

Governing from the opposition?: tracing the impact of EFF's 'niche populist politics' on ANC policy shifts

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ABSTRACT

In December 2017, South Africa's ruling party, the ANC, announced that they will adopt expropriation of land without compensation and free higher education for 90% of students. These policy positions had been associated with the radical left-wing EFF party. This article asks whether the EFF influenced the ANC policy shifts and if they did, how? Leveraging Williams (2006)'s theory of peripheral party impact and the process tracing method, the study finds evidence of EFF direct causal contribution on ANC policy shift on land reform and strong grounds for inferring indirect influence of the EFF on ANC policy shift on higher education funding. Data sources included policy documents, manifestos, speeches by ANC and EFF political leaders and parliamentary motions. The study contributes to the literature on peripheral party impact and understanding populism in Africa.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 March 2020
Accepted 11 June 2021

KEYWORDS

South Africa; EFF; ANC; peripheral party; policy shift; populism

1. Introduction

Among other things, December 2017 will be remembered in South Africa's political landscape as a month of significant policy shifts by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) on two key issues. First, on the morning of 16 December 2017, the South African Presidency announced the introduction of fully supported higher education for 90% of tertiary students (RSA Presidency 2017). This was a significant policy shift from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), a cost sharing, income dependent loan and bursary scheme introduced in 1996 (Wangenge-Ouma 2012).

Secondly, on the 20th of December 2017, at the end of the 54th Conference of the ANC, the party resolved to pursue as 'a matter of policy' the expropriation of land without compensation (ANC Conference Resolutions 2017). This land resolution was later followed up in Parliament where the ANC collaborated with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to pass a land expropriation motion brought by EFF leader and Member of Parliament, Julius Malema (RSA Parliament 2018). This could be considered a major U-turn given that the ANC had previously rejected three times to vote with the EFF on the issue. The motion sought to amend Section 25 of the constitution (Government of South Africa 1996) to speed up land redistribution (Mokoena 2018).

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The radicalization of ANC policies is instructive when read from the context of peripheral party impact studies and the global rise of radical populist parties that have impacted on mainstream parties' policy making (Williams 2018; Inglehart and Norris 2017). In explaining immigration policy shifts in Europe, Williams (2018) asserts that radical right populist parties (RRP) influences manifest in 'governmental and public anti-immigrant positions either directly or indirectly through interaction effects. The notion and extent of interaction effects between the ANC and the radical populist EFF party (Mbetse 2016) potentially provide one of, but very important explanations to the observed policy shifts. In this study I pursue this line of inquiry, to ascertain the impact which the EFF has had on these ANC policy shifts.

In this article, I make three mutually reinforcing contributions. First, I broaden peripheral party impact scholarship by studying an African left-wing populist case study since the extant literature on party impact largely focusses on European radical right populist parties. Second, I complement emerging scholarship on radical populism in Africa.

This is especially with regard to understanding populism's counterintuitive utility in amplifying voices of Africa's urban youth and the poor by raising the salience of policy issues neglected by ruling elites. Third, I initiate a debate on the importance and impact of peripheral opposition politics in the continent by sketching out its success determinants.

My research was conducted in 2018. Specifically, I traced the role and influence of the EFF in processes leading to the policy position shifts by the ANC. I used a qualitative process tracing method identify intervening causal pathways between causes (EFF Influence) and specific outcome in ANC policy shifts (Checkel 2008). To do that, I reviewed EFF and ANC policy documents, manifestos, speeches by ANC and EFF political leaders, social movement leaders, government policy papers, parliamentary motions/order papers, academic papers, media reports and opinion pieces by prominent commentators and academics. My theoretical framework draws from Michelle Williams (2006) theory of peripheral party impact. I found evidence of EFF direct causal contribution on ANC policy shift on land reform. Furthermore, I find strong grounds for inferring indirect influence of the EFF on ANC policy shift on higher education funding.

This study is the first I am aware of that analyses African peripheral and left-wing populist parties' impact. In doing so, this study provides novel way of contributing to the broad literature on populism and specific peripheral party impact scholarship. In addition, within literature there is limited attention to the impact of political parties outside government in terms of the policy agenda. Williams (2006, 2015, 2018) highlights that scholarship on political party impact has largely concerned itself with the ways and means which parties with the majority of popular votes advance their policy propositions. This approach seems to underestimate the prospect of opposition parties, particularly the smaller parties in having influence on the policy making process.

Two points, highlight the significance of this study. The study critically assesses the extent which the inevitable competition brought by the EFF transforms ANC policy trajectory. This is because since 1994, the EFF is the first major left split in the ANC party. The EFF radical policy platform on land and higher education closely mirrors pre-1994 positions of the ANC before it moved to the centre largely as a result of the responsibility strictures of being a governing party. Assessing external influences on the ANC policy making has an indirect effect of teasing out the agency of the ANC in agenda setting.

Secondly, this study contributes to the literature on party politics and by connecting the dots of the association between the explanatory variable (EFF Politics) and outcome variable (ANC Policy Shifts) and provides the basis for more detailed work in establishing interaction effects between political parties in emerging democracies.

2. Theory, materials and methods

Principally, I lean on Williams (2006, 2015, 2018) theoretical propositions on peripheral party impact from where I draw the study's construct (capacity to influence) that I assess through the process tracing method. In this study, I interchangeably use the words niche and peripheral to refer to the character and form of the EFF party. Williams (2006)'s propositions assert that success of peripheral political parties goes beyond electoral performance. Their capacity to influence ideas, profile issues, shape discourse and generate legislation is in itself a measure of impact. She contends peripheral parties' impact manifest through leveraging direct access to institutional channels of influence which allows their greater visibility and legislative power. This framework enables the study to gather evidence to assess the EFF and its impact in utilizing official and other public channels to table their policy agenda have and its possible effect in influencing ANC policy.

Williams' thesis holds that major political parties modify their policy positions by embracing trending issues raised by peripheral parties in order to forestall their momentum (Williams 2006). This provides the lens to assess the interaction effects between the mainstream and niche populist party. Furthermore, the theory contends that entrepreneurial leadership in peripheral parties improves chances for impact. Such entrepreneurial leaders can create issue salience. This proposition dovetails with Moffitt (2016) who emphasizes the importance of the leader in a populist movement especially outside the Western European context. This proposition is an important frame in exploring the role that the EFF leader has had on creating issue salience and by extension the 'discomfort' that this causes on the ANC.

Secondly, Meyer and Miller (2015) conceptual definition of niche parties as parties that emphasize policy areas neglected by its competitors. This is the definition I use when referring to the EFF and I only extend it by bringing in Laclau (2005) definition of populism as a way of constructing the political. Hence the theorized definition of the EFF in this study refers to an opposition political party that primarily focusses on amplifying neglected issues through populist discourse.

Thirdly, I draw from Dolezal's (2014) reiteration of Budge and Farlie (1983) central claim of salience theory of party competition as epitomized by competition through selective issue emphasis rather than direct confrontation. I utilize Dolezal to illustrate the ideological closeness of the EFF and the ANC as left leaning parties hence explaining their iterative conduct in policy influence. This is because he (Dolezal 2014) contends that it is rational for parties to emphasize only those issues in their ideological portfolio where their party's position is in line with majority preferences and that the way parties consequently emphasize or downplay issues is not by chance but predictable.

Finally, I rely on Judis (2016) framing of populist parties' significance as a model to theorize the EFF's populist discourse and strategy within South African political context. Judis highlights core aspects useful for understanding the role of the EFF in South African politics.

Judis (2016) mentions that populists' role includes flagging extant political crises, tapping into and shaping people's unmet aspirations into a political programme of action.

3. Case selection and approach

I critically sampled ANC policy shifts in Land reform and Higher Education funding because these two elements are the most central in South African political discourse hence best placed to dramatically illustrate the phenomenon under investigation. My qualitative study explores causal mechanisms underpinning the association between EFF agency and ANC Policy shifts and makes causality claims. However, the causality in this study is within the context of contribution rather than attribution. I employ a specific case study process tracing variant (Halperin and Heath 2017) defined as 'the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator'(Collier 2011).

I use process tracing to identify intervening causal pathways between causes (EFF Influence) and specific outcome in ANC policy shifts. In addition, process tracing enables me to use description as a crucial strategy for analysing the trajectory of ANC Policy shifts and causation (Mahoney 2015; Collier 2014). Process tracing allows me to develop and ascertain theoretically sound hypotheses-also called 'priors' (Ulriksen and Dadalauri 2016). This detail in preliminary organization of the study allows for close consideration to the sequences of the causal path and the contribution of the EFF in the ANC policy shifts.

Conceptually, I seek to ascertain whether the EFF directly or/and indirectly influenced the ANC to shift its policies on land and higher education funding. The key operative word in this study is 'influence' which mean 'the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself' (Oxford English Dictionary 2016).

Given the foregoing, I draw the construct 'capacity to influence' from where I extract the study's hypotheses. In this process tracing study's context, the hypotheses are qualitative in nature and my measurement tools are ordinal. I theorize a niche populist party's capacity to influence as demonstrating the ability to generate ideas and alternative legislation, ability to profile and articulate issues and the ability to leverage access to institutions. My three process tracing hypotheses are each made up of two components; the hypothesis statement and the pathway questions that I used to prove or disprove the veracity of the hypothesis. The hypotheses are as follows:

- (1) The EFF was able to generate ideas and that influenced ANC policy shifts.

Pathway: What kind of ideas on land reform and higher education did the EFF generate?

- (2) The EFF was able to articulate policy positions that influenced ANC policy shifts.

Pathway: How did the EFF communicate their policy positions on land reform and higher education funding?

(3) The EFF was able to leverage access to institutions that influenced ANC policy shifts.

Pathway: Which institutions did the EFF leverage to promote their policy positions on land reform?

4. Dealing with confirmation bias

The way in which the study's hypotheses are designed requires a detailed prior knowledge of South African politics specifically the relationship between the EFF and the ANC, hence this raises the possibility of cherry-picking only those priors that validate my story. I adopt Ulriksen and Dadalauri (2016) methodological steps in dealing with such a challenge. The first step is to ensure that the hypotheses so chosen should align to the theoretical framework. In this study, I have made it clear that I seek to test Michelle Williams (2006) theory on peripheral party impact and my hypotheses are in congruence with the theory. In addition, to being theory relevant, I employ a temporal strategy to ascertain the sequence of the chain of events. This sequence can be verified independently from the public record and partly provides a ballast against any possible bias.

Secondly, Ulriksen and Dadalauri suggest the 'inclusion of alternative explanations forces the researcher to look for evidence that goes against the preferred theoretical explanation' (Ulriksen and Dadalauri 2016, 231). In this case, my alternative explanations are endogenous to the hypotheses I have chosen. For example, in determining the exogenous influence of the EFF on ANC policy making, I have to systematically control for the internal aspects. Furthermore, since the EFF is not the only external influence to the ANC policy choices, I have to reflect on how much of what I observe as determining the ANC policy shifts is independent of the EFF and the ANC.

5. The setting

Notwithstanding the fact that the Natives Land Act (1913) placed 90% of South African Land in white hands, the ANC led post 1994 South African State failed to concretely address this anomaly. Within the governing ANC, the prospect of nationalizing land for equal redistribution as suggested in the Freedom Charter (Congress of the People 1955) was ruled out due to factors inclusive of influence of the Washington Consensus market-oriented land reform recommendations (Ntsebeza and Hall 2007) and the dominance of a neo-liberal faction within the ANC (Marais 1998).

Indicatively, by 2012 the South African government had only redistributed slightly over 7% of land (Nkwinti 2012) and by 2016 the budget allocation for land reform had fallen from the 1% average to 0.78% (Kepe and Hall 2018). In addition, Kepe and Hall (2018) found that the ANC Government's Plan for Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) has major effects that affect the sustainable redistribution bottom line. PLAS does not permit transfer of land to the beneficiaries and the associated absence of long-term leases creates vulnerable land tenure rights. This failure by the ANC Government to resolve this central question of South Africa's liberation struggle created internal contradictions within the party and manifested as a crisis in society.

Cloete's (2009) study revealed that there were three million young people aged between 18 and 24 who were not in education, training or employment. Of these,

770,000 (27%) had the requisite academic qualifications to attend tertiary education. This stark statistic points to lack of access to higher education as a real livelihood imperative especially read in the context of South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world, with its Gini Co-efficient increasing from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.72 in 2005 (Bhorat 2009).

The ANC Government's centre piece Higher Education Funding policy revolves around the NSFAS inaugurated in 1996. It is described as an income dependent loan and bursary scheme. In addition to the failure of NSFAS cater for the majority of deserving youth, its major weakness before the 2017 policy shift, was its costing based on the average cost of study programmes and not on the actual hence leading to underfunding. This underfunding of beneficiaries could be endogenously associated with the reported drop outs.

Wangenge-Ouma (2012) quotes the 2005 South Department of Education Report which found that of 120,000 students registered for 3-year higher education programmes, 30% (36,000) dropped out in their first year, an additional 20% (24,000) dropped out in second year and only 22% graduated within the specified three-year period. This twin crisis of unfulfilled access and support for Higher Education, training and employment inevitably created a constituency of excluded youth who could be amenable to politics of inclusive populism.

6. The EFF

The entry of the EFF onto the political scene in 2013 and their subsequent relative electoral breakthrough in the 2014 and 2016 elections obtaining one and three million votes respectively (IEC 2014, 2016) presented three new challenges for the ruling ANC (IEC 2014, 2016). First, Julius Malema and the EFF radical left-wing politics was by and large ANC Youth league gone rogue from internal rumblings to the political competitor (Neethling 2015). This is exemplified by the EFF's founding manifesto which highlighted seven cardinal principles which included expropriation of land without compensation and free higher education.

The radical policy positions had hitherto been lobbied for by Malema and his League before his expulsion and the ANC no longer had a way to control their discourse. Second, unlike the main opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) characterized by 'racial and class narcissism' (Mbembe 2011), the EFF represented new left politics which was replacing 'the ideological bankruptcy of the official left'. This meant that on the electoral market place the EFF was appealing to the voters who are attracted to left politics and this had an effect of eating away the ANC base.

Third, the ANC was facing a new situation where they would lose their monopoly of agenda setting. The EFF's emphasis on radical land reform a historic issue increased its salience but outside the realm of ANC policy think. In addition, the EFF's galvanization of youths through harping on the extant challenges anchored on their lack of access to opportunities provided a different type of opposition platform which would worry the ANC. This set the stage for the mainstream ANC to grapple with a niche left-wing populist party as political competition within both the electoral and public spaces.

The literature clearly positions the EFF as a left-wing populist party. Essop (2015) applies Ernesto Laclau's formulation of populism to discuss the political character of

the EFF. Nieftagodien (2015) examines the EFF and characterizes as a left-wing party and the first major left split from the ANC in the post 1994 era. In addition, he posits that the EFF is the ‘most crucial significant youth movement’ – making it a solid player in aspects such as attending to higher education funding concerns.

Mbete (2016) makes a major contribution in analysing the EFF as a populist party through using Moffitt and Tormey’s category of political style. Calland and Seedat (2015) assess the impact of the EFF in enhancing parliamentary democracy especially executive oversight within the SA Parliament. Mbete-Lecturer (2014, 2016) evaluates the electoral performance of the EFF in the 2014 national and 2016 local government elections. Obikili (2017) shows the impact of the EFF on ANC vote share by highlighting evidence which shows that in municipalities with higher level of unfulfilled expectations they are more likely to vote for the EFF and likely to reduce their votes for the ANC.

7. Findings

7.1 Hypothesis 1: generating ideas

What kind of ideas on land reform and higher education did the EFF generate?

EFF Policy documents show that in the period covering 2013–2018 they came up with ten ideas on land reform clustered around four aspects; the action required, land ownership model, agrarian policy proposal and enumerating the benefit from the adoption of the land reform ideas.

The EFF states that it ‘wants a Constitutional amendment that would make it legally permissible for the State to expropriate land – but not other forms of property – without compensation’. (EFF FAQ 2017). The EFF Founding Manifesto (2013) proposes a land ownership model where:

All land should be transferred to the ownership and custodianship of the state in a similar way that all mineral and petroleum resources were transferred to the ownership and custodianship of the state through the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) of 2002. This transfer should happen without compensation and should apply to all South Africans, black and white. (EFF 2013, para. 1)

The EFF also suggest two agrarian ideas within the context of land reform. First, they make a point of linking their ideas to the Freedom Charter in proposing that the state should ‘provide implements and related extension services to help those who work the land to use it productively’. They contend that this idea will ensure that all land is productively utilized due to the support from the State in promoting small-scale farming. Secondly, to boost sustainable demand domestically and create downstream benefits from agrarian reform, EFF proposes that:

The South African government should pass legislation that all the food bought by the government for hospitals, schools, prisons, and the like should be sourced from small-scale food producers. This in itself will create sustainable economic activity and inspire many young people to go into food production because there will be income and financial benefits to boost other economic activities out of it. (EFF 2013, para.6)

Within this land reform ideation, the EFF contextualize the benefits of their ideas. They list constituencies that could directly benefit from their proposed radical land reform

ideas. They list the urban poor, farm workers and the rural poor. They reiterate that expropriation of land, putting all land to productive use, state support and protection of small-scale farmers could change South Africa's current net food importer status and use land reform as a pivot to stimulate sustainable job creation as opposed to the current ANC government model of short-term jobs created through infrastructure development.

Radical higher education funding ideas. I reviewed EFF Policy documents from their 2013 founding manifesto, parliamentary motions and media statements during the 2015 #FeesMustFall demonstrations up to their official reaction to the findings of the Heher Commission into the Feasibility of Fee-Free Higher Education and Training (2017).

These show that the EFF generated three central ideas on higher education funding grouped around free fee threshold, the proposed source of the resources and funding for new industry training. First, the EFF proposed that Education should be free from fees, meaning publicly funded up to undergraduate level. Second, the EFF suggested that resources to support higher education public funding should be through expanding the tax base. The EFF reacted to the ANC government appointed Heher Commission recommendations which suggested that students should be 'funded through a cost-sharing model of government guaranteed Income-Contingency Loans sourced from commercial banks (Chabalala 2017; Gerber 2017). The then EFF Spokesperson, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi said:

The EFF has made concrete proposals regarding the expansion of our tax base by nationalising mines and banks to allow the government to source more funding for higher education and training. The responsibility of educating young people must not be placed on a loan scheme from the private sector. The EFF believes it to be a matter of human rights for education to be de-commodified. (Ndlozi 2017, para.8).

Third, the EFF mooted a new government financed scholarship which could also leverage on resources from state-owned enterprises and the private sector to be established for the purposes of funding supporting eligible students to study in top universities outside South Africa.

In their revised EFF policy document on education (2016) they proposed that at least 10,000 bright South African students per year be funded to attend top universities in the world (EFF 2016). These EFF ideas on higher education funding could have likely impacted on the ANC because the EFF was giving political weight to an acknowledged but unsolved problem. Cloete (2009) study found that 770,000 youths representing 27% of the 18–24 age group had the requisite academic qualifications to attend tertiary education but were frozen out of the system due to funding challenges.

7.2 Hypothesis 2: articulating policy positions

How did the EFF communicate its policy positions on land reform and higher education funding?

7.2.1 Julius Malema factor

I found that the EFF utilized the Julius Malema factor.

The Julius Malema factor refers to the role, manner and impact that EFF leader Julius Malema had in communicating the EFF's radical left-wing populist policies. Findings are

classified into two sub-categories; Malema's use of Manichean framing and his quantified impact in political communication.

First, since Manichean political framing is a political strategy that creates an us versus them dichotomy –pitting people vs. elites, (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Posel 2014) several of Malema speeches show that he consistently projected the ANC as an elitist, pro-capital political party whose policies marginalized the majority of poor working-class South Africans. Below is an excerpt representative of Malema's framing of the ANC in contrast to the EFF in pronouncements in public gatherings, rallies and meetings; 'The ANC is committed to a right-wing, neo-liberal and capitalist agenda which has kept majority of our people on the margins of South Africa's economy' (Malema in Fin24 2013). In contrast, he *said* the EFF 'will be the vanguard of community and workers' struggles and will always be on the side of the people'. Julius Malema and by extension, the EFF's influence in public discourse is partly illustrated by followership on social media. The table below shows Twitter followers of the three major parties in South Africa in 2018 who were; President Cyril Ramaphosa (ANC), Mmusi Maimane of the DA and Julius Malema (EFF). These followership figures are updated and correct as at 14 August 2018 (Table 1).

The table above shows that in 2018, Malema was the most followed political leader in South Africa.¹ In real terms, Malema has more than seven times more followers on Twitter than President Ramaphosa who is both leader of the ANC and the country. This indicates a following and presence of a critical mass who are an audience to Julius Malema and the EFF. Controlling for non-south African followers, these figures have the capacity to worry the ANC because they show that Julius Malema and the EFF are growing expanding their reach and as shown earlier, the EFF's message centred on presenting the land reform and higher education alternative policy framework and characterizing the ANC as incapable of delivering such radical measures.

7.2.2 Symbolic articulation

The EFF was also able to symbolically articulate their positions through the use of imagery, symbols and spaces. For example, symbolic articulation is illustrated through the EFF's use of the colour red, wearing (and the struggle to wear) overalls and cleaning clothes and the pattern of choosing spaces to commemorate headline EFF events.

Addressing reporters in June 2014, EFF leader, Julius Malema said; 'Red is originally an EFF colour because it represents the blood that has been shed by those who have died during the struggle for economic freedom' (Malema, in Thelwell 2014). He referred to Marikana and Sharpeville massacres as symbolic of that struggle (Thelwell 2014). The EFF also articulated their poor and working-class policy perspective through dress. The party took a decision for all their representatives in legislatures to wear red overalls (men) and the women to dress as domestic workers in headscarves and aprons. In 2014,

Table 1 . Showing Twitter followers of Political Leaders in South Africa.

Leader	Twitter handle	Twitter followers
Julius Sello Malema	EFF Leader	2.1 Million followers
Cyril Ramaphosa	ANC Leader	285,900 followers
Mmusi Maimane	DA Leader	1.0 million followers

Source: Twitter 14 August 2018.

the Gauteng and Eastern Cape legislatures threw out the EFF representatives. This led to the EFF using this to dramatize the issue further when on the 22nd of July 2014, Julius Malema led scores of supporters in storming the Gauteng legislature. In the end, the EFF successfully secured the right to wear their uniform through the South Gauteng High Court (Thelwell 2014). EFF Deputy President Floyd Shivambu characterized the uniforms as representing working class South Africans. Speaking to the BBC in 2014, he said: ‘The working class and poor now know they’ve got representatives in Parliament. There is no other organization which associates itself with the struggles of the poor’. (BBC 2014)

The EFF also created a pattern of choosing symbolic spaces for their headline events. Below is a table with three columns listing the events, the venues and the symbolic nature of the spaces (Table 2):

The EFF made a point of linking the symbolism of these spaces to poor black people’s struggles. For example, addressing EFF supporters, Malema made a contrast of the EFF’s choice to host their function amongst the poor in contrast to the ANC’s January 8 2018 Statement held in the exclusive Absa Stadium in East London’s affluent district. This contrast of articulating the EFF as a pro-poor and the ANC as an elitist movement is a running theme found in EFF communication strategy.

The evidence of the EFF continued growth as evidenced by the success of their events over the five years of their existence potentially worried the ANC. In addition, the EFF appropriated struggle credentials which were historically within the ANC domain. For example, the EFF 2017 Land rally was symbolically held on April 6, the day when Jan Van Riebeeck – recorded in history as the first European to settle in South Africa-arrived. Furthermore, the rally was held amongst the poor community of George, reinforcing the consistent EFF message siding with and speaking for the poor (EFF 2017).

7.3 Hypothesis 3: leveraging access

Which institutions did the EFF leverage to promote their policy positions on land reform?

Table 2 . Listing symbolic venues used by the EFF.

Event	Venue	Symbolism
2013 Launch of the EFF	Marikana, Northwest Province	The place (Kopple) where the South African Police shot and killed 34 striking miners
2014 1st anniversary	Thokoza Park, Soweto	Situated in the heart of Soweto and near Regina Mundi Church, a site of resistance during apartheid and a place of shelter during the 1976 Soweto Uprising
2014 Manifesto launch	Mehlaeng Stadium, Tembisa	Located in a black Township (98%) where poor people live
2015, 2nd EFF Anniversary	Olympia Stadium, Rustenburg	Non-identified in the data
2016 election Closing Rally	Peter Mokaba Stadium, L	Named after former ANC Youth League President and Julius Malema’s mentor
2017, 4th EFF Anniversary	Curries Fountain Sports Centre, Durban	In the struggle days, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced the interaction of Black people within a socio-political and cultural space.
2018 Land Rally	Thembaletu Stadium, George	Poor neighbourhood and symbolic location close to where Jan Van Riebeeck landed.
2018 EFF 5th anniversary	Sisa Dukashe Stadium, Mdanstane	Located in the black township in Mdantsane

7.3.1 EFF leverage of official spaces

I found that EFF was able to leverage access to official legislative spaces and used their presence to advance the party's legislative proposals, motions and policy positions on land reform and higher education. During the 2014–2019 period, the EFF was represented in the national legislature by 25 Parliamentarians (IEC 2014). Matshaba (2018) credits the increased viewership of Channel 408 – an exclusive platform for airing Parliamentary debates South African cable television – to the EFF robust presence in the National Assembly. At provincial level, the EFF's 30 Members of Provincial legislatures were spread in all the nine provincial parliaments (IEC 2014). This geographical spread ensured that the EFF's advocacy capacity increased and associated to this, their growing direct influence on political processes. In addition, the EFF have a total of 826 local government councillors (IEC 2016) across South Africa. The EFF has also spoken of using the wards controlled by the EFF as 'liberated zones' (Malema in Dlodla 2016). By liberated zones he was referring to EFF creating models of effective representation so that they use the wards as demonstration of their craft competency in future elections. The EFF representatives are actively engaged in debates within the various legislatures and councils.

In the national legislature, the EFF managed to table motions such as the motion on land expropriation without compensation tabled on the 27th of February 2018. The motion sought to initiate the amendment of Section 25 of the South African Constitution to make it consistent with their central idea of radical land reform. In addition, three of the EFF Parliamentarians including Malema and his deputy Floyd Shivambu sat on the parliamentary constitutional review committee on land expropriation (RSA Parliament 2018).

Access to official legislative spaces and effective use of these spaces enabled the EFF to push through their niche issue of land reform. This put the EFF in direct engagement with the ANC and this iterative context provides a discernible line of influence. The ANC as 'the traditional leader of society' and shaper of the national narrative due to their historic successes and the current political power they hold faced a challenger, albeit sitting on the periphery of political power but armed with ideas that captured the national mood. The policy shifts by the ANC in these circumstances can best be explained as an effort to reclaim both the narrative and leadership of key policy issues such as implementing land reform and State funded higher education.

The EFF was also able to cultivate and leverage alternative spaces of engagement such as in their advocacy for publicly funded higher education. The EFF set up a semi-autonomous student body – the EFF Student Command (EFFSC). In a study commissioned by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2016) – arguably the most authoritative account of the Fees must fall movement to date-, the role of the EFF as a key player in the events is illustrated. The report cites the EFF 37 times and relies on rich quotations from EFFSC members gleaned through in-depth interviews. The report shows that at the centre of the protests there were three main organizations; the ANC aligned SASCO which was losing credibility due to its closeness to the government, the non-aligned PASMA and the EFFSC which was growing and replacing SASCO as the natural home for black student activism (Langa et al. 2017).

Furthermore, to demonstrate its growing influence, the EFF was invited to address groups such as the white dominated Cape Town Press Club (EWN 2014) and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). On the 14th of September,

Julius Malema addressed the Cape Town press club on the radical EFF policy of land expropriation without compensation (EWN 2014). By reaching these spaces, the EFF indicated the courage to take their radical ideas to hostile audiences. In addition, the EFF managed to strike an understanding with Contralesa on the expropriation of land without compensation strategy (Dlamini 2018).

8. Discussion

The findings show that in the period under review, the idea of expropriation of land without compensation (ELWC) was initiated and promoted by the EFF. For example, on the 27th of February 2017, the ANC Parliamentary caucus rejected the notion of ELWC and expressed preference of the status quo – the passing of the expropriation bill (It has since been removed for consideration). Exactly a year later, in February 2018, the ANC voted in favour of an EFF ELWC motion. In addition, evidence of consistency in EFF speeches on land as shown by Julius Malema's April 2018 address at a land rally a George and the contrasting indecision of the ANC from their May 2018 Land Summit up to the July 31 2018 ANC meeting is indicative of the direction of the pressure put on the ANC.

However, this policy shift was also possible because in reality it is a neglected ANC position from a historical context (Freedom Charter 1955). The EFF's determined focus on this neglected issue is consistent with how niche parties (Meyer and Miller 2015) concentrate on neglected issues. The response of the ANC is typical of one of Meguid's (2005, 2008) typologies of how mainstream parties respond to competition from niche parties. Meguid points out that mainstream parties respond to salient issues from niche parties either by ignoring, rebutting or accommodating the issue. In this case, the ANC chose to accommodate and reclaim the issue ownership. Given the evidence, it is within reason for the EFF to claim to have had direct influence on the ANC land reform policy shift.

The EFF indirectly influenced the ANC policy shift on higher education through radicalizing the student movement and articulating unequivocally in favour of fee-free higher education. Evidence shows that the EFF openly showed their solidarity when students came to demonstrate in Parliament on the 15th of October 2015 and thereafter consistently spoke (See Ndlozi in leveraging access hypothesis findings), produced policy documents (See Ideas Hypothesis findings) and established institutions (EFFSC) in favour of the policy position. The findings in the hypothesis on leveraging access of institutions show that the EFF embedded itself in student politics through establishing the EFFSC. In contrast, the ANC official attitude towards 'free' higher education was negative. This is shown in the findings by the response of then Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande who characterized struggles for publicly funded higher education as a reactionary call, notwithstanding its seemingly progressive slant (Nzimande 2016).

The action by the EFF on higher education can be theoretically explained by Judis (2016) illustration of the significance of populism. Judis shows that populists, tap into and shape people's unmet aspirations into a political programme of action. The EFF's transformation of the salience of the higher education funding issue is a sub-set of the challenges identified by Cloete (2009) that I mentioned in the background section of this study. It is indicative of supply side populism that Inglehart and Norris (2017) conceptualizes as framing the social through political lens. Actual attribution remains

conjectural due to the manner in which President Zuma announced the policy shift. The clear contributory pathway of the EFF in radicalizing the student movement provides trace finger prints for their role.

The EFF demonstrated the ability to generate ideas that influenced the ANC to shift its policy position on both land reform and higher education funding. The EFF policy documents show high level ability in condensing and outlining the ideas that the party as a left-wing movement stands for. This is particularly instructive when read from the ANC's position on the political spectrum. The ANC as a centre-left party and the position of the EFF anchored on strong ideas as shown in the findings forced the ANC to find a new centre (Downs 1957) in search of the new median voter. Clarity of EFF leftist ideas on paper is one of the aspects identified in this study as an overlooked area by commentators and scholars alike who are fascinated only by the performative elements of EFF politics. Two ideas best illustrate this assertion.

First, the EFF proposals on land reform when reviewed in their policy document look very similar to leading academics in the field such as Hendricks et al. (2013) articulation of constitutional amendment as key in transforming land reform. Second, the EFF proposals on nationalization of land are nestled within the context of precedent – how the ANC government dealt with the mining sector through the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) of 2002. The downside of EFF ideas is inherent in its populist character of Laclau's construct of constructing the political (Laclau 2005). One of the EFF's established themes across their ideas is the central role of the State in their imagined political order. As conceptualized by Judis (2016), the EFF as a populist movement, like others elsewhere are catalysts, they do not need to implement their own programme. While this may sound reassuring in stemming radical populist programming, the fact that the ANC has been influenced already by some of these ideas such as ELWC show a more blurred policy making dynamic. This has been demonstrated in empirical studies elsewhere in Europe, where radical populist parties mediate the policy framework (Williams 2006, 2018).

The EFF displayed the ability to articulate policy positions on the left which resulted in influencing the pivot of the ANC as a centre-left party hence the shifts. Evidence in the findings shows that the EFF effectively used Manichean framing, symbolism and differentiated themselves from the ANC. The impact of this framing was also traced and is illustrated through the growing influence of EFF Leader, Julius Malema as shown through his Twitter account followers who outnumber the ANC President seven times. Malema's effect on the EFF populist politics is theorized from the context of Williams (2006) peripheral party impact proposition on entrepreneurial leadership. She asserts that an effective peripheral party with an entrepreneurial leadership quality can have impact.

Malema confirms this theory on entrepreneurial populist leaders. In addition, Williams (2006) notes that a peripheral party that is able to profile and articulate issues even though it has limited electoral output can have an impact. This is again validated through this study. The new insights I provide in extending this framework is the effect of combining an entrepreneurial leader with the ability to tap into symbolism of historical political culture. As shown by Mbembe (2011), the floundering left in the ANC created grounds for an alternative and it seems the EFF tapped into this gap

hence their consistent appropriation of ‘struggle symbolism’. The uniforms and associated imagery are part of this toolkit.

The EFF also managed to amplify their few numbers in official institutions and also harnessed network and coalition building in support of their radical ideas and in opposition to the ANC approach. The policy outcomes of the ANC indicate elements of EFF influence. In the findings, the best example, is the way in which the EFF succeeded in getting ANC support for the ELWC motion on the 27th of February 2018. In addition, the presence of the EFF in the constitutional review commission has made them to be at the coalface. As a stress test for this asserted impact, as shown in the findings in February 2017, the ANC presented an alternative land reform model the EFF’s ELWC. In addition, the ANC government was already implementing the PLAS policy hence putting these two aspects together, it is plausible to conclude that without the EFF’ as the default starting point, the policy outcome would have been different.

While Williams (2006) notes that leveraging direct access to institutions improves peripheral party impact – as validated in this study, it is the developing work on Populism in Africa by Larmer and Fraser 2007; Cheeseman 2013; Resnick 2014; Cheeseman 2016; Resnick 2017; Cheeseman et al. (2018) that provide a reflective frame for these findings.

Cheeseman et al. (2018) conceptualize populism as a potential force for good in a continent where leaders remain ambivalent in solving socio-economic challenges. The EFF within this context, can be seen as both a conscience of the old ANC and a weapon of choice by the marginalized poor.

9. Conclusion

In this study, I managed to process trace the role and influence of the EFF in processes leading to ANC policy shifts on land reform and higher education funding. I found that in the broader corpus of literature on populism, especially dealing radical right, niche populist parties do influence mainstream parties to shift policy positions. I carried this theoretical framework onto the empirical work of this study which found evidence of EFF direct contributory causal effects on ANC policy shift on land reform. I also found strong grounds for inferring indirect influence of the EFF on ANC policy shift on higher education funding. More importantly, this study sketched a prospective model of how niche populist parties like the EFF influence policy outcomes of mainstream parties such as the ANC. Within the theory of peripheral party impact evidence showed EFF proficiency in generating ideas, articulating policy positions and effectively leveraging access to institutions.

As research, into the policy making dynamics of arguably Africa’s most advanced democracy, this study concludes by making two reflections. First, understanding policy making rationale needs more than watching what the mainstream political actors (ANC) do. Given evidence in this study, watching peripheral but radically effective actors such as the EFF broadens our understanding. Second, the study recommends future research that may do a quantitative study to test these findings and perceptions of South Africans on sources of these policy shifts and longitudinal studies of the EFF by tracing its unfolding role in developing a new radical opposition party model in Africa.

Note

1. At the time of reviewing this study in June 2020, Julius Malema's twitter followers numbered 3 million compared to President Cyril Ramaphosa 1.4 million, and new DA Leader, John Steenhuisen's 149 thousand.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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