

THE EFF'S

INTERNAL REVOLUTION

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South African Institute of Race Relations
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Overview

This document has two parts: Part A aims to briefly set out and analyse the extraordinary turnover rate among EFF MPs in Parliament; Part B aims to provide an explanation for the phenomenon.

Part A: Analysis

As of February 2018, 60% (15 out of 25) of all EFF MPs in the National Assembly (NA) have resigned or been expelled since the 2014 national and provincial elections. In the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), four out of six EFF MPs have resigned or been expelled over the same period.

Thus, of the 31 EFFs represented in Parliament, a total of 19, or 61%, have resigned or been expelled since the 2014 election. That represents an average of one resignation or expulsion every 2.3 months over the 45 months since the 5th Parliament was formed.

That constitutes a remarkable turnover rate – something of an internal revolution – and yet, despite a great deal of the attrition being the result of internal disputes, disciplinary issues, redeployment or demotion, for the most part the EFF does not suffer any general reputation as a fractious or divided party.

By way of comparison:

TABLE 1: All changes to the National Assembly representation of the Big Four political parties

PARTY	ALL CHANGES	%	FAILED TO TAKE UP SEAT	PASSED AWAY	EXPELLED	%	RESIGNED	%	RETIRED	PRESIDENT
EFF	20/25	80%	5	0	3	12%	12	48%	0	0
DA	17/89	19%	2	2	1	1%	12	14%	0	0
ANC	47/242	19%	3	8	2	1%	33	14%	0	1
IFP	4/11	36%	0	0	0	0%	1	9%	2	0

In the National Assembly, the EFF's turnover rate is exceptional, compared to that of each of the three other biggest parties. It dwarfs even that of the African National Congress, which has been riddled by infighting and division since 2014.

Making sense of the numbers

Understanding the numbers requires some perspective. Ahead of the election results, all parties submit to Parliament a final list of candidates for the National Assembly. Of these, a number of candidates will not take up their seats, for a variety of reasons. They may, for example, stand on different lists (national, provincial or for the National Council of Provinces) and, when the results are finalised, are forced to choose one option. Thus, they may fall off the NA list.

Of the 25 members on the EFF final list for the NA, five chose not to take up their seats. This was significantly more than the other big parties (DA 2; ANC 3 and IFP 0), but likely due to the party's newness and limited pool of talent. These changes, along with a number of other minor categories (the death of a member, or retirement, for example) are apolitical and cannot be interpreted as having any political significance.

The telling categories are resignations and expulsions. From these, one is able to discern more about the political stability of any national party caucus. And it is on this front that the EFF is, by some considerable distance, the most tumultuous of all the major political parties.

Twelve EFF MPs have resigned since 2014 (48%). The reasons differ, but the circumstances surrounding the majority of those changes suggest internal discord and unhappiness, and are set out below. Three further EFF MPs were expelled (12%), meaning 60% of the EFF's National Assembly representation has changed since 2014 as the result of some inner unhappiness. (The total change is 80% if one includes MPs who did not take up their seat.)

If one extends the analysis to the NCOP, where the EFF has six provincial representatives, the same kind of turmoil is evident. Three NCOP EFF members resigned and one was expelled.

Between the two Houses (NA and NCOP), the full EFF caucus, which comprises a combined 31 members, has seen 19 resignations and expulsions (61%) and a total of 24 changes all inclusive.

A breakdown of the changes to the EFF's NA representation and its representation in the NCOP follows below, along with reasons for the respective changes.

TABLE 2: Changes to the EFF National Assembly membership: 2014-2018

	2014 EFF MEMBERS ELECTED TO NA BUT NO LONGER SERVING IN NA	REASON FOR/DATE OF CHANGE	PEOPLE WHO REPLACED AN ORIGINAL 2014 EFF MP, AND WERE REPLACED THEMSELVES	REASON FOR/DATE OF CHANGE	CURRENT EFF NA MEMBERSHIP (BLUE DENOTES CHANGE FROM ORIGINAL 2014 LIST)
1.	Mr RP Ramakatsa	Expelled: 13 April 2015 [1]			Mr MM Dlamini
2.					Mr GA Gardee
3.	Mr JA Mngxitama	Expelled: 13 April 2015 [2]	Ms MO Mokause	Resigned: 1 January 2018 [3]	Ms NKF Hloniyana
4.	Ms M Moonsamy	Resigned: 12 January 2015 [4]			Ms V Ketabahle
5.					Ms MS Khawula

	2014 EFF MEMBERS ELECTED TO NA BUT NO LONGER SERVING IN NA	REASON FOR/DATE OF CHANGE	PEOPLE WHO REPLACED AN ORIGINAL 2014 EFF MP, AND WERE REPLACED THEMSELVES	REASON FOR/DATE OF CHANGE	CURRENT EFF NA MEMBERSHIP (BLUE DENOTES CHANGE FROM ORIGINAL 2014 LIST)
6.					Mr JS Malema
7.					Ms NR Mashabela
8.	Ms A Matshobeni	Resigned: 26 August 2016 [5]			Ms LA Mathys
9.	Mr K Bavu	Unavailable: 7 May 2014*			Mr NS Matiase
10.	Ms RGM Monchusi	Unavailable: 7 May 2014*			Ms NV Mente
11.	Mr DL Twala	Resigned: 16 July 2015 [6]			Mr SP Mhlongo
12.					Ms HO Mkhaliphi
13.	Ms TJ Mokwele	Unavailable: 7 May 2014*	Ms P Ntobongwana	Resigned: 23 August 2016 [7]	Mr LG Mokoena
14.	Ms LA Mathys	Unavailable: 7 May 2014*			Mr PG Moteka
15.					Mr Mulaudzi
16.					Dr MQ Ndlozi
17.	Mr NJ Mdluli	Unavailable: 7 May 2014*	Mr MS Mbatha	Resigned: 1 January 2018 [8]	Ms N Nolutshungu
18.					Ms EN Ntlangwini
19.	Mr BD Joseph	Resigned: 20 May 2015 [9]			Mr N Paulsen
20.	Mr KZ Morapela	Resigned: 31 October 2015 [10]			Mr Rawula
21.					Mr NF Shivambu
22.					Ms NP Sonti
23.	Ms K Litchfield-Tshabalala	Expelled: 13 April 2015 [11]	Dr H Chewane	Resigned: 1 January 2017 [12]	Dr SS Thembekwayo
24.	Mr NP Khoza	Resigned: 24 January 2017 [13]	Mr LS Tlhaole	Resigned: 31 October 2017 [14]	Mr M Tshwaku
25.	Mr AM Matlhoko	Resigned: 19 August 2016 [15]			Mr ZR Xalisa

**Unavailable: These are people who, although elected to the National Assembly on the EFF national list, did not take up their seat, possibly because they stood on two lists, or for some other reason. Essentially, though, these changes are not politically significant.*

TABLE 2: Reasons for departure from the NA

1. Along with Mr JA Mngxitama and Ms K Litchfield-Tshabalala, Mr RP Ramakatsa was expelled from the party on 13 April 2015. The three were found guilty on a range of misconduct charges after they accused the party leadership of misappropriating funds. After initially being suspended in February, a 63-page EFF disciplinary report found them guilty of, among other things, conducting unauthorised media interviews, giving misleading information to the public about the organisation and being absent from parliamentary sittings without apology or notice to the organisation.
2. See Above.
3. According to the Diamond Fields Advertiser (*EFF MPs 'instructed to resign'*, 27 October 2017), "Mokause and fellow EFF MP Siphon Mbatha were served with letters by the EFF central command team on Tuesday, instructing them to 'resign immediately' from the National Assembly." The story continued: "Although the MPs have not been charged, the reasons provided apparently cited 'laziness and under performance' as well as a failure to add value to the growth of the movement and deployments." EFF Chief Whip Godrich Gardee refused to comment on the allegations, slamming the phone down on the reporter. One anonymous EFF source stated: "Mokause is not scared to take on Julius, which is not entertained by the party. He only wants 'yes' men and women." In a subsequent story in the DFA (*Outcry over resignation of EFF MPs*, 30 October 2017), Mokause is quoted as saying: "To challenge this decision would amount to extreme ill-discipline. I submitted my letter of resignation on Friday and it has been accepted by Parliament. I will continue to serve on the central command team of the EFF. I have not resigned from the party. I have taken instructions and listened to the party."
4. Ms M Moonsamy originally gave as an explanation for her resignation a desire to pursue her legal career, but, some months after resigning her position, turned on the EFF publicly for its decision to work together with the DA. Prior to that, the two seem to have parted on good terms. EFF Chief Whip and secretary-general Godrich Gardee had said: "The EFF is proud that consistent with the call we made, commissar Magdalene [Moonsamy] is pursuing her studies and training to the next level." That cordiality, however, was short-lived. After Moonsamy had accused the EFF of having "sold out", the EFF would accuse her of suffering from a "nostalgic pathology" and wishing to return to the ANC (she, like Malema, started in the ANCYL). She had also served as the EFF's treasurer.
5. According to the EFF, Ms A Matshobeni, along with a handful of other MPs, was to be redeployed to serve at local government level. Matshobeni was deployed to the Amathole District Municipality.
6. Mr DL Twala was originally suspended from the party in February 2015 for three years, pending an apology, for subversive activities and behaviour, along with Mr JA Mngxitama, Ms K Litchfield-Tshabalala and Mr RP Ramakatsa. When he resigned in July, Twala said he was not willing to apologise for "what I believe are valid concerns", and that "I tendered my resignation, because the situation over the past few months was untenable. The damage in the relationship between me and those higher up in the party was irreparable. This move was the wiser decision."
7. According to the EFF, Ms P Ntobongwana, along with a handful of other MPs, was to be redeployed to serve at local government level. Ntobongwana was deployed to the Mhlontlo Local Municipality.
8. See Point 3.
9. Mr BD Joseph resigned his position in May 2015, to effectively swap places with Mr N Paulsen, the EFF's only representative in the Western Cape legislature. There were rumours of infighting in the EFF Western Cape at the time of Paulsen's resignation, but he denied this was the reason for the change.
10. Mr KZ Morapela resigned his position in October 2015. An EFF statement said that he had "been redeployed to the EFF caucus in the Free State Provincial Legislature". He had previously served the ANCYL as a provincial chairperson.

11. See point 1.
12. There appears to be nothing on the public record explaining Dr Chewane's resignation.
13. There was almost no public reporting on Mr NP Khoza's resignation, besides speculation on a few obscure websites that he had left to pursue his own business interests and, later, joined SANCO – none of which is verified.
14. Mr LS Tlhaole took up a position as a Member of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature.
15. According to the EFF, Mr AM Matlhoko, along with a handful of other MPs, was to be redeployed to serve at local government level. Matlhoko was deployed to the Rustenburg Local Municipality.

The situation is no better with regards to the EFF's representation in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

TABLE 3: Changes to the EFF National Council of Provinces membership: 2014-2018

	PROVINCE	2014 EFF MEMBERS ELECTED TO NCOP BUT NO LONGER SERVING IN NCOP	DATE OF CHANGE	REASON	CURRENT EFF NCOP MEMBERSHIP (BLUE DENOTES CHANGE FROM ORIGINAL 2014 LIST)
1.	Free State	Mr LG Mokoena	24 August 2016	Resigned. Moved to NA [1]	Mr M Chabangu
2.	Limpopo	Mr VE Mtileni	24 October 2016	Expelled [2]	Ms BT Mathevula
3.	Northern Cape	Mr MA Matebus	30 July 2015	Resigned. Redeployed [3]	Ms NP Mokgosi
4.	North West				Ms TJ Mokwele
5.	Gauteng	Ms LA Mathys	26 August 2016	Resigned. Moved to NA [4]	Ms D Ngwenya
6.	Mpumalanga				Dr YC Vawda

Table 3: Reasons for departure from the NCOP

1. Mr LG Monaco was moved to the National Assembly after Ms P Ntobongwana was redeployed to the Mhlontlo Local Municipality.
2. After the local government elections in 2016, Mr VE Mtileni says he received a "telephonic instruction" from EFF secretary-general Godrich Gardee saying that he would be redeployed to work in the Vhembe District Municipality as a councillor. Mtileni resisted this on account of the financial implications of a substantial decrease in income as a councillor. He was suspended, then a disciplinary hearing expelled him. He subsequently took both the EFF and NCOP to court.
3. For reasons not available on public record, Matebus was redeployed to serve at district level in the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality.
4. Originally on the NA list, Ms LA Mathys declined the position in favour of a seat in the NCOP. In August 2016, however, she took up a seat in the NA after Ms A Matshobeni was redeployed to the Amathole District Municipality.

PART B: The EFF's internal revolution



“The EFF is the only stable and genuinely united organisation on South Africa. Other political organisations are defined by internal strife, which evidently impacts on their capacity to lead society and provide sustainable and quality services to the people. Divided organisations have no practical capacity to provide leadership to society, and should be rejected by the electorate.” EFF National Spokesperson, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, Statement on the outcome of the EFF's Fourth Annual Plenum, 5 February 2018

Introduction: Democratic Centralism

Few things are more important to EFF commander-in-chief Julius Malema than discipline. And he practises a very particular kind of centralised control. Inspired by the likes of Stalin and Mao, the party – primarily directed by its central command structure – oversees its membership with an iron fist.

This attitude is hardwired into the EFF constitution. It states that “[t]he sowing of disunity within the ranks of the EFF and the oppressed will be severely dealt with”, that a “paramount organisational principle of the EFF” is “democratic centralism” and that “the guiding principle is that at all times the individual is subordinate to the organisation, the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level is subordinate to the higher level, and the entire EFF is subordinate to the CCT”.

In turn, the party's Code of Conduct and Revolutionary Discipline reflects this emphasis on central control. The list of potential offences it identifies – many of which are standard fare for any political party – are far more comprehensive than is typical of more federal organisations.

Thus, while there are common clauses, (such as “bringing the organisation into disrepute”), they are supplemented by a range of far harsher prescripts, ambiguous and all-encompassing. They include such violations as the “deliberate gross misrepresentation and distortion of facts”, “spreading false rumours about another fighter”, “stifling democratic debate”, collaborating “in any manner” with “counter-revolutionary entities or agencies” and the especially vague, “defining himself or herself outside the organisational structures and discipline”.

The core philosophy, that the party hierarchy is primary, is repeated to the point of redundancy. For example, one clause states that a member may not “wilfully defy any CCT and/or NPA decision and/or resolution”, while another states that a member may not “undermine or disobey decisions of higher structures and officials”.

The consequence of all this is an internal organisational culture that is highly regimented and authoritarian. In turn, there is an exhaustive list of often open-ended criteria on which any action can be judged, and, if the member is found wanting, disciplinary action against them can be instituted.

Thus, democratic centralism – a Leninist idea the ANC has long subscribed to and a favourite organising principle of socialist revolutionary parties the world over – augments a strict power hierarchy inside the EFF, in which all members are totally bound by any party decision, without exception. Debate is encouraged internally, but, externally, disagreement is absolutely prohibited once a majority view is determined. Lenin described it as “freedom of discussion, unity of action”. And Malema enforces it without compromise.

It is, of course, ironic. The very reason Malema was expelled from the African National Congress was because he was found guilty, after an exhaustive internal disciplinary process, of “bringing the party into disrepute”. But while Malema might have shown scant regard for the principle of democratic centralism in his guise as leader of the ANCYL – the remarks that saw him expelled came on the back of a raft of other criticisms and disparaging comments about the ANC – as head of the EFF, he has overseen the creation of a far more autocratic regime.

Perpetual internal turmoil

The EFF has had its problems, some them perhaps typical of a new organisation. Soon after the 2014 elections, in April 2015, it was forced to expel three members – Mr JA Mngxitama, Ms K Litchfield-Tshabalala and Mr RP Ramakatsa – all for bringing the party into disrepute. Soon after, in July 2015, Mr DL Twala, who was suspended from the party for the same violations as the other three but spared an expulsion, resigned rather than apologise, the condition determined by the party as necessary for him to retain his membership.

Twala said of his decision: “I tendered my resignation, because the situation over the past few months was untenable. The damage in the relationship between me and those higher up in the party was irreparable. This move was the wiser decision.”

But it was the expulsion of Mr VE Mtileni – from the party as well as his position in the NCOP – that was perhaps more significant. The infractions committed by Mngxitama, Litchfield-Tshabalala, Ramakatsa and Twala were all fairly clear cut and the fallout very public and brutal. Essentially they could only ever end in expulsion. But Mtileni’s violations are not known precisely.

They can be more or less deduced from the public record, however. In July 2015, for example, he was pictured asleep in the NCOP – to which Malema responded by saying publicly, “I saw [a] picture of some clown in Parliament claiming to represent the EFF”, before further excoriating him. Mtileni denied he was ever asleep, but the damage was done.

When he was effectively fired from the NCOP the following year, the precedent his expulsion set was important for other reasons.

After the local government elections in 2016, by his own account Mtileni received a “telephonic instruction” from EFF secretary-general Godrich Gardee telling him that he was to be redeployed to the Vhembe District Municipality, as a councillor. This, of course, was both a sanction and a demotion. The disparity, in pay alone, between a member of parliament and a councillor is substantial.

Mtileni fought the decision. He was subsequently suspended and, in October 2016, expelled. He would take both the party and the NCOP to court, complaining that the loss in income had severely affected his life, resulting in him being unable, among other things, to pay his children’s school fees. But all to no avail.

One of the clauses in the EFF Code of Conduct and Revolutionary Discipline states that no member may refuse “to carry out officially mandated duties and/or deployments” And so Mtileni was gone. In his wake, there followed over the next year or two a raft of other deployments, all effectively demotions, though none met with any resistance.

In August 2016, three further EFF MPs in the National Assembly were redeployed in similar fashion. Ms A Matshobeni was redeployed to the Amathole District Municipality, Ms P Ntobongwana was redeployed to the Mhlontlo Local Municipality and Mr AM Matlhoko was redeployed to the Rustenburg Local Municipality. All without so much as a murmur. The reason for their demotion is not known. They all followed Mr MA Matebus, the first EFF MP to be redeployed in this fashion; in July 2015, he was sent to the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality from the NCOP.

There have been other redeployments, some less controversial and more lateral. Mr KZ Morapela resigned from the NA in October 2015 to take up a seat in the Free State legislature. Mr BD Joseph resigned his position in the NA in May 2015, effectively to swap places with Mr N Paulsen, the EFF’s only representative in the Western Cape legislature. And Mr LS Tlhaole took up a position as a Member of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature in October 2017. Reasons for these changes are also not known, but they appear to be more strategic than disciplinary.

Not all resignations resulted in redeployment. Ms M Moonsamy (January 2015), Dr H Chewane (January 2017), Mr NP Khoza (January 2017), Ms MO Mokause (January 2018) and Mr MS Mbatha (January 2018) all resigned their positions without redeployment.

Ostensibly, Moonsamy quit the party on good terms, to pursue a legal career. However, a few months later, she would suggest it was not an entirely amicable separation, publicly attacking her old employer for working with the DA:

“The EFF sold out the African people when they voted with the DA, there is nothing right about that. It is painful for me to say it, but I needed to clarify that because I didn’t need to be dragged into this space. I was accused of being involved in those negotiations with the DA, don’t expect me to keep quiet when you open the door for a response. The EFF sold out, it sold out. It most absolutely sold out.”

EFF national spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi said in response that Moonsamy suffered a “nostalgic pathology” and argued: “We are not about saving the ANC and that is why she is open to the idea that the commander in chief must be recruited back to the ANC. Maybe she also hopes to be recruited back into the ANC.”

Less is known about the other resignations. Khoza and Chewane quietly resigned without any formal explanation. According to the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Mbatha and Mokause were served with letters by the EFF central command team “instructing them to ‘resign immediately’ from the National Assembly”. The story continued: “Although the MPs have not been charged, the reasons provided apparently cited ‘laziness and under performance’”.

Later, Mokause would say of her resignation: “To challenge this decision would amount to extreme ill-discipline. I submitted my letter of resignation on Friday and it has been accepted by Parliament. I will continue to serve on the central command team of the EFF. I have not resigned from the party. I have taken instructions and listened to the party.”

The power of uncertainty

The consequence of all of this is an extraordinary set of numbers. Some 19 out of all 31 EFF MPs in Parliament have resigned or been expelled over the course of 45 months since the 5th Parliament was constituted. That is an average of one MP every 2.3 months and represents some 61% of all EFF MPs. No other party – not even the ANC, which is riddled with factional acrimony – comes close. Both it and the DA have had a turnover rate in terms of resignations and expulsions of just 14% since 2014.

One fact that would seem indisputable is that the quality of EFF MPs leaves a lot to be desired, by the party's own reckoning. Dealing with that problem is, of course, to the party's credit, but a turnover rate this high can only suggest a profound problem with the level of skills and expertise available to the EFF. Two pieces of evidence support this.

The first is that twice when an MP was demoted from the NA to local government, the party was forced to draw on its NCOP membership to fill the slot. Second, on three other occasions, when an MP resigned or was expelled from the NA, the replacement, in turn, resigned or was expelled. This does not suggest a deep pool of talent from which the EFF is able to draw.

As a result, it has been next to impossible for the EFF to properly build up a stable caucus with experience and expertise. The constant changing, resigning and firing means a relatively small membership, already stretched in terms of committee representation, is forced to perpetually re-educate itself as new members have to learn the ropes and familiarise themselves with a particular area or portfolio. All of which affects its ability to perform to a high standard. A new party, with little or no parliamentary experience, thus undermines through inner turmoil its own ability to learn and grow.

But the consequences for the party's internal organisational culture are, perhaps, more interesting.

President Jacob Zuma practises his own form of organised chaos with regards to the national executive. He is currently overseeing his 12th Cabinet and has, in total, made 125 changes to the executive since 2014. This he has supplemented with a staggering 180-odd changes to the position of the Directors-General that head up the national administration. The result is a permanent uncertainty, in which no one is safe or secure in their position and deference before his leadership heightened.

There is an argument that, to certain degree, Malema wishes to replicate this kind of perpetual insecurity among the party's national leadership. It has the effect of not only sealing off the party leadership from any threat (the most powerful EFF leaders in the NA – commander-in-chief Malema, his deputy Floyd Shivambu, secretary-general Gardee and spokesperson Ndlozi – have remained untouched to date), but also makes it almost impossible for anyone to establish or mobilise around any alternative. It was a strategy both Stalin and Mao employed to great effect: permanent instability and the fear of change constantly augment the power of the party hierarchy.

Healthy internal competition is a necessary ingredient for any political party. Without it, it is unable to adapt to circumstance or respond to a changing political environment. It is difficult to argue, with a turnover rate this high, that the EFF is able to boast any meaningful competition in its national operation. That criticism is often levelled at Malema by those alienated or expelled from the party. On the facts alone, there would seem to be some truth to the claim.

A silent revolution

There has been some small, often fleeting, media commentary on the EFF's fraught internal dynamics. But for the most part it usually only surfaces when a member resigns or is expelled and, even then, it is short-lived. For the most part, there is no sustained narrative about the EFF and its turmoil, despite an extraordinary set of numbers that demonstrates quite clearly it is unable to maintain a stable caucus at national level. That is a remarkable fact.

How is it that 60% of the EFF's national MPs have resigned or been fired, and yet the party does not suffer the commensurate reputation?

Partly it is, no doubt, attributable to the media's infatuation with the EFF's theatrics. There is a tendency to analyse the party only in so far as its external message relates to South African politics generally and the ANC in particular. There is little desire to understand the party on its own terms.

During the EFF's public press conference in February 2018, where its leadership reported back after its fourth annual plenum, Malema told a packed media contingent:

"This year we take pride in our five years of existence; our indisputable unity at all levels, stability and formidability as an organisation. We note that we have come out as the most stable political organisation in South Africa with an unquestionable record of shifting the political balance of power in favour of the forces of the left, particularly the working class and poor masses of our people both in urban and rural areas, township and suburbs, and informal settlements."

That the EFF can get away with sort of blatant falsehood is testament to how little serious scrutiny the party enjoys. After and during the press conference, there was little or no attempt to interrogate the party per se, but rather to indulge Malema's entirely self-serving analysis and gossip about the ANC. In this way, the EFF encourages political commentary rather than political analysis, and it remains immune to any real investigation of its character and nature.

Those members who resigned are often not interrogated or cross-examined. There is no attempt to define or even describe the party's inner workings or organisational culture. It exists, in the public eye, as no more than a useful sounding board off which the ANC and Zuma's politics can be bounced.

Were 61% of the ANC or DA's national caucuses to have resigned or been expelled, the public spotlight would have shone on the leadership and the party's internal condition with a blinding intensity. Not so the EFF. If the EFF does have serious aspirations for direct, formal power come 2019, the media is going to have to start turning its attention to better understanding the party's private nature, for it is that attitude that will inform much of its approach to actual governance, and which speaks to the values and principles that underpin its highly authoritarian ideology.

The same is true of many other aspects of the EFF's behaviour, policies and positions. It is simply not taken seriously as an institution in and of itself. In the South African national debate, it serves primarily as a sounding board against which both the ANC and DA can be tested and challenged, compared and contrasted – most often to favour the EFF.

Look at the party itself, and an altogether different picture emerges.

But the EFF's public character, as defined by the media, is very different from its private personality. The many and various changes to the party's national representation speak not only of a party that is as, if not more, divided than either the DA or the ANC, but is simultaneously faced with a profound skills problem and the inability to fashion a cohesive caucus. There has been a silent revolution inside the EFF, a slow systematic purge of the majority of its national caucus. And it has passed by with any considered recognition or analysis.

It is all held together by a highly autocratic disciplinary machine, absolutely hierarchical in nature and self-protecting in the way it ensures permanent instability and uncertainty. Jacob Zuma has demonstrated very clearly the consequences of this kind of approach in government. It has come at a great cost to the South African public and it has put paid to any meaningful outcomes in terms of either service delivery or accountability. For all its public condemnation of the President, in private, the EFF clearly sees great strategic value in how Zuma goes about his business.

That it has pulled all this off, with only so much as the occasional public muttering, is remarkable.

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