless, the rising institutional presence of the red berets at universities had a major political effect on the governance of higher education, although whether this translated into votes in Election 2019 remains debatable.

Nonetheless, it was undeniable that the wins on campuses encouraged the EFF as it embarked on robust campaigning to win the youth vote beyond its base in Limpopo, North West and Gauteng. With Malema calling for the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 years, the party sought to expand its reach beyond campuses to high schools, in an effort to recruit the next generation of party 'fighters' among senior learners.²¹

The party manifesto

Attended by thousands of red-clad members of the 'ground force', the launch of the EFF manifesto took place on 2 February 2019 in Soshanguve's Giant Stadium in Tshwane, a few days after the Electoral Commission held its final voter registration weekend. The highly detailed, 169-page 'people's manifesto' was framed on the cover by the simple but urgent theme of 'Our land and jobs now!'²² The document was designed to appeal to the party's core constituencies, notably unemployed adults, black youth and the poor, drawing heavily from the party's founding manifesto centred around 'economic freedom in our lifetime'.²³

The EFF drew attention to persisting economic inequalities despite political freedom, the shortcomings of the ruling party and the urgency of addressing issues such as landlessness and joblessness. As Malema declared in his speech at the launch event: 'We cannot postpone the land question. We cannot postpone the jobs question. It must happen now. We don't want to be told we will get land in 2030. We don't want to be told we will get jobs in 2030. We want jobs now. We are hungry now. We want to eat now.'²⁴

Top priority was the amendment of section 25 of the Constitution to empower the state to expropriate land without compensation, together with the progressive state custodianship of land. This was accompanied by a call for the nationalisation of mines, the Reserve Bank and game reserves; the renationalisation of Sasol and Iscor; increasing government's stake in Telkom to 60%; and the establishment of state-owned banks.²⁵ The manifesto also called for the aggressive pursuit of affirmative action, including a special emphasis on women and youth empowerment. The party's job creation initiatives focused on large-scale, protected, state-led industrial development, special economic zones, local beneficiation of mineral resources, and strategic support for small- and medium-sized enterprises. This would be reinforced by quotas on the local procurement of goods and services, import substitution mechanisms and a minimum wage of R4,500 per month for full-time workers, rising up to R12,500 per month for mineworkers.

On social spend, the promise of doubling the value of social grants was a popular electoral pledge, in addition to committing to improving basic education, progression rates, and investments in better teaching and school infrastructure and safety, as well as lauded suggestions such as raising pass rates in mathematics from 30% to 50%.²⁶ While the party maintained a predictable commitment to universal health coverage and improving life expectancy, it also contained ambitious plans such as ensuring that 'each district in South Africa has a regional or tertiary hospital with a minimum of 450 beds, open 24 hours a day, with internal medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology and general surgeons, by 2022'.²⁷ Meanwhile, the manifesto included a chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) rights, containing eight core recommendations, designed to appeal to those particular constituencies.

The EFF's founding manifesto was an aspirational text rather than an inherently practical one and was criticised as 'bold, seemingly uncosted' and 'full of grandiose promises to the electorate'. Thus judgement applied equally – if not more so – to its 2019 version.²⁸ Nonetheless, the manifesto was pitched at conveying a sense of purpose to the party's core base that the EFF regards itself a government in waiting with an in-depth programme of action.

Growing the brand

Even though the 2019 electoral campaign was generally characterised as

lacklustre, there was a shared belief that the EFF would increase its support, even though there were doubts about whether it would cross the symbolic 10% of votes. Leading up to the election, the omens were largely favourable for such an outcome. The 2016 municipal elections performance saw national party support rise to 8% from just over 6% in 2014, and public opinion polls placed support for the EFF in the 9–15% range.²⁹

A variety of reasons were put forward for this expected surge in support. These included the successful campaign to place the land question firmly on the national and electoral agenda and to strongly champion the cause of the unemployed through the promise of job creation. By adopting a nationalistic, pro-black, pro-poor agenda, as summed up in the slogan 'Our land and jobs now', the EFF was portrayed as resonating with poorer constituencies that were all disillusioned with the failure of the ANC to deliver on electoral promises. The party also ran a highly visible, appealing and generally successful social media campaign. Against this, it was widely surmised that there were significant obstacles to the party's translating its potential appeal into votes.

As Schulz-Herzenberg outlines in Chapter 4, there was a significant tapering off in registration among those aged 18–19 years and in their 20s. This had an instrumental effect on turnout among a cohort that currently represents approximately half of the voting age population. Given that the EFF support base remains a predominantly youthful one, and that the electoral campaign has focused attention on consolidating and expanding this core voting bloc, this was a major barrier to the party expanding its electoral footprint.

A second key issue was whether current and prospective EFF voters would overlook the more troubling aspects of the party's recent record. Both before and during the electoral campaign, the EFF was subject of negative publicity as a result of financial scandals and factional squabbles of the sort that also afflicted the ANC. As described above, the party was tainted by its alleged involvement in the looting of millions of rands from VBS Mutual Bank, while Malema remained haunted by allegations of his centrality to corruption issues in Limpopo during his ANC Youth League days.

The VBS allegations surfaced in October 2018, when a report entitled 'The Great Bank Heist' revealed that the bank had become insolvent due to approximately R1.8 billion being supposedly stolen by its owners, managers and the politically connected over a three-year period. Ongoing investigations have suggested that Sgameka Projects, which is owned by

Floyd Shivambu's brother, Brian, received R16 million of illegal funds from VBS, with the EFF allegedly benefiting from a sizeable share through various channels.³⁰ Despite vehement denials by party leaders, these unfolding claims are likely to be a critical test for the EFF over the next term. The campaign period also saw Malema's relationship with alleged cigarette smuggler Adriano Mazzotti come under the spotlight. Having previously donated R200,000 to the EFF through his company Carnilinx, this time the focus was on Mazzotti's rental of luxury family property to Malema's wife, Mantwa. Elitism also surfaced as a discussion point, with Malema's membership of the exclusive, Sandton-based Inanda Club being contrasted against the party's socialist, revolutionary, pro-poor ideological positioning.³¹

Compounding these concerns were claims of misuse of party funds by party members. First, former EFF parliamentarian, Thembinkosi Rawula, accused the top leadership via Facebook of running a dictatorship in relation to party funding.³² This was followed by the claims of EFF MP, Zolile Xalisa, who alleged in his resignation letter that Malema had been abusing funds and administering the party 'like his bedroom, kitchen, toilet and yacht'.³³ The Rawula-Xalisa incidents recalled the case of Andile Mngxitama, who, together with two other EFF parliamentarians, had been expelled from the party in April 2015 after making allegations of misappropriation of party funds by the leadership, resulting in the formation of Black First Land First (BLF), which sought to outflank the EFF from the black nationalist left during the 2019 election campaign.³⁴

The ill-feeling between the EFF and BLF was plain for all to see when in early April 2019, EFF members threw chairs at their rivals. Although the EFF leadership swiftly distanced itself from these antics on Twitter, many recalled how followers of Malema during his ANC Youth League days had developed chair-throwing into an art form.

Coalition talk: Reds in the bed?

As the 2019 campaign progressed, there was intense speculation about the possibility and character of post-election coalitions.³⁵ With polls pointing to dwindling ANC and DA support in contrast to growing EFF numbers, reference to the party as a potential 'kingmaker' continually surfaced as election day drew nearer. However, because the coalitions of convenience, which had been forged the DA and EFF in Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Nelson Mandela metropolitan municipalities, had by 2018 come under

major strain, the attention now gravitated towards the prospect of ANC and EFF coalitions.

There were also musings about whether the EFF might consider re-joining the ANC following the election. This was fuelled by a number of incidents. First, ANC deputy president, David Mabuza, posted a photograph on Twitter of a light-hearted moment with Malema at an Easter weekend church service in Zion City, Moria. This was interpreted by some as an attempt to woo Malema back into the ANC fold, leading opposition parties to declare that a vote for the ANC was equivalent to a vote for the EFF.³⁶ Second, ANC secretary-general, Ace Magashule, directly approached Malema about re-joining the party. This was seen as an effort to forge links with an ANC faction that was likely to be under increasing threat under a Ramaphosa administration. In contrast, there were no evident attempts of an approach to the EFF by Ramaphosa, perhaps because – as one journalist recalled – 'the relationship between Ramaphosa and Malema was coloured by the fact that it was Ramaphosa who had presided over the disciplinary hearing that led to Malema's expulsion from the party [ANC]'.³⁷

The commander-in-chief made his position on these matters abundantly clear at various rallies and media engagements. The points he stressed were:

- The party remained focused on securing outright wins in Gauteng, North West and Limpopo, but was open to inter-party coalition discussions;
- While the EFF entered into support agreements rather than formal coalitions following the 2016 elections, it was now considering more formalised coalitions;
- A coalition with the DA was deemed 'impossible', because of its personalised, anti-EFF, anti-ANC election campaign. This had opened the door to the possibility of a coalition with the ANC;
- However, the EFF would not countenance a return of the EFF to the ANC, as the latter was 'a sinking ship'. The EFF's preference was to continue to prioritise the building of 'a sustainable entity' independent of the ruling party;
- The negotiation of any coalition would involve hard bargaining with policy-related conditions attached, such as endorsement of the party's stance on land expropriation without compensation.³⁸

Table 7.1: EFF national election results as % of total valid votes, 2014 and 2019 compared

Province	2014 provincial results			2019 provincial results			Change	
	Party votes	All valid votes	% party votes	Party votes	All valid votes	% party votes	Party votes	% party votes
Eastern Cape	84,783	2,243,497	3.8	155,899	2,020,527	7.7	+71,116	+3.9
Free State	81,559	1,034,337	7.9	105,228	905,976	11.6	+23,669	+3.7
Gauteng	471,074	4,592,219	10.3	607,577	4,510,019	13.5	+136,503	+3.2
KwaZulu-Natal	76,384	3,874,883	1.9	363,537	3,649,966	10.0	+287,153	+8.0
Limpopo	156,488	1,523,169	10.3	198,439	1,510,568	13.1	+41,951	+2.9
Mpumalanga	85,203	1,385,407	6.2	146,426	1,271,979	11.5	+61,223	+5.4
North West	141,150	1,126,691	12.5	169,748	994,064	17.1	+28,598	+4.5
Northern Cape	22,083	436,065	5.1	39,879	410,842	9.7	+17,796	+4.6
Western Cape	50,280	2,168,147	2.3	88,426	2,112,136	4.2	+38,146	+1.9
Out of Country	255	18,132	1.4	765	19,882	3.8	+510	+2.4
Total	1,169,259	18,402,497	6.4	1,875,924	17,405,959	10.8	+706,665	+4.4

The election result: An enduring opposition

EFF was the party that grew the most relative to the 2014 electoral results. The party's national support increased by 4.4% and 706,665 votes to give it a total of 1.9 million votes and 10.8% of all valid votes (Table 7.1), which stands in stark contrast to the patterns observed for the ANC and DA. Support for the EFF increased in all nine provinces over the 2014–19 period, and even in the overseas vote. This improvement is evident both in terms of the absolute number of votes and the percentage of votes secured (last two columns of Table 7.1). These gains were not as emphatic as promised by the party and certain pre-election polls. However, they clearly demonstrated that the EFF has escaped the fate of other splinter parties and produced the kind of growth that other parties would envy.

In its first two electoral showings in 2014 and 2016, the core of the EFF's national support had resided in the northern provinces of North West, Limpopo and Gauteng. In 2019 the party consolidated its growth in these localities, with the share of all party votes in these provinces rising to 17% in North West and 13% in both Gauteng and Limpopo. The most notable change in national support for the party came from KwaZulu-Natal,

where it rose from a meagre 1.9% in 2014 to a 10% in 2019. This translates into a gain of nearly 300,000 votes, accounting for 19% of the 1.9 million EFF national votes, placing it second after Gauteng (32% of EFF national votes). This reflected substantial investments the EFF had made in building structures at branch, regional and provincial levels in the province, which were to prove critical in its grassroots mobilisation of supporters to register and vote.³⁹ This, coupled with aggressive campaigning in the province, often involving strongly critical statements about racism and privilege among Indian and white South Africans, rewarded the party handsomely. Modest inroads were also made nationally in Mpumalanga.

EFF representation in the National Assembly has increased from 25 to 44 seats as an outcome of the election, a gain equal in number to the 19 seats lost by the ANC. Among the new EFF parliamentarians are the head of the EFF student command, Peter Keetse, prominent #FeesMustFall campaigners Naledi Chirwa and Vuyani Pambo, as well as well-known musician Brian "Ringo" Madlingozi. The red berets' increased presence will enhance its capacity to use parliament as a forum for promoting its political messages, challenging Ramaphosa and the ANC on its policies and performance, and further exposing the general public to its populist brand of politics. In post-election press briefings, the EFF pledged to use the forthcoming parliament to continue to push motions for constitutional amendment to enable land expropriation without compensation, the nationalisation of banks and free higher education.⁴⁰

The growth in national EFF support was mirrored in the provincial electoral results (Table 7.2). On aggregate, provincial support rose from 6.3% of valid party votes to 11.3% between 2014 and 2019. The 1.13 million votes secured in 2014 rose by close to 800,000 votes in 2019 to give the party a tally of 1.91 million provincial votes. As in the national ballot, all provinces recorded growth in EFF support. Higher than average increases in the percentage of provincial votes over the 2014–19 period were evident in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and North West. The dominant share of new EFF votes again came from KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, accounting for around 450,000 out of the 780,000. From a party-ranking perspective, the EFF managed to retain its position as official opposition in the North West and Limpopo legislatures, while also displacing the DA from this position in Mpumalanga, having more than doubled its share of the provincial vote from 6.3% to 12.8% between the two elections.

The 2019 election results did not necessitate the formation of coalitions,

Table 7.2: EFF provincial election results as % of total valid votes, 2014 and 2019 compared

Province	2014 provincial results			2019 provincial results			Change	
	Party votes	All valid votes	% party votes	Party votes	All valid votes	% party votes	Party votes	% party votes
Eastern Cape	75,776	2,180,464	3.5	154,821	1,974,181	7.8	+79,045	+4.4
Free State	82,674	1,014,663	8.2	111,427	885,677	12.6	+28,753	+4.4
Gauteng	451,318	4,382,163	10.3	629,096	4,295,026	14.6	+177,778	+4.3
KwaZulu-Natal	70,823	3,836,009	1.9	349,050	3,594,119	9.7	+278,227	+7.9
Limpopo	156,982	1,462,186	10.7	209,488	1,452,158	14.4	+52,506	+3.7
Mpumalanga	83,589	1,336,259	6.3	155,573	1,216,522	12.8	+71,997	+6.5
North West	143,765	1,088,450	13.2	178,013	954,853	18.6	+34,330	+5.4
Northern Cape	20,951	422,431	5.0	38,527	396,679	9.7	+17,576	+4.8
Western Cape	44,762	2,121,153	2.1	83,074	2,057,097	4.0	+38,312	+1.9
Total	1,130,640	17,843,778	6.3	1,909,069	16,826,312	11.3	+778,524	+5.0

but the 2021 municipal elections are not far off, and the EFF is strategically placed to reprise its role as king-maker, especially in metropolitan areas. In the week following the declaration of results, Malema gave a foretaste of what may come when he announced that a formal power-sharing deal was being negotiated with the DA regarding Gauteng municipal governance. The EFF was pushing for mayorship in Tshwane (Pretoria) in exchange for support for retaining the DA's City of Johannesburg mayor, Herman Mashaba.⁴¹ Malema also promised that the EFF would replace 'lazy councillors' and overhaul local EFF structures with the forthcoming municipal elections in mind. Attending the funeral of his grandmother, who passed away the weekend prior to election day, he also reiterated that he would never consider re-joining the ANC.

There are interesting, finer-grained, spatial dynamics that underlie the EFF electoral fortunes in 2019.⁴² For instance, in Mpumalanga, EFF support increased in five wards in eMalahleni municipality, especially in the townships of Thushanang and KwaGuqa and adjacent suburbs.⁴³ This municipality was badly affected by poor governance and financial mismanagement under former ANC premier, David Mabuza, resulting in high levels of indebtedness, underinvestment in water, electricity and other

service infrastructure, and talk of being placed under administration.⁴⁴ In KwaZulu-Natal, EFF electoral growth was concentrated in the southern parts of the province and among the urban, black electorate, to the detriment of the ANC. In the eThekweni metropolitan area, the EFF won increasing support in many areas apart from historically white and Indian localities. Apart from the factors already mentioned, factionalism and legitimacy crises in ANC provincial structures in the province, unhappiness over eThekweni mayor, Zandile Gumede, who faces corruption and money-laundering charges, and possible lower turnout among ANC supporters are all likely to have had some role in this result. By contrast, the more rural northern parts of the province were the site of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) resurgence, with more narrow EFF expansion.

Overall, the EFF's national support remains primarily urban-based, with 1.1 of the 1.9 million votes coming from urban voters, but there has been incontrovertible growth in rural areas too, with votes from rural, traditional-authority areas and rural commercial farmlands now accounting for nearly 40% of all EFF national votes.⁴⁵ In Gauteng, the EFF showed distinct upswings in support in the province's larger townships between the 2014 and 2019 elections. In places such as Soweto, Vosloorus, Katlehong and Thokoza, Soshanguve as well as KwaThema and Tsakane, support for the EFF grew impressively in the 5.8% to 7.0% range between the 2014 and 2019 provincial elections, although in Tembisa, support was unchanged.⁴⁶ These benefits came mostly at the ANC's expense, and since the aforementioned areas account collectively for 30% of registered voters in the province, it offers a clear sign that Gauteng will be a major battleground in the 2021 municipal elections.

Conclusion: Looking to a red horizon?

An examination of the EFF's goals and efforts at pursuing economic freedom and social justice through radical transformation, as well as its internal organisation and practices, points to a young party that is characterised by a complex and often contradictory hybrid of populist, authoritarian and democratic tendencies. This is manifest in the observed tensions between the party's defence of constitutionalism and the rule of law (at least in rhetoric), and the everyday practices and experiences in parliament, through internal structures and on social media, and at grassroots level in communities and across campuses. Such dynamics and undemocratic tendencies were evident during the 2019 elections campaign

and continue to inform discussion about the future prospects of the party.

Although the EFF has not grown to the extent that it poses a credible challenge to either the ANC or DA at provincial or national level, the election results do support the narrative of a party that is enjoying progressive growth and an entrenched place among the top three parties in the country. Due to the successes of its carefully thought-out strategies and tactics, EFF coalition politics are likely to continue to play out over coming years, most especially in the context of the 2021 municipal elections, where the battle for wards and municipalities is likely to be an intensely fought one. Continued EFF expansion is likely to be contingent on the outcomes of several factors playing out among the electorate. One is the matter of electoral registration and turnout among young South Africans under 35. If the pattern witnessed in the 2019 electoral context persists, and parties such as the EFF are unable to significantly encourage participation among youth cohorts, then the party is likely to face a ceiling in electoral growth. Another is the voting culture in the country, which still remains largely loyalist in character, even though abstention politics and to a lesser degree swing voting are on the rise.

This returns us to the bigger question of whether the populist brand of politics pursued to considerable effect by the EFF has had an adverse effect on efforts to consolidate liberal democracy and on the character of domestic politics.⁴⁷ The experience of the last five years has shown that democracy in South Africa is fragile, yet in some respects also remarkably resilient. Economic freedom is nonetheless a grave concern, especially given the stubbornly persistent triple bind of poverty, unemployment and inequality that continues to afflict South Africans, especially younger generations. The social discontent and insurgency that this has fostered is likely to continue to shape electoral politics, and parties such as the EFF will work tirelessly to capture the support and represent the voices of the socially disadvantaged. With young voters increasingly representing a growing share of the voting age population, this may offer a demographic dividend if the EFF continues to champion issues such as employment creation and redistributive policies, and the hopes vested in President Ramaphosa's 'new dawn' are not effectively delivered upon.

For now, the EFF remains the only party of note to the ideological left of the ANC. Whether its brand of populist-authoritarian politics will continue to attract poorer and socially marginalised segments of the electorate away from the ANC will do much to shape the pattern of the future.

8

The smaller parties: Who's in and who's out?

Cherrel Africa

South Africa has an electoral system designed to maximise representation. The barriers to setting up and registering new political parties are low, ensuring that a broad range of political parties can contest elections to gain representation. The run up to the 2019 polls saw the re-emergence of smaller parties after a period of decline in previous elections. This was primarily due to heightened frustrations with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA). Media attention focused on the fact that pre-election polls and several by-elections revealed that voters who had migrated to the DA from smaller parties such as the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and Freedom Front Plus (FF+) were returning.¹ Opinion polls also pointed to lowered support for the ANC across the provinces, and for the DA in the Western Cape.² The Western Cape and Gauteng were therefore identified as provinces with the possibility that no party would obtain an absolute majority, paving the way for smaller parties to emerge as so-called provincial kingmakers.³

In 2019 new smaller parties once again expected to benefit at the polls but they did not. The number of contesting parties in national elections increased from 16 in 1994, 19 in 1999, 21 in 2004, 26 in 2009, 29 in 2014 to 48 in 2019. A record number of parties also contested in the 2019 provincial elections with between 21 and 36 parties contesting in the different provinces. In the end, the three largest parties – the ANC, DA and EFF – obtained 89% of the vote at national level and all the provinces

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