

# EISA ELECTION RESOURCE CENTER



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A weekly review of the South African 2019 national and provincial elections

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## **WHY SMALL PARTIES MATTER IN SOUTH AFRICA'S DEMOCRACY**

WRITTEN BY NANCY HAKIZIMANA

Despite the sway the ANC holds in South African politics, there is no shortage of healthy democratic competition thanks to the number of smaller political parties that take part in national, provincial and municipal elections. Their significance is often underestimated, and it is often assumed that voting for them is irrelevant to the political context, a “wasted vote”. But, in recent times, it has become common to view a vote for a smaller party as a vote against the ruling party.

A recent poll by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) found that voter support for the ANC has decreased from 62.1% in 2014 to 54.7% in 2019. This corresponds with the number of seats the party lost in the 2014 national elections and 2016 local government elections, making room for smaller parties to enter the parliamentary fray.

Despite their lack of voter support, smaller parties hold relative negotiating power, not only because their elected members are in the position to act as whistleblowers, propose or challenge new bills, and fight state corruption, but because they are able to use their seats to bargain with larger parties. This was the case in the 2016 municipal elections when the Democratic Alliance (DA) won power in Nelson Mandela Bay through forming a coalition government with the

*Political parties:  
The voter's choice*

**WHY SMALL  
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African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the Congress of the People (Cope) and the Patriotic Alliance.

One of the first significant moments for smaller parties in South Africa's democratic era came in 1999, when Pan Africanist Congress member Patricia de Lille provided an arms deal dossier to Parliament that led to the prosecution of Tony Yengeni and Schabir Shaik. Similarly, in 2018, United Democratic Movement leader Bantu Holomisa shone a spotlight on possible corruption at the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) due to the mismanagement of government workers' pensions. This resulted in investigations by Parliament's committee on government spending, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and led to the passing of the PIC Amendment Bill in the National Assembly in February 2019.

Also in 2018, the Labour Amendment Bill, which was proposed by ACDP member Cheryllyn Dudley, was passed to allow for parental leave of 10 days; and the Inkatha Freedom Party was instrumental in ensuring the Medical Innovation Bill, also known as the Ambrosini Bill, was passed, which allows for prescription cannabis to be incorporated into other health laws.

Smaller parties such as Black First Land First can also play a pivotal role in generating debate around ideas and representing views that may not be raised by larger, more centrist parties. Given the degree of voter apathy displayed in previous elections, the generation of fresh debates in the South African political landscape in 2019 may well draw out some new voters or at the very least push traditional parties to examine their own policies more closely.

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## **A PARTY DIVIDED: THE ANC'S FACTIONS, FRICTIONS AND FUTURE**

**Written by Maite Dithebe and Sandile Khuboni**

Factionalism has been part of the ANC's DNA since its inception, but internal battles have become more pronounced and more public since the party's 2007 elective conference in Polokwane, when Jacob Zuma ousted Thabo Mbeki.

After Polokwane, according to Mukweda (2015), the party was divided at the national level into two identifiable factions of nationalists and communists. The infighting also led to the formation of the

Congress of the People, a breakaway party whose members were aligned with the losing faction. Increasingly, according to Lodge (2014), the divisions within the ANC were more about personal loyalty than differences in ideology. This led to what Beresford (2014) terms “political gate-keeping” by those who control opportunities and resources. During this period, factionalism took the form of purging rival members and rewarding patronage.

Provincially, the ANC became divided into two camps: the Premier League, comprising former Free State premier Ace Magashule, former Mpumalanga premier David Mabuza and former North West premier Supra Mahumapelo; and the Forces of Change, who emerged in reaction, seeking to wrest back control of the party to save its “soul”. The Premier League used its collective power to influence decisions in the ANC, including those affecting the party’s upper structures. The president and his premiers became untouchable, eventually undermining governance and the ANC’s own constitution and processes.

There was resonance of Polokwane at Nasrec in 2017, although the factions that year had different faces. The ANC was again divided down the middle, one camp behind Cyril Ramaphosa and the other vying for Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. The Ramaphosa faction might have narrowly won, but the ANC’s top six remained divided. The Premier League was weakened when Mabuza disassociated himself from his cohorts, casting himself as a champion of ANC “unity”. Magashule was the only member of the league to make it into the top 6, as secretary general.

What followed was a concerted campaign to convince South Africa that the ANC was united, but various contradictory messages from the top 6 indicated that this was not altogether true. Recently, the public and political rejection of certain individuals from the ANC’s national list of candidates caused controversy. The fault lines are emerging again as some party members openly support the removal of members implicated in corruption and state capture, while the individuals implicated are fighting for their survival. The shifting of the balance of power has left the supporters of the Premier League unprotected against corruption charges that have surfaced through the various commissions of inquiry into state corruption.

It is essential for the Ramaphosa faction’s survival that its members demonstrate to voters that they are different from the previous faction. They know that the party is compromised by having a member of the Premier League in such a powerful position, and that they will need to address issues of corruption and patronage strongly despite the divisions in party’s top leadership structures. They also know that if the infighting continues, it will threaten to undermine the organisation’s integrity and its ability to deliver on its electoral mandate.

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2019 ELECTIONS



# WHO'S OLD? WHO'S NEW?

*Who's vying for your vote and why?*

Since 1994, South Africa has seen fluctuations in the number of political parties that contest national elections. The 2019 elections are no exception.

A number of new parties will contest the 2019 elections, bringing the total to 48.

## IN THE LAST 2 DECADES:

### 1994

Parties that contested the 1994 elections and still exist today:

- African National Congress (ANC)
- Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)
- Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)
- African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)

### 2014

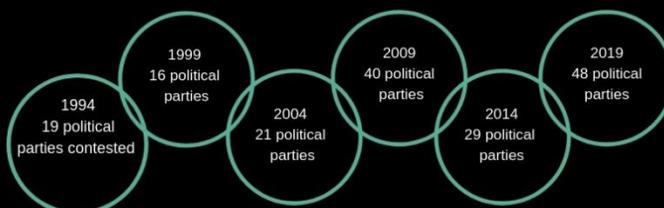
New parties with seats in Parliament:

- Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)
- National Freedom Party (NFP)
- African Independent Congress (AIC)
- Agang

### 2019

Newcomers on the ballot sheet:

- GOOD
- Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP)
- African Content Movement (ACM)
- Black Land First (BLF)
- Capitalist Party of South Africa (ZACP)
- African Transformation Movement (ATM)
- African Renaissance Unity Party (ARUP)
- Alliance for Transformation for All (ATA)
- Land Party
- Zenzeleni Progressive Movement (ZPM)



## WHY NOW? WHAT'S NEW?

### Common threads in new political party manifestos

- Land reform to favour historically disadvantaged South Africans
- Job creation
- Boost economy by encouraging entrepreneurship
- Rework public transport system
- Develop effective policies to combat corruption and crime in general



Did you know?  
There are 60% more political parties contesting the 2019 elections compared to the 1994 elections

## DECISION 2019: HAS THE DA REACHED A CEILING?

Written by **Thembelani Mazibuko**

Although the DA has managed to increase its voter share in every national election since 1994, recent political developments have prompted questions as to whether the party will continue growing. Under its former leader, Helen Zille, the DA transformed into a modern, effective political party. Zille also introduced a new generation of leaders. In 2015, in a move that was seen as an attempt to attract black African voters, Mmusi Maimane was elected DA leader. The 2016 municipal elections, Maimane's first election as the party's leader, was widely considered a success as the DA won a number of new mayoral positions.

*Figure 1: DA's growth in national and provincial elections*

Election	Total votes	Share of vote	Seats	Change in seats
1994	338 426	1.73%	7/400	N/A
1999	1 527 337	9.56%	38/400	+31
2004	1 931 201	12.37%	50/400	+12
2009	2 945 829	16.66%	67/400	+17
2014	4 091 584	22.20%	89/400	+22

Source: IEC

While the DA's support has grown, such growth has brought about challenges that are common in bigger political parties. Now, as the party attempts to sustain its growth trajectory by capturing newer voters, it is faced with having to fine-tune its message. While there are some overlaps, the concerns of black South Africans (the DA's target for future growth) are often divergent from the concerns of white South Africans (the DA's traditional voter base). As such, a message deemed optimal in attracting the one group may be deemed offensive to the other.

During a speech at a DA rally in the black township of Soshanguve in Gauteng in May 2018, Maimane made reference to "white privilege and black poverty" (Phaliso & Adriaanse, 2018). This comment did not sit well with the party's senior leadership, who were said to be concerned that such comments could alienate the DA's traditional support base and lead to a "hemorrhaging" of votes in 2019 (Cele, 2019).

In light of these and similar comments made in recent years, some white and middle-class DA voters have felt disillusioned that the DA is not adequately representing their interests. This leads to the question of how the DA plans to sustainably, and over the long term, balance the interests of its black and white supporters. In light of this, there is evidence that some white voters are seeking alternative political homes.

To this end, the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), which expressly seeks to advance minority interests, has used the chasm within the DA as an opportunity to attract voters. By-election results in George (Western Cape), Kroonstad (Gauteng) and more recently Krugersdorp (Gauteng) suggest that some white voters are leaving the DA for the FF+ (Davis, 2018). For its part, the FF+, which received 165 000 votes in the 2014 elections, is targeting 1 million voters in 2019 (Makinana, 2018). The FF+ believes it can achieve this target due to its uncompromising opposition to affirmative action and BEE, and the expropriation of land without compensation (Makinana, 2018).

### **Of factions and splits**

Up until recently, the DA had grown by absorbing smaller parties into its fold, which proved to be an effective strategy. However, this strategy has led to “re-divisions”, the most recent being the emergence of GOOD. The GOOD party split, led by former Cape Town mayor Patricia De Lille, is an illustration of how the DA’s growth, if not handled with political astuteness, can backfire. This is a challenge that the ANC, South Africa’s largest party, constantly faces.

### **Conclusion**

Given South Africa’s history and context, dealing with such challenges will be crucial to how the DA adapts and evolves. As the DA grows, such challenges are most likely to increase.

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## **THE EFF AFTER ZUMA**

**Written by Sizwe Nene and Chido Dzinotiwei**

Since its formation in 2013, the EFF has grown to become the third-largest political party in South Africa by voter share (Adams, 2018: 114). The party came into being after two of its leaders, Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu, were expelled from the ANC Youth League. The rise of the EFF in this short period prompts a closer examination of how the party has been able to drive itself through populism, and of

whether the party will remain sustainable since the departure of Jacob Zuma as ANC and South African president.

The EFF has gained much of its popularity through rhetoric pertaining to “economic freedom” for South Africa’s historically disadvantaged majority. As such, the party aligns itself with those who still remain on the fringes of the economy 25 years after apartheid, specifically the unemployed youth. The party’s tactics, which ultimately contributed to it winning a respectable 6% of the vote in the 2014 elections, are often considered controversial. However, they have proven to spark debate and unite constituents. The past five years have also seen the EFF’s support increase on university campuses across South Africa, a factor that increases its viability in the future <sup>1</sup>.

While the EFF’s gains since its formation cannot be downplayed, the party’s excessively hierarchical structure, with Malema at its apex as “commander-in-chief”, is seen as a possible barrier to it gaining credibility as a democratic organisation. It also remains to be seen whether the EFF can sustain itself without the political clout it had gained in the past as being markedly anti-Zuma, as much of the party’s previous messaging centred on its “Zuma Must Go” campaign. Now that Zuma is gone, how will the EFF frame its messages? Will it attempt to build itself based on its own vision and mission rather than by discrediting other political figures?

Questions have constantly emerged around how the EFF defines itself ideologically, as well as its relevance in a democratic dispensation. Although the EFF is considered an essentially left-wing party, having been able to gain support from youth and economically marginalised people who are frustrated with the high unemployment rate, which is currently estimated at 55%<sup>2</sup>, its radical style is perceived as a threat to the country’s constitutional democracy (Mbetse, 2014).

According to Moffitt and Tormey (2014), the EFF believes that “the people are exploited both by the white capitalist class that has not relinquished power since 1994 and by the corrupt, black elite that sold out during the negotiated settlement”. While the party has been effective at driving important issues in Parliament, it has often done so using populist, inflammatory and derogatory statements, coupled with disruptive and demagogic behavior. One can also argue that the EFF’s presence in Parliament has dominated key policy discussions on land expropriation and the nationalisation of strategic economic sectors.

In conclusion, the 2019 elections will be a test as to whether the EFF can establish itself as a viable political party by growing its support base and enhancing its political skills without resorting to personal attacks and gaining popularity by discrediting others.

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<sup>1</sup> Independent Electoral Commission | 2014 |

<sup>2</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/youth-unemployment-rate> | 2019 |

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## THE VOTER'S VIEW

### Are you voting? Why are you voting?

Researchers working on this Weekly Brief did a small poll of their acquaintances to get a sense of whether people would be voting, and why. *\*These are not the real names of the persons quoted.*

<p><b>“Yes, I am voting because we never had the opportunity to do so and now that I can it’s almost as if I have the responsibility to do so. Our past really is important to me even if I do not personally experience it. I have a voice so I should speak.”</b></p> <p><b>Lethabo</b></p>	<p><b>“No. I am busy. I will be working even though it is a public holiday!”</b></p> <p><b>Rethabile</b></p>
<p><b>Yes, I am voting because it’s what I have always been taught to do. As a nationalized citizen it is my responsibility to abide by my civic duties of citizenship of this country.”</b></p> <p><b>Jane</b></p>	<p><b>“Yes, I want to have a voice on policy issues.”</b></p> <p><b>Siyabonga</b></p>
<p><b>“Yes, I vote for the social rights of unemployed, youth and pensioners.”</b></p> <p><b>Omphile</b></p>	<p><b>Uncertain. “I am not sure whether to vote or not. I have not been convinced yet.”</b></p> <p><b>Blessing</b></p>

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