



The Patriotic Alliance: a marginal kingmaker

Last month the tiny Patriotic Alliance (PA) stepped forward to save Athol Trollip from a vote of no confidence in Nelson Mandela Bay (municipaliq.co.za). (The AIC is now said to provide additional support to the DA alliance after a fall-out with the ANC on Matatiele, ewn.co.za). Like the AIC in Ekurhuleni and Rustenburg (municipaliq.co.za), the PA has leveraged off its marginal support to become a kingmaker in ways that make other minority parties like the EFF (municipaliq.co.za) or UDM (municipaliq.co.za) look comparatively sizeable. Disproportionate influence is clearly an undesirable outcome of coalition arrangements. This Briefing considers the PA's philosophy and the association with its founding leader Gayton McKenzie.

A one-man show?

The PA, founded in 2013, is strongly associated with convicted bank robber turned motivational speaker/politician, Gayton McKenzie, along with convicted fraudster and businessman/socialite, Kenny Kunene, who later left the PA. The Party contested 2014 elections in the Western Cape (its base), the Free State, Gauteng, Northern Cape and North West.

Neither the DA nor ANC, with which the PA compared itself as a credible alternative, took the PA seriously - a position vindicated by marginal showing in the PA's first national and provincial election (winning 0.07% of the national vote, and 0.4% in the Western Cape), eroding further to 0.06% in 2016 municipal elections, albeit with seats in Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Bay, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, as well as Tokologo in the Free State (en.wikipedia.org).

So what does the PA stand for? In Nelson Mandela Bay, Gayton McKenzie took a strong non-racial stand on the EFF's plans to unseat Trollip (www.thesouthafrican.com) - departing from the PA's previous opposition to the DA

after the Party's Marlon Daniels did not assume the Deputy Mayoral post which was rendered vacant by a PA motion of no confidence in former Deputy Mayor, Mongameli Bobani (www.heraldlive.co.za, www.rnews.co.za).

In his political incarnation, McKenzie emphasises the importance of creating a peaceful society and creating youth employment in growth industries, with his interest in politics said to have been sparked by work in mediating gangsterism in the Western Cape (www.heraldlive.co.za).

As a centrist, the PA is philosophically different from the EFF (with McKenzie addressing EFF leader Julius Malema in a number of open letters), but will the Party ever escape the history of its founder? Last month's events suggest that this depends on whether the PA's seat is needed in a coalition with Trollip arguing that McKenzie is rehabilitated (www.youtube.com), while the EFF dismissed him as a criminal.

Such are the times of narrow coalitions!

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