

Unlikely bedfellows, the DA and EFF have much to do

KANTHAN PILLAY

IN THE build-up to the 2014 national elections, advocate Dali Mpofu, representing the then newly-formed Economic Freedom Fighters, was a guest on my radio station's weekly current affairs show.

We chatted briefly in the parking lot thereafter, and I posed the question: "If you end up doing well and driving the ANC below 50 percent in some areas, would you consider going into coalition with them?"

"Never," he said quite decisively, indicating that he thought that would be the kiss of death for the new party.

I chuckled. "So you learnt a lesson from what happened to the Independent Democrats in Cape Town?"

"Yes," he said. "We would rather consider a coalition with the DA than the ANC."

It's a conversation that I've often repeated since and have always been met with incredulity at the idea. What on earth does the EFF have in common with the Democratic Alliance?

I'll return to that question shortly, but first, I'd like you to think back to May 11, 1994 when president Nelson Mandela announced the first cabinet of a free South Africa:

- First deputy president. Thabo Mbeki, ANC;

- Second deputy president FW de Klerk, NP;
- Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, IFP;
- Foreign Affairs, Alfred Nzo, ANC;
- Minerals and Mining, Pik Botha, NP;
- Housing, Joe Slovo, SACP;
- Justice, Dullah Omar, ANC;
- Transport, Mac Maharaj, ANC;
- Finance, Derek Keys, NP...

I'm not going to list all 27 members of president Mandela's cabinet, I'm just reminding us that the idea of people with diametrically opposing viewpoints working together in the national interest is not a new one. The interim constitution gave us a government of national unity – the mother of all coalitions.

Surprisingly, it worked. The successes of the Mandela administration feeding into the Mbeki years sparked the biggest sustained period of economic growth and national prosperity in our country's history.

Even when the 1996 constitution removed the need for a shared cabinet, president Mbeki of his own accord included members of other parties in his team.

The result was a steady build-up of trust in the ANC peaking at the height of the Mbeki era with the party earning two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly; thanks in part to the National

Party disbanding and merging with the ANC.

Fast forward through the decades to this past week when our local government elections have wreaked havoc upon the mighty ANC's once unassailable position. The party now finds itself dropping below 50 percent in Nelson Mandela Bay, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Mogale City, and Johannesburg.

Most of us now agree that the self-destruction of the ANC traces back to Polokwane 2007 when Jacob Zuma unseated Thabo Mbeki as president of the ANC.

The subsequent "recall" of Mbeki as president of the country sparked the first implosion. Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa broke away to form COPE, taking with them 1.3 million former ANC voters.

The second implosion came in 2014 when Zuma's former protégé, Julius Malema, formed the EFF, taking with them 1.1 million former ANC voters.

And the final straw to break the camel's back is the current local government elections, where the EFF has racked up 2.4 million former ANC voters.

This leads me back now to my earlier question as to what the DA has in common with the EFF? How can they possibly work together?

Some 2400 years ago, there lived in India a man named Chanakya – teacher, philosopher,



Nelson Mandela and his wife Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Mandela was released on February 11, 1990, after 27 years in prison. On May 11, 1994 he announced the first cabinet of a free South Africa. Thabo Mbeki of the ANC and FW de Klerk of the NP were two of the elected members.

Picture: AP PHOTO

economist, jurist and royal adviser. He is credited with writing the *Arthashastra*. Loosely translated as "The Science of Politics", it includes books on the nature of government, law, civil and criminal

court systems, ethics, economics, markets and trade, the methods for screening ministers, diplomacy, theories on war, nature of peace, and the duties and obligations of a king.

8 percent of the population without controlling a single municipality. If it is to grow into the future, it has to be seen to deliver.

The DA, where it governs, has shown itself to be good at two things. One: it is the least wasteful in terms of spending public funds and consistently posts relatively clean financial audits. Two: it spends a disproportionately high amount of its revenue on upgrading poorer communities.

The EFF also has these at the core of its platform. They too, want an end to wasteful expenditure. They too are focused on upgrading poorer communities (which is where they have posted their most significant electoral gains).

And that's why alliances between the two parties are likely to work.

The EFF simply has to write into its agreements with the DA that poorer areas be prioritised. The DA will happily say yes, because they would have done that anyway. The EFF then simply needs to sit back with a watchful eye, allowing the DA to do the work, and then take the credit.

So much for the facts. Now here's my opinion if you care to have it.

I believe that the intellectual

One gem of wisdom from the work which has become part of global culture today is this simple concept: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Consider this: the DA has shown steady incremental growth in every election starting with 1.7 percent in 1994 touching a new high of 27 percent in the current election. If it continues on this path, it cannot expect more than 30 percent in 2019 and 35 percent by 2024.

The EFF has altered the odds in the DA's favour. By slashing the ANC support base, it has fast-tracked the current situation where the ANC and DA are neck and neck in the major metropolitan areas apart from Durban.

At the same time, the EFF is in the difficult position of having captured the support of

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