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A New Dawn for the EFF: The Strategic Importance of the EFF Youth Command

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) 3rd National People's Assembly (NPA) will be marked in history as a reassurance of the presence of a vanguard party on the Southern tip of Africa. From the 12th to the 15th of December 2024, the party sought to diagnose its position amidst its slim electoral decline and inconsequential efforts of disloyalty to the generational mission of Economic Freedom in Our Lifetime, and thus devise a renewed mandate to advance the struggle for total emancipation.

The conference's mood, theme, and most importantly its resolutions highlighted the movement's shift

from what can be understood by its unqualified critiques to be instability, or reaching a political ceiling, towards an unquestionable political force with staying power. The resolutions of the conference represent concise prescriptions of why the EFF will continue to be a relevant political alternative to South Africa's body politics.

Key among the resolutions is the decision to dissolve the Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command (EFFSC) into the Economic Freedom Fighters Youth Command (EFFYC). In line with the 3rd NPA resolution, EFF's constitution, and as of late the Central Command Team (CCT), in

maintaining these prescriptive bodies directives the establishment of the Central Youth Interim Leadership Core (CYILC) has soon followed. As South Africa awaits the EFFYC's 1st National Youth Assembly (NYA) an immediate task to justify the establishment of the EFFYC remains important.

To reason, the EFFYC establishment as cemented by the 3rd NPA, can be understood as an essential acknowledgment by the EFF that a conscious effort to organise the EFF outside of state power is unavoidable. The EFFYC is sourced primarily from young seasoned activists who once belonged to the EFFSC, young people from civil society



organisations, and activists of the EFF who formed a part of the ranks of the EFF mother-body but are under the age of 30. A review of electoral support where these young activists were charged with the responsibility to canvass for the EFF indicates that all Voting Districts were fertile ground for the EFF.

The EFFYC is an emboldened EFF conference resolution for South Africa as the Black Power Movement was in the United States of America in response to the assassination of Malcolm X and the urban riots in 1964 and 1965; and more recently as young Kenyan activists were to Kenya as they took to the streets under the #RejectFinanceBill2024 banner against harsh austerity measures introduced by the Kenyan government. The EFFYC, for South Africa, rises to respond to the Government of National Unity (GNU) as it postures itself within the hegemony to shape a dangerous justification for government composition.

The GNU has painted a facade through different mainstream platforms as a composition of government that seems less a decision for state power and control by the various parties and capitalist interest but the obvious option for so-called stability and political

harmony, and other forms of deceiving society. A typical illustration of a Gramscian understanding of hegemony, where power over societal consciousness is a reflection of the dominant class, is the dangerous strain of class domination that comes with the GNU. Reflections of pervasive class interests have encroached themselves so firmly that the GNU is justified as reconciliatory efforts between political parties (not reconciliation between peoples but party's themselves), and some pundits insisting on the notion to give the GNU 'time' to self-organise. Strangling communications from radio, news outlets and various media platforms state that the GNU is the most reasonable government that will be results driven as the various political parties will hold one another accountable. Efforts to present the GNU as a sensible outcome that all should appreciate and accept in society is the very basis the EFFYC rises as a counter-hegemonic force.

A leading thought here to be embarked on by the EFFYC is that unlike an orthodox social movement that rises and subsides, the EFFYC is intended to hold the platform to organise South African youth against the GNU. A platform that is an extension of the EFF as a resisting force to the right-wing

reconfiguration of South Africa's political system that sees the EFF outside of the National and Provincial State authority. The need for the EFF to further organise itself outside of state power is therefore answered by establishing an EFFYC.

In redistributing not only the EFF's revolutionary outpost but a broader response to a hegemonic continuum against what presents itself as a legitimate alternative to South Africa's coalition government phenomenon, the EFFYC emerges out of the womb already with a target in mind. A component within the hegemony is the simple fact that South Africa's democratic system is a constant site of a battle but has now become a contested terrain where multiple forces, both progressive and reactionary, seek to shape its future direction. A proper appreciation of the EFFYC as a broadening of the working-class detachment first needs a brief underpinning of the State in the South African and GNU context.

The composition of the state under a democratic government in 1994 was a catalyst breakthrough in the liberation pursuits of South Africa's struggle. The attainment of what can be understood as State power and control in the arsenal of the people against all forces of oppression and exploitation. What



makes the state a substantial instrument of power and control is the authority to exercise military, police, and bureaucratic forms of securing the interests of whichever class is ruling. Through State control, executive members of government implement its ideological outlook through education, religion, and various instruments of the state apparatus. State power and control come to be through electoral terms.

State power and control attainment can be understood as one of the most essential pursuits for a class advancement of the will of the people or the capitalist class. The attainment of State power becomes a non-negotiable to achieve substantial freedom for the people or in South Africa's context becomes a continuum of capitalist interest exercises through the state as an instrument. The State as an instrument of this sort can never be a neutral force but uses its tenants to demonstrate power. While the expectation in 1994 was that the African National Congress (ANC) would use State power and control to further the gains of 1994, the electoral has voted to signal that the former liberation movement has lost all ability to manage South

Africa's state machinery effectively for the past 31 years. Keeping in line with the logic of history and the instrument of a Nation State, the EFFYC rises not simply out of the wisdom of the EFF national conference held in December 2024, but out of South Africa's state apparatus being further infiltrated by right-wing elements.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) is the second biggest political organisation in both the executive of the State and Parliament. The continuum of the hegemony has led to a government budget scheduled by Parliament and said to be announced by Minister Enoch Godogwana being postponed for South African Members of Parliament to consider. An unprecedented yet anticipated turn of events. Where the DA has shown its presence not only in the GNU as a major political party with the sheer numbers but equally as a performance of the organisation's lack of neutrality and further a demonstration of the extent to which they will travel to pull the State control further in their reach. The illustration here is that the South African State and its apparatus may not be unstable necessarily but are in contestation.

The concepts of power and control are not in synergy and much unprecedented turn of events can be expected more so in how the GNU continues to produce nothing in less than a year in office. Noting a new normal which is abnormal and its persistence in organising the working class at various flanks is critical for the EFF.

Deon Xiaoping makes this matter clearer by arguing that "if the party and government leadership of the socialist country cannot earnestly correct their political errors...the situation will become complex and grave, and major reserves or even great historical retrogression will follow." The GNU has no semblances of a socialist character but the principle drawing lies in the great historical retrogression that will further follow. It is bad enough that the DA has gained State influence but the complexities that can arise will even override parts of the 1994 moment, the parts of the state power and control that render a democratic state as inefficient for whichever class it represents. The capitalists will not be able to maximise their profits from the state and the people, and the people who rely on a state for basic services will be denied access as a result of no budget for public institutions.



It may not be completely unqualified to suggest the DA's presence in the GNU has invited the imperial aggression by the US on its threat to remove South Africa from AGOA and recent comments by the Trump administration on South Africa's Land Expropriation Act, as they rely on their white supremacist geopolitical alliance to overwhelm the GNU towards the DA's form of state power and control; the contestation of the state will never be neutral. Examples of these great historical retrogressions must be expected to continue with right-wing elements inside the GNU.

The electoral outcome when studied carefully indicates the readiness of working class rule led by the EFF, it is not a simple measure of the working class but a repurposing of the people's power as a counter-hegemonic force in South Africa's polity, a fundamental pursuit to alter the GNU towards a reimagined social and political culture.

As the EFF matures as an organisation and proves its political consistency, it is well within reason to establish a youth wing to reinforce a left political alternative especially as the debate on contesting the State power intensifies. In this line of thought, the EFFYC is a qualified respondent to toxic and crass understandings of what is certainly a hegemonic understanding of the 'unity of the left.' Presenting themselves as the prevailing narrative in South Africa's societal discourse, the MKP is contended as the same as the EFF. This confusion is perpetuated both by the MKP itself and those that wish to dilute the EFF as the alternative government in media, academia, and other forms of public discourse; both are the actual

components that are in agreement that the EFF must be done away with.

The EFF outside of State power is not to be misunderstood as political manoeuvres of how to remain relevant just enough to be included in coalition government. Being outside of State power cannot be reduced to searching for an invisible nexus of so-called like-minded parties with parties with electoral support. The EFF's surge for State power and control rests on the reasoning that it remains the only political party in South Africa that is a counter-hegemonic force, a force of fundamental change. One that seeks to move from student activism to national resistance.

The EFF's electoral performance in institutions of higher learning, as valuable as it was as a reflection of young people's chosen political party, is not even enough to win over a ward let alone contribute fuller to the overall electoral outcome for the EFF. However, it is an indication that the EFFYC and by extension, the EFF needs not to kowtow to the electoral positions of other political parties but rely on the correctness of its tools of analysis that have now birthed the EFFYC.

The EFFYC rises as a grassroots intervention to the South African nation-state being used by the GNU to not only reverse the gains of 1994 but as an instrument to further repurpose the vastness of the state for white minority interests. In just under a month of being established the bold decision to establish the EFFYC has proven to be valid. We recently pursued the Treasurer General of the ANCYL as not only unqualified to be a board member of the NYDA but alluding to an

indictment of the ANC's patronage over the South African government. Additionally, we broke grounds as the EFFYC by introducing the Student Debt Bill that will see graduates released from the shackles of student debt.

As the EFFYC continues to agitate and prepares its structures for our upcoming National Youth Assembly, the recently tabled Government budget speech signals the need to further organise the working class for the inevitable event of what happened in Kenya. It is, therefore, unquestionable that the EFFYC is to represent this resistance both through and beyond the ballot.

Essentially the EFFYC binds itself to the South African society as a counter-hegemonic political actor that traces its immediate task from the late Kwame Ture who, when asked what message he had for the youth, responded: "Organise, Organise, and Organise."



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