

Political discourses on race and social inequalities through social media and live parliamentary debates in South Africa : A content analysis

ABSTRACT

This article, informed by framing theory, uses qualitative content analysis to analyse the Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) discourses on race and social inequalities through social media and live parliamentary debates in South Africa. The article reveals that protest and provocative political statements by EFF members attract audience and media attention, and reinforce their political agenda. Political personalities communicate their message effectively on social media and influence audiences' perception through protestation. The well-known framing theory by the traditional mass media has been exceeded by that of social media where politicians radically engage their audiences. This paper reveals that the populist political style has much impact on social media, where political actors interact directly with audiences.

Keywords: audience fragmentation, EFF, framing theory, parliament, race, social inequalities, social media

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on framing theory continues to examine the influence of mass media, new media and the involvement of political actors in the framing of political agendas. Goffman (1974) believes that frames can influence the behaviour of individuals through the way they perceive and interpret issues. Framing theory explains how the mass media frames news to influence audiences' behaviour, especially during elections (see Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 2000). Just like agenda-setting (see McCombs & Shaw, 1993), framing also refers to the salience of issues (Entman, 1993) given by political actors and their parties in the shaping of public agendas through party manifestos or ideologies, political speeches, government policies and state of national addresses as they display what they intend to achieve (Hängglin & Kriesia, 2010:143; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2016:2). Hängglin and Kriesia (2010:143) are of the view that politicians use substantive frames to confuse opponents by diverting the public's attention to their own objectives, away from other political sentiments.

With the advent of social media, politicians now interact directly with audiences and bypass the gatekeepers of traditional media (see Meraz, 2009; Williams & Deli Carpini, 2004) and control the public presentation of their personalities (see Enli & Thumim, 2012). Political actors with highly personal traits on social media now attract attention and enjoy more visibility in both new media and mainstream media (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2016; Amsalem et al., 2018). Thus, mass media and social media hinge on each other for information, while politicians enjoy visibility in both. This has also led to an increase in news selectivity and audience fragmentation (Feezell, 2017:1).

This study therefore focuses on the use of social media and live parliamentary debates by political actors, specifically the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), in their framing of issues on race and social inequalities in South Africa. Race and social inequalities are topical issues in South Africa that still need be studied. Although several studies focus on a diversity of themes on race and social inequalities in South Africa, this study takes a different approach by applying a content analysis to big media data. Twenty-six years after Mandela's metanarratives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), South Africa is still held between the history and the present social ills of past apartheid or racial discrimination, and race remains a critical faultline in its social landscape (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015). South Africa is still damaged around race and has the highest social inequality rates in the world (World Bank, 2019). Braga (2015:26) argues that the legacy of colonial and racial segregation could not be erased over a short period of time. Though the Nelson Mandela project of reconciliation had the objectives of establishing a non-racial South Africa "the rainbow nation, the new South Africa, the struggle, truth and reconciliation, the people, and Madiba Magic" (Leubolt, 2015:43), it seems that centuries of the racial politics of colonialism and apartheid could not be erased over the past years of democracy. Kinloch (1979) argues that countries with a long history of colonialism or conquest have a high level of racial conflict. This article therefore analyses

how the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) uses social media and parliamentary live sessions for protest and parliamentary disruption to set an agenda through frames on race and social inequalities in South Africa. The study applies a qualitative content analysis that focuses on choice of words (diction), adjectives, adverbs and content. Entman (1993) writes that news frames can be examined by identifying certain keywords, stereotyped images, stock phrases and sources of information.

2. A BACKGROUND ON RACE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The high rates of social inequalities in South Africa have racial connotations marked by the past disturbances of colonialism (Hall & Gay, 1996). In colonial Africa “land and labour policies, social relations, or residential policy, were based on racial superiority and the determination to promote white interests at the expense of the nonwhite population” (Mlambo, 2019:1). In South Africa, the origins of race or racism can be traced back to the Dutch and British settler colonialism. Race has been linked to a form of identity or social stratification affiliated with skin colour, as in being termed white or non-white. In the 19th century, the British integrated Dutch political leaders into the government “to maintain political stability and began to implement racist social and labour market policies” (Leubolt, 2015:38). The race narrative “became the central political category” for the British and the Dutch to create “unity in the power bloc” (Beinart, 2001). Affirmative action policies were enacted to assimilate the Dutch minorities into the public sector and to uplift them to the standards of the British (Louw, 2004). Wolpe (1990) notes that the class tensions between the Dutch and the British declined, to the impairment of the marginalised colonised black society.

The racist arrangement of the Dutch and the British, “a two nations project” (Leubolt, 2015:38) developed into an apartheid system (1948-1994). In 1948, the Nationalist Party passed an apartheid policy which divided South Africa into “system of social stratification” (Puttick, 2011:2). The apartheid policy perpetuated a “gross social inequality” between whites and blacks (Stevens et al., 2006). Apartheid policies used race as a dividing tool and even exploited African ethnic differences to promote division. Leubolt (2015:39) argues that nonetheless race became the unifier category among Africans where freedom fighters defined themselves as “black- resisting the different racial and ethnic division criteria introduced by the apartheid regime.

The 1994 democratic elections officially ended the reign of the apartheid regime. The new government of Nelson Mandela had the burden to envision a new equal South Africa based on nationhood, citizenship, commonality and consensus for all (Clark & Worger, 2004; Stevens et al., 2006). Mandela’s government from 1994 to 1998 adopted the reconciliation approach to build one South Africa. The ANC government designed three interlinked or overlapping primary approaches to correct the wrongs of the past (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015). The post-apartheid government introduced “universal social and labour rights” (Leubolt, 2015:43). First was the nation-building approach through symbols and metanarratives of reconciliation or

togetherness. Secondly, they brought in policies to effect reparations or compensation for past socio-political injustice. Thirdly, they restructured long-term plans to ensure that the state, civil society and business actors and other work together in sharing wealth and opportunity (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015).

Unlike in Zimbabwe where there was a willing-buyer-willing-seller policy which eventually saw a chaotic land reform programme in 2000-2002 (Makasa, 2012), Mandela's land reform programme under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 1995 to 2003, aimed to transfer 30% of white commercial farms to black farmers by the year 2014. Employment equity policies (affirmative action) were also put in place to empower the disadvantaged (by race, gender and disability), across government and the private sector (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015). Due to criticism from the Black Management Forum against white dominance in the business sector, the government set up an empowerment commission in 1997 which birthed the Black Economic Empowerment programme (Jack & Harris, 2007). Specifically, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was erected as programme to make black South Africans get involved into business, property ownership, entrepreneurship and tender procurement. The TRC also recommended the compensation or pension for individuals who were involved in the struggle for freedom and to "locate the remains of persons murdered by the apartheid state and return them to the families" (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015).

Outwardly, the TRC has so far failed to curb socio-economic inequalities. Only 76 000 land return claims, 90% in in urban areas, have been settled, while rural land redistribution has been very sluggish (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015). An estimated figure of 30% land ownership transfer from white owners had not happened by 2014. In 2015, the estimated figure of land acquisition was at 7-9%, and here have been several cases where beneficiaries resell the land to the "original" owners (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015). The employment equity programmes somehow were well represented in public sector than private sector, for instance in 2011, whites occupied 70% managerial positions in the private sector positions. But BEE has not successfully drawn a majority of ordinary blacks into business (Marais, 2010). Thus, a few blacks benefitted from the TRC programmes and these few can access privileges. The few black elites in the governing structures of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) benefited from the affirmative action policies, leaving large numbers of the majority blacks excluded (Leubolt, 2015:44; Freund, 2007). This can be likened to the current Zimbabwean situation, where even under western sanctions the rich are said to be getting richer and the poor poorer (see Makasa 2012), and black elites wield personal wealth, dragging the country into economic disaster at the expense of ordinary citizens (Hanson 2009)

From 1998, the ANC government adopted a discourse of the "African Renaissance", which combined traditional African nationalism and post-colonialism with a neoliberal understanding of "globalisation" (Marais, 2011:380). Marais (2011) calls this period "post-modernism", which is largely credited to former President Thabo Mbeki. In a speech in 1998, Thabo Mbeki notes that

South Africa is divided into two nations, the poor blacks and the rich whites. Leubolt (2015:44) notes that Mbeki's two nations discourse "indicates the attempts of the governing party to sustain the support by their constituencies who were disappointed by the still existing lack of opportunities". The social class gap widened between the rich "white" nation and the poor "black" one (Daniels, 2006) and there has not been significant reduction in inequality (Webster et al., 2017). Economics scholars show that since apartheid the income inequalities indicator, the Gini coefficient was marked at 0.66 to 0.7 from 1993 to 2000 (Leibbrandt et al., 2010:32), then rose to 0.72 in 2006, dropping to 0.7 in 2009 and 0.069 in 2011 (SSA, 2014:14; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). The World Bank updates noted that South Africa has a dual economy reflecting the highest inequality rates, with Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2015 (World Bank in South Africa, 2019).

In 2008, a new project under Jacob Zuma leadership began a counter approach to the African Renaissance discourse of Thabo Mbeki, involving "important parts of the left, who were given a much stronger voice internally" (Leubolt, 2015:46). Soudien et al. (2019) argue that "inequality is a relational phenomenon which is mediated by power". Thus, Zuma's governance included communist components, reinforcing the Africanist discourse. Pillay (2008) argues that Zuma was the man to benefit from the new project which was accompanied by the Traditional African Rights Bill reinforcing the rights of traditional African leaders (Southall & Daniel, 2009). The bill was critical, highlighting the limits of the post-apartheid constitution on several aspects including gender rights (Marais, 2011:380). Zuma was forced to resign in 2018 to the succession of a veteran anti-apartheid leader, business elite and beneficiary of the BEE, Cyril Ramaphosa of the ANC. In 2019, Cyril Ramaphosa was elected President of the Republic of South Africa. Bond (2018) assumes that President Ramaphosa's "unpatriotic neoliberal extractivism is now fusing Zuma's legacy of corrupt neoliberal nationalism". Given this background, this article analyses how the EFF interprets history and frames its political agenda from the given political context.

2.1 The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and a populist political style

In July 2013, African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) leaders broke away from the African National Congress (ANC) and formed their own political party called the EFF to continue their "radical" Africanist discourse (Leubolt, 2015:46). Among these youthful leaders were Julius Malema, Floyd Shivambu, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi and Andile Mngxitama from the September National Imbizo (SNI). The EFF argues that the ANC abandoned the Freedom Charter's foundational principles of 1955 which states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that the national wealth of South Africa shall be restored to her people" (EFF, 2013). Thus, the EFF's socialist commitment "comes from an appreciation of the role played by the fathers and mothers of South Africa's liberation movement and states that the party draws inspiration from the radical, working class interpretation of the Freedom Charter" (Mbethe, 2014:35). The EFF believes the objectives of the Freedom Charter could be achieved through nationalisation of mines, banks and monopoly industries, expropriation of land without compensation and free

education (EFF, 2013a), plainly a different approach from the current elitist and conservative ANC (Mbete, 2015).

A number of well-known commentators have criticised the EFF's stance. Max du Preez says their statements are excessive, "promoting a new form of populism going beyond the rhetoric already practiced by Zuma" (du Preez & Rossouw, 2009). Steven Friedman describes the party's dominance as a "case of media hype over substance confused with actual influence over the electorate" (Friedman, 2014:5). Ebrahim Fakir (2014:5) describes the EFF as "a hodge-podge of different ideological and political strains melding the incendiary politics of 'radical blackness' with the seeming elements of socialism". Several scholars view the EFF's political style as a form of populism (see Mbete, 2015:36; Hurt & Kuisma, 2016). Mbete (2015:36) argues that "the impact of the substance of the EFF's politics is secondary to the impact of its political performance and populist political style on the content of current political debate in South Africa". Fakir (2014:5) further criticises the EFF's radical approach as "essentially an empty rhetoric captured in the politics of spectacle, where even complex ideas get pared down to mere slogans".

Populism is defined as political opportunism with policies that aim to quickly please the people or voters (Mudde, 2007:542). Mbete (2014:36) regards populism "in a negative light as implying an emotive politics that explains phenomena in simplistic rather than holistic terms and encourages people to suppress or override their rationality". Populism as an ideology also views society in two homogenous and antagonistic groups, that is the pure people versus the corrupt elite (Mudde 2007:543). Mbete (2014:543) further argues that "the mutual constitutive relationship between style and content in populist politics is significant in the context of the EFF, which has developed a distinctive style but has been accused of lacking substance". It is therefore, significant to analyse EFF's political style and content.

2.2 Social media and audience fragmentation

Social media as a web.2.0 technology has become an agent of audience fragmentation (see Lee, 2009; Price, 2011; Fonseca, 2014: 90). Information consumption is now faster with the availability of mobile cellphones and computer devices connected to the internet. Social networking sites (SNSs) such as Twitter and Facebook (Price, 2011) facilitate the interaction of billions of people. Online public commentary forums now act as public sphere where users participate and discuss issues of interest (Banda, 2010; Mathe & Caldwell, 2017), although it is only accessible by those with technological privileges (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002). Mathe and Caldwell (2017:56) note that the views of online participants do not necessarily:

... represent an aggregate political sentiment of the wider population to which they belong, but do at least reflect those found among a mainly middleclass population with the means to participate online through their cell phones, personal computers and other digital devices.

Banda (2010) views online participants as citizens who actively discuss public issues and utilise the media to gratify themselves. Thus, due to diverse online communications, these participants selectively choose what they want to read or follow resulting in audience fragmentation (Lee, 2009). Audience fragmentation is viewed as a development of exclusive small discursive communities where community differences possibly block social cohesion (Lee, 2009). Lee (2009) notes that audience fragmentation threatens democracy and may “prevent people from sharing public issues and understanding each other” (Fonseca, 2014: 91) while McCombs (2005) confirms that it is unlikely for a fragmented audience to reach consensus or even conduct constructive discussions.

Thus, fragmented audiences may hinder the functioning of democracy (McCombs, 2005; Lee, 2009; Bennett & Iyengar, 2010). Bennett and Iyengar (2010:4) argue that “news audiences increasingly self-select the programs to which they are exposed”, and by so doing, political communication through these channels only reinforces their prior predispositions. The national audience, therefore becomes fragmented in response “to particular patterns of news; as media audiences devolve into smaller, like-minded subsets of the electorate” (Fonseca, 2014:91). Thus, audience fragmentation online become reinforced by the self-selectivity of media content resulting in change of audience behaviour (Lee, 2009). Therefore this paper, analyses audience reaction online in response to the political content on race and social inequalities in South Africa by the EFF.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Framing as a concept is the “idea that people use sets of expectations to make sense of their social world and media contribute to those expectations” (Baran & Davis, 2009: 282). Many scholars emphasise Entman’s (1993:52) definition, that framing is to selectively emphasise

... some certain aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation for the item described..

This definition shows that language or diction plays a central role in shaping a frame. All conceptual definitions on framing “treat language as central, making the tools of natural language processing especially important” (Boydston et al., 2014:2).

There are different strategies of frames, such as the substantive frames in the form of a strong frame and context-specific frames (see Hängglin & Kriesi, 2010:143; Aarøe, 2011:210; Gross, 2008). Media elites or politicians use substantive frames to distract opponents by attracting the public to their own objective, away from the rivals’ political sentiments (Hängglin & Kriesi, 2010:143). This means that they can manipulate the opponents’ frames to their own advantage either in defence or in offence by contrasting those frames against their own. Journalists and political elites can also choose the amount of attention they give to their own substantive

frames, thus building up a “strong frame” (Hänggla & Kriesia, 2010:143-144), either intentionally or unintentionally through mass media (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987)

Context-specific frames are categorised as “episodic frames” and “thematic frames” (Aarøea, 2011:208-211; Gross, 2008). Gross (2008:171) note that episodic frames cover an issue by giving a specific example to its context. This provides a case study, for example by reflecting on the deaths caused by road accidents and getting specific to the current car accident. Thematic frames take another turn by looking more into the broader context, for instance, reviewing the annual report on road accidents and offering figures (Gross, 2008:171). These frames are likely to provoke emotional behaviour from the audience such as compassion, pity, disarray and disgust (Hänggla & Kriesia, 2010:144).

In some contexts, journalists or politicians may also employ a strategy whereby they remain consistent in reinforcing their viewpoints, thereby building an advocacy frame (Aday, 2006:769). Advocacy framing occurs when journalists or politicians want to stress a point through consistence or emphasis and this often occurs in stories that cover minority groups (Aday, 2006). The opposite of advocacy frames is the objectivist frame viewed as “two-sided narrative devices or a detached reportorial stance” (Aday, 2006:769). It is most found in news stories that are conventional, event driven and episodic (specific) reporting (Aday, 2006:770). This study, views the occurrence of terms, repetition of phrases as emphasis that is intended to build a strong frame.

Thus, among generic news frames, there are the conflict frame, the economic frame, the responsibility frame and the powerlessness frame. A conflict framed news story is assumed to have a less negative effect on the audience because such frames likely to be received in a reflexive manner that develops an informed point of view (Corbu & Botan, 2011). Liu (2014) adds that conflict frames portray conflict between individuals and other institutions, while human interest frames focus on human welfare stories. Liu (2014) also emphasises remedy frames which depict solutions to certain issues, and explains responsibility frames as holding accountable individuals, organisations, societies and governments. The economic frame depicts the economic consequences of political events, economic policies by governments and various other groups, just to mention a few (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000:96). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) also describe economic consequences frames as concerning material benefits and costs. This study applies framing theory to the EFF’s discourses both on social media and in live parliamentary debates to reveal their framing strategies and agenda.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used a purposive sampling technique. A qualitative content analysis (aided by a frame analysis) was applied on EFF’s political agendas on Twitter and YouTube by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC News) and the News24, of live parliamentary assembly. Selection of content for analysis from YouTube ranged from 2018 to 2020 on themes such as a)

land expropriation without compensation: constitution amendment (SABC News 27/02/2018), b) the State of the Nation Address (SONA) Debate (SABC News 12/02/2019), and c) the disruption of SONA 2020 by the EFF (News24 13/02/2020). Then selection of content for analysis from Twitter was derived from 3 Twitter accounts of key EFF leaders, Julius Malema, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi and Floyd Shivambu between January and February 2020 to follow up on topics such as land expropriation without compensation, white monopoly capital, nationalisation and free education, because these make up the central EFF political agendas. The study made use of readers' comments as audience response to the EFF's political agendas.

Qualitative content analysis can be implemented through either an inductive or deductive approach (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). An inductive approach is defined as an approach to news content with an "open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000:94). Thus this study began with "loosely defined preconceptions" of EFF's political content through metaphors, cluster of words, signals in language use, and catchphrases.

The data analysis of political news frames was interpreted in relation to its historical context or other indicators that highlight its meanings. The researcher as a coder had to study and understand the political story before coding. Qualitative content analysis involves quantitative procedures such as coding of frames from a text (Mayring, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis is also one method that can be used to analyse a corpus of new articles or frames and can "handle the unstructured matter as data" (Krippendorff, 2004:41). This study made use of Nvivo 11 as a research tool to code media data and categorise it into themes.

5. FINDINGS

A qualitative content analysis of the EFF's discourses and political style on social media, and parliament reflects protest frames, and a provocative and disruptive approach. The EFF settles disagreements in parliament in a defiant manner. The social media is mostly used to interact and inform audiences, while public spectacle in parliament is exploited to demonstrate or protest. The EFF's political style and the content of its political agenda attract attention both of the media and audience. The findings also show audience fragmentation on the land question and nationalisation. Figure 1 below reflects the party's political content, style and audience response.

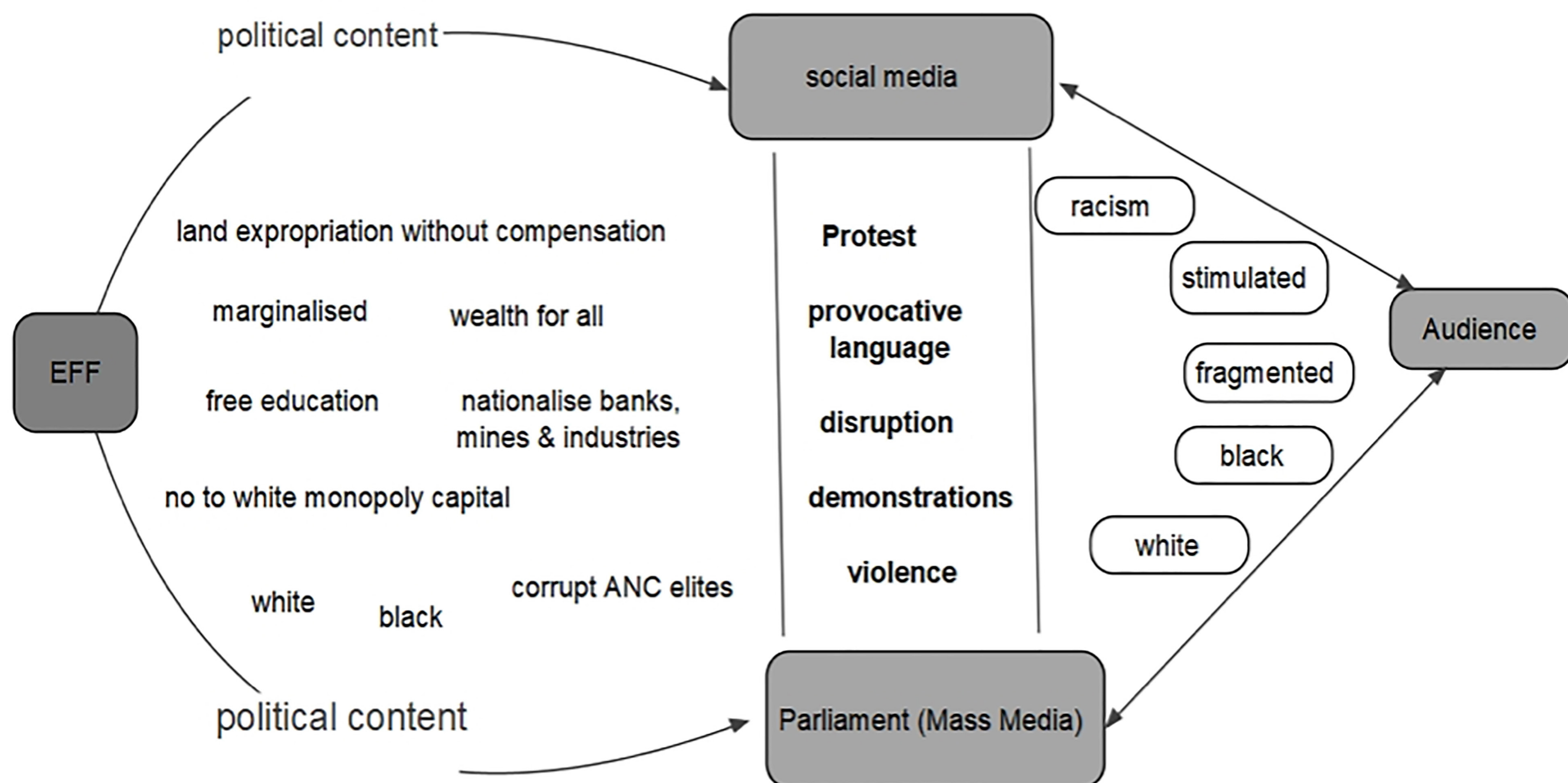


Figure 1 EFF's political content & style
Source: Author (created using VUE)

5.1 Land expropriation, nationalisation and monopoly capital

The EFF advocates for constitutional amendment on land expropriation without compensation, nationalisation of mines, banks and industries stating that "Africans are the rightful owners of the land". Literature has shown that the EFF identifies Africanism with "blackness" as shown in Malema's parliamentary statements below, reported in the national news.

Almost 400 years ago a criminal by the name John Van Riebeeck landed in our native land, and declared an already occupied land by the native population as a no man's land. Van Riebeeck the first descendant of the Dutch to arrive in the Cape who later led a full blown colonial genocide anti-black land disposition criminal project, arguing that simply because our people could not produce title deeds, this land that they have been living in for more than a thousand years was not their own (SABC News, 27 February 2018).

Essentially, he was disregarding their humanity treating as part of the animal world to him and many who would have come long after him, the Africans were less than human not deserving land ownership. On this basis the project disempowering Africans of their ability to call this place their land was initiated in blood and in pain. Millions ended up in the humiliated conquered township condition of being cheap and easily disposable labour (SABC News, 27 February 2018).

The EFF ridicules ANC's for failure to solve the land question. They also ridicule the Truth and

Reconciliation agenda of Nelson Mandela's ANC, pointing out that it built "false reconciliation without justice", as argued by Braga (2015:26) that "the legacy of colonial exploitation and racial segregation could not be easily suppressed". Thus, the EFF resurfaces with the land question through the use of an advocacy frame.

Those who came in power in 1994, carrying the popular mandate of our people to restore the dignity of an African child by reinstating land to the dispossessed, forgot their mandate and they became drunk in luxury and glory building false reconciliation without justice (SABC News, 27 February 2018).

Julius Malema views land expropriation without compensation as a "central agenda of human freedom". They frame expropriation of land as "justice and gift of humanity". Malema had the following to say;

It took the arrival of the EFF in these chambers to return in the central agenda of human freedom- the need for the land that was dispossessed through brutal crimes against humanity. The time for reconciliation is over now it is time for justice. If the grandchildren of John Van Riebeeck have not understood that we need our land, that over and above it is about our dignity then they have failed to receive the gift of humanity (SABC News, 27 February 2018).

Today let us close this question once and for all, let us unite and pay no one for benefiting from the crimes against humanity let us come together and agree on this noble historic and humane call to expropriate land without compensation for equal distribution (SABC News 27 February 2018).

On 13 February 2020 during the State of the Nation Address, the EFF demanded the removal of the former Deputy President of Nelson Mandela's government, De Klerk from parliament, saying that "he is an apologist of apartheid". Julius Malema was shown in parliament on live television news asserting that;

De Klerk has got blood on his hands ... and said that apartheid was not crime against humanity. He is an unrepentant apologist of apartheid who is not willing to accept that apartheid was crime against humanity. And therefore, it is an insult to those who died and tortured under the instruction of De Klerk to have De Klerk sitting in this house. I therefore suggest, Honourable Speaker, that De Klerk should leave this house (News24, 13/02/2020).

It is evident that the EFF will always bring into focus the injustices of the past colonialism and apartheid to cement and drive home its political agenda using such context-specific, thematic and episodic frames.

The EFF also believes that the country's current economy is subject to white monopoly capital.

Terms like capitalist greed, white monopoly capital and *nationalisation* always resonate with their political agendas. Julius Malema had the following to say;

Mr President, you intend to breakdown Eskom with the aim of privatisation of some components of the utility. It is a fact that at the center of Eskom problems are the power purchase agreements which force Eskom to buy power at unaffordable and impractical practices through irrational business model (SABC News, 12 February 2019).

We know that your friends such as Trevor Manuel through Old Mutual and your relative through Patrice Mutsipe stand to benefit from the privatisation of Eskom. We want to tell you here that Eskom will not be privatised and there are no retrenchments that are going to take place. If you proceed to privatise Eskom be rest assured that we as the EFF we will seriously confront your government because they represent capitalist greed an obsession with money at the expense of our people (SABC News, 12 February 2019)

Mr President you have completely abandoned politics to impress white monopoly capital and the West. Your approach to Eskom is going to destroy the power utility and as people who will be here and still active in the next 30 to 40 years we are not going to allow you to destroy Eskom for quick personal gains (SABC News, 12 February 2019).

The EFF believes privatisation of state enterprises will only benefit capitalists at the expense of the suffering masses as reflected in the comments below;

You made an announcement here that Total has made enormous oil and gas discovery which you claim will be a game changer. What you did not say is that more than 98% of the oil and gas discovery will benefit foreign companies. These people came here colonised us, took our gold and diamonds and now they will take the oil and gas under our own watch yet we claim to have defeated colonialism (SABC News, 12 February 2019).

Oil and gas can be a curse to a nation of not properly managed and if you continue with indecisiveness around natural resources, the oil and gas will be a curse to our nation as like it is in many African countries. We demand that all oil and gas discoveries must be nationalised and to create sovereign wealth fund (SABC News, 12 February 2019).

5.2 Social media engagements

Political engagements on Twitter include EFF main actors and the audience (supporters and opposers). This study notes that Twitter audience is racially polarised. On 27 February 2020, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi tweeted that,

One thing you cannot take from EFF; since its arrival in parliament, radical left ideas are NOW articulated in ACTUAL corridors of law making: expropriation of land without compensation, state bank, and free education. This was not possible without a strong left leaning opposition!

The *tweet* provoked public responses attracting 1,700 likes, 445 retweets and 144 responses, though numbers continued to grow. Comments below reflect audience perspectives;

This is why all left forces must come together to have a single strong voice that can advocate for the poor and working class. Numsa, Amcu should unapologetically support the EFF. ANC, Cosatu and SACP are now fronting the wmc, like gate keepers.

That's why we will keep voting the EFF, it exists for the black majority.

It's TRUE! Today me and my colleague had a talk about this... ANC is scared of white people and white economy!

Chris Hani was one of the biggest advocates for expropriation without compensation in our history.

1955? Count the years and the possibilities of all that having possible without the EFF's push.

Sovereign wealth fund is also the idea of the EFF.

Political actors provoke debates and build public agenda for people to talk or think about. They were many comments which also opposed Mbuyiseni's *Twitter* post such as shown below;

So, all the looting went on while EFF was there.

Are you going to close your existing bank accounts and deposit your money in the new State Bank ... I didn't think so ... can't be looting your own money now, can you?

Who resort to violence at every opportunity and whose most senior members are as corrupt as those in the ruling party! You must be so proud!

All the economic destruction ideas belong to the EFF?

You stole those ideas from #ANC You think we're all fools. Your bosses emerged from ANC youth league, they know all ANC policies which we not yet implemented. Keep celebrating ANC implementations, they're in charge.

Opposers raised the issues of corruption, racism and that the EFF is just a breakaway of the ANC.

On 17 February 2020, Julius Malema posted on Twitter: "Let's go fellow South Africans; only the @EFFSouthAfrica can defend the people of South Africa and their assets", calling for a march

against Eskom on 28 February and having framed that Eskom is about to be privatised, thus reflecting a protest or conflict frame with comments below as an example,

We are ready and will to defend the assets of the country.

We are not just youth, but we are the future of Africa. So bakgalabje be ANC one side. No... Julius want to march against "privatisation"... whatever that means.

Can you save people pension money from bailout of Eskom and SAA?

You don't represent all South Africans, only using these supporters to run your own self-serving agenda. What assets are you talking about and which SA will benefit like you have?

As an ANC voter I will be there no doubt.

In another scenario on 18 February 2020, after a debate in parliament, Julius Malema triumphantly posted on his Twitter handle, "*back tomorrow in parliament, #FearFokol himself*" showing a protest attitude. His supporters on *Twitter* rallied behind him;

South Africa loves you Julius Malema not up for discussion

Please stay a bit longer, that place is boring without you.

Oh yes my President, we are behind you all the time.

@CyrilRamaphosa where's that intelligence report on the being a MI6 project that you ignore based on Malema's "good behavior"? Your regime allowed this character to get out of hand, it's all on your hands now. The world is watching!

We know you are very abusive. End of discussion.

On another note, the EFF's theme of the year 2020 reads "*The Year of Action Against the Racist Financial Sector*" which may be interpreted as a racist frame against "*monopoly capital*". On 10 February 2020, Floyd Shivambu, tweeted that;

The Year of Action Against the Racist Financial Sector. Reality is that the banks, insurance companies and medical aid schemes constitute the core of black people's economic marginalisation, discrimination, and oppression.

Audiences online hailed the party as revolutionary, "the only revolutionary movement that has balls". However, opposing voices viewed EFF's political agenda as racist:

You black people are just so helpless-they just blame whites for their incompetence and inadequacies.

SA belongs to all who live in it that's what the founding manifesto you wrote says. That was the first mistake of this revolution.

Some of them are the only industries creating wealth for South Africans. Be careful how you proceed.

It is evident that the EFF is socialist political party against the so-called "*white monopoly capital*". The main EFF actors attract audience attention on social media and enforce their political agendas in parliament. They are personalities with branded traits visibly active on social media. But *Twitter* reflects audience fragmentation where supporters engage in collective action while others gather to oppose political personalities.

6. DISCUSSION

A content analysis of the EFF's discourses both on social media and in parliament has revealed different kinds of frames such as an advocacy frames, protest, conflict frames and thematic frames on race and social inequalities in South Africa. The EFF believes social inequalities in South Africa are a result of racial segregation that happened in the past colonial times. Malema uses a thematic frame to take audience back to the injustices of the past when he says, "Almost 400 years ago a criminal by the name John Van Riebeeck landed in our native land, and declared an already occupied land by the native population as a no man's land". According to Gross (2008:171) thematic frames focus more on a broader context of the problem, thus the EFF refers the audience back to the root of the problem, almost 400 years ago .Hence, the EFF exploits history through a thematic frame to arouse audience emotion and promote its agenda on land expropriation without compensation.

The EFF also uses an advocacy frame which remains consistent throughout their political agendas. The advocacy frame carries racial connotations on the premise that black poverty is a result of colonialism. Aday (2006) shows that an advocacy frame occurs in stories that cover minority groups and is opposite to an objectivist frame which views a story in "two-sided narrative devices or detached reportorial stance". Thus, the EFF only focuses on the plight of poor blacks, who are in this case viewed as disadvantaged yet the majority. This study reveals that an advocacy frame also occurs in stories that cover the disadvantaged either minority or majority. The EFF does not use an objective approach or frame. They speak only for the poor blacks as reflected in their discourses, for example, "This is why all left forces must come together to have a single strong voice that can advocate for the poor and working class". They completely ignore the repercussions of racial expropriation of land without compensation either for the majority race or minority race. As shown by Kinloch (1979), countries with a long history

of colonialism or conquest have a high level of racial conflict, thus racial expropriation of land may not guarantee an end to racial disputes.

The EFF also employs an economic frame against what they call white monopoly capital. An economic frame depicts the economic consequences of political events or economic policies by the government (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 96). According to the EFF, privatisation of state enterprises such as Eskom will further impoverish the people and enrich capitalists. The findings of the study show that the EFF believes the ANC elites benefit from capitalists activities at the expense of the general populace. Thus, the EFF uses a protest frame in parliament and social media in demonstration against “white monopoly capital”. It is also evident how live parliamentary debates often get adjourned due to disruption and violence. The political content is racialised, resulting in a racial debate. Their audiences on Twitter are divided between black and white racial narratives. Black racism is noticeable as well as white racism, evidenced by comments on EFF’s political agendas, and the disruption of parliament by the EFF threatens democracy as it also reflects audience fragmentation. Lee (2009) has shown that audience fragmentation prevents people from engaging constructively and McCombs (2005) also notes that fragmented audiences may not reach consensus. Thus this study notes that audiences are politically racialised in South Africa, making it very difficult for constructive discussions.

The EFF communist political agenda disrupts other opposition parties’ political agendas, as they call for nationalisation of state wealth: “We demand that all oil and gas discoveries must be nationalised and to create sovereign wealth fund”. However, they speak more for black Africans. It is seemingly black racism fashioned behind the discourses of land expropriation without compensation, nationalisation of mines and industries. The EFF believes nationalisation of state wealth will end social inequalities between blacks and whites. However, there are many instances to learn from, for example, in Zimbabwe, even having expropriated the land, black elites are getting richer while ordinary citizens wallow in poverty (Makasa 2012). Hence racial resolutions may not guarantee an end of social inequalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show racial audience fragmentation in response to EFF agendas on land expropriation, nationalisation of mines and industries. The EFF effectively makes use of social media and parliament to influence peoples’ perspectives. They bypass conventional mass media and directly or radically engage their followers through new media. The traditional mass media finds itself behind the fast interaction between political elites and social media audiences. Thus, the EFF’s populist political style delivers well on social media and live parliamentary debates where they attract audience and media attention. The EFF political actors drive on people’s emotions and often tell them what they would want to hear. This study notes that the land question has been a public agenda in South Africa since 1955, but the EFF revisits and

reframes the issue to provoke audiences through disruptive communication in parliament. This article affirms that protest and provocative political communication attract audience and media attention, and reinforce political agendas. The impact exerted by the EFF's political tweets goes as far as provocative, arousing debate on the past injustices of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. This paper therefore notes that the EFF is but reawakening political ideologies or agendas of the old ANC which have been predominant among the black majority in South Africa. They awaken predominant memories of apartheid injustices in live parliament assemblies where they gain public attention through spectacle.

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