

# **POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND PARTY POLITICS: THE CASE OF PDP**

**(PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY)**

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## **Abstract**

Looking at the state of affairs in Nigerian political system and its democratic transition, the most arguable and widely challenging issue, of its political discourse has remained the derivative factors, and strands of the political ideology of the key major political parties in the country. For example; PDP, APC, APUGA, LABOUR and SDP. But on this article emphases would be laid on the principles and belief system of the People's Democratic Party, PDP.

Following these very crucial debates, and finding the best way forward, am taking time-out to look at the actual meaning and modern trends of political ideology, while at the same time making key reference points with my finds to what is obtainable within our political system.

To start with it is important to have an open minded view on the subject matter, considering the fact that ideology is central to any political formation, with a direct or indirect democracy around the world. Every political party in modern politics is supposedly formed or established on one form of ideology or the other, reflecting the mind of the individual or group of individuals that have decided to come together with a common belief, under one platform. The party membership and followership tends to be based on the set parties belief's, values and principles, these could be found in most cases in developed countries with much more consolidated democracies, such as in Europe and America. Ideology represents a typically crucial element of political parties and their activities. It is a set of ideas about politics, all of which are related to one another and that modify and support each other. Though relatively enduring, it is yet a dynamic phenomenon, capable of being modified by new issues. It was in this light that Philips W. Shively (1997) defines an ideology as "a continually developing, organized set of ideas about politics that helps us to make sense of the myriad of political questions that face use". For Okudiba Nnoli, ideology typifies "a systematized and interconnected set of ideas about the socio-economic and political organization of society as a whole" (Nnoli, 2003: 178).

The concept of ideology, is, historically, deeply rooted in political theory. As a concept, it was coined by the late eighteenth century French philosopher, Destutt de Tracy (1754 – 1836). According to Nnoli (2003:177), Destutt de Tracy used it to describe a new scientific discipline that systematically studies ideas, emotions and sensations – the science of ideas. This conception has since changed and ideology has come to embody the ideas themselves. As a result of the changes, ideology has come to be presented as a subject representing two contradictory realities – the good and the bad, the former depicting ideology as “a system of thought that animates social or political action”, and the latter as a “misleading, illusory or one-sided criticism or condemnation” (cf Nnoli, 2003:178-79).

This was the kind of debate that dominated political discourse in the mid- nineteenth century. For instance, in their: *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1960) took a swipe at Hegel and his-co-travellers, describing them as ideologists of the bourgeois system, not articulate about the material conditions of social and political life. Yet, they went ahead to articulate another conception of ideology based on class analysis as a device for articulating the conflicting interests of different social classes (Nnoli, 2003:178).

### **Basic Definitions of Ideology:**

An ideology is defined as a “Set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved”. Erikson and Tedin (2003).

Ideology is also defined as “The shared framework of mental models that group of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured”. Denzau & North (1994/2000).

Going by the two definitions above, if one accepts that ideology is shared; that it helps to interpret the social order; and that it normatively specifies good and proper ways of addressing life’s problems, then it is easy to understand how ideology reflects and re-enforce what psychologists might refer to as relational, epistemic and existential needs or motives.

Re-affirming my view point from the above, I would like to express a little further on the five key principles that would help to understand the importance of ideology in party politics.

### **Five key Principles:**

1. Elective Affinity: The forces of mutual attraction involving the structure and contents of belief systems and the motives of their adherents.
2. Relational Motives: The desire to affiliate and establish interpersonal relationship needed for personal or social identification, solidarity with others, and shared reality.
3. Epistemic Motives: The drive to reduce uncertainty, complexity, or ambiguity, cognitive preference for certainty, structure, order and or closure.
4. Existential Motive: The drive to manage threatening circumstances, a personal search for security, self-esteem, and meaning of life.
5. System Justification: The motivation to defend, bolster and justify the status quo; tendency to view current social arrangements as fair, legitimate, and desirable.

Ideologies also endeavour to describe or interpret the world order as it is, through the process of assertions or assumptions about human nature, historical events, present realities and future possibilities. To envision the world order as it is, certainly specifies an acceptable means of attaining social, economic and political ideals. This to a certain extent shows that different ideologies represents socially shared but competing philosophies of life, and how it should be lived and governed.

Looking at the above argument its invariably clear that there is a huge misconception of what political engagement is in its conceptual and practical terms, or its functionality in view of the high level of disconnection among politicians and the polity; considering the case of those who tend to cross-carpet at random with absolute rascality. It is a very common Philomena even in the western developed democracies for party elected officers or politicians to defect or cross-carpet from one party to the other but mostly based on ideological differences or disagreements; thus, in the case of African politicians, most especially Nigerian elected officers or party members tend to do such base on selfish interest, personal egoism, and individualism.

There are two key major political parties in Nigeria; of one is the party in government, while the other stands as the opposition party. For a striving democracy and a revolving society to grow politically it ought to have ideologically and philosophically driven political parties on

different straight lines of the debate or spectrum. The case of Nigerian party politics is quite different, here you have two major parties with or without ideologies are socially and economically driven by men who taste after political power.

### **Common Ideological Trends:**

1. Conservatism/Capitalism: This is a system of government where the existing institutions are maintained, emphasizing free-enterprise and minimal government intervention; it could also be referred to a “Right-Wing” thinking political system approach in which the principle means of production and distribution are in private hands or individuals.
2. Liberalism/Egalitarianism: This is referred to as a representative government, with a strong belief in liberty and freedom; free speech, abolition of class privilege and state protection of the citizen. A government system that beliefs in an equal society were all citizens has equal rights and life privileges.
3. Socialism/Populism: This is a government system, with a strong belief and drive that is based on the principle means of production, distribution and exchange being in common or collective ownership; in order words it is seeing as a political system of thinking that demands the redistribution of resources, political power and economic ownership to the “Common People”.

Using the above stated ideological trends, one could invariably identify with two key dimensional approach of political thinking, which very noticeable in many developed democracies in Europe and America. For instance, taking the case of Britain, where they have a political system drawn in the line two ideological approach, the Right/Centre- Right and the Left/Centre- Left, also similar debate occurs around Europe with the issues of the Far-Right and the Far-Left across many countries. But in the case of African politics it’s very difficult to determine the ideological trend, though in south Africa it could be said that there are some traces of dimensional challenges between socialism and conservatism.

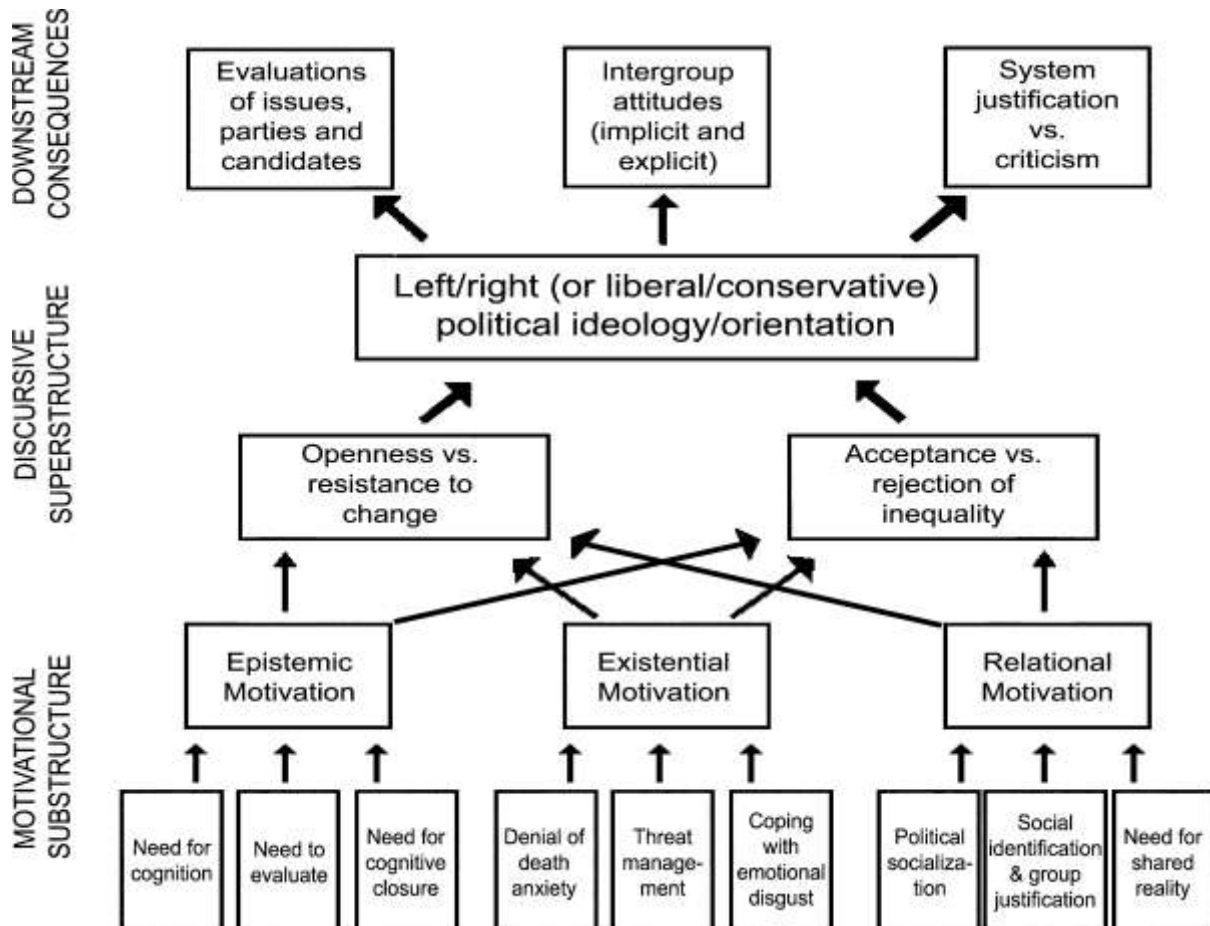
in the case of Nigerian politics, historically since independence; Nigerian’s experience with political parties dates back to the colonial era, and the contemporary incidences of Intra and Inter-party squabbles associated with party politics, is nothing but a throw-back to the past which is replete with schisms, bickering, backbiting, intrigues violence, packing and sacking

of party members; the present is therefore, the reflection of the past, showing that the same present may not be totally different from the past, and the future not likely to be clearly demarcated from the present. (Agbaje, 2003). During the first, second and third republics most of the key political systems were formed based on the two strands of political ideological trends, that were the core beliefs of then nationalist leaders, such as; Azikwe, Awolowo, Tafawa-Balawa, Ahumadu Bello and Enest Okoli. There was this dichotomy between the Far-right conservatives of the North; the Far-left socialist of the South; the Centre-right Neo-Conservatives. The first republic had the NPC of Alh. Abubakar Tafawa-Balawa/Ahumadu Bello was a Far-right conservative ideological driven platform; the NCNC by Dr Azikwe/M.I.Okpara was a Centre-right Conservative party; and the AG of Chief Obafemi Awolowo/Akintola was a Far-left Socialist party in the first republic there were series of cross-carpeting, mergers and broken marriages between parties of different political ideologies; the second republic had similar scenarios with slight differences in party names, but sustained ideological directions, such as; the NPN of Alh. Shahu Sahgari/Chief Akinloye, which was also a Centralist-Conservative party; the NPP of Dr Azikwe/Ajasin was still a Neo-liberal Conservative party and UPN of Chief Obafemi Awolowo/Chief Bola Ige was a reformed Neo-liberal Socialist party; the second republic; then the SPD of Alh. Baba-Gana Kingbe and the NRC of Chief Tom Ikimi of the aborted third republic.

### **The two dimensional political thinking:**

- The Leftist/Liberal thinkers: these are people or politicians and political parties that have a conscious belief in the freedom of speech and the right to dissent; a classless society with a systemic process for redistribution of wealth through a welfare state system, with a core value to brotherhood. Liberalism as a Leftist thinking is a political ideology with the core trend of equality of opportunity which very essential, and to achieve this end, believe that every act of discriminatory practices must be eliminated, as well advocates vigorously for public policies that helps to reduce or eliminate inequalities.
- The Rightist/Conservative: these are people or politicians and political parties that believe in the core values of preserving order through an evolving authority and the continuation of the existing social order, with the right to private ownership. The conservatives believes and maintain the position that people need a strong

leadership institutions, firm laws and strict moral codes; they most often base their claims on the teachings of religious and traditional morality, and tend to underestimate the rational social theories propounded by secular philosophers, economist, and outstanding intellectuals.



It is important here to see and understand that one of the greatest problem facing most political party structure and politicians capacity building in Nigerian politics is the lack of consistence and sustainability of core values and beliefs; as such the level of carpet crossing at a ridiculous, abandoned recklessness, by politicians who have no feeling or quest for political knowledge but the boring hunger for political power and relevance, which has delimited the bases of a proper political culture in the society.

We have seen in resent time the rate at which politicians, party members are moving from one political party to another, as if travelling from one town to another without due regards to community cultural and traditional values.

**Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. Edmund Burke 1770**

The political party has been turned into a business organization where the pecuniary interests of the leadership are dominant; but they are able to access political power and keep it because of their ability to manipulate the citizenry". The leadership problem has been a perennial issue with the PDP since inception with countless number of chairmen exiting the position in questionable manners thus culminating in internal wrangling. Recently, the squabble between the PDP and the so called "NEW PDP" attests to this which bothers neither on party accountability to people nor faulting the governance style but on occupying strategic positions within the party hierarchy. The fractionalization of APP, APGA and CPC calls for worry. It was AD and ANPP merger in 1999 to face the PDP. The foundation being laid now is almost APC mega arrangement to confront the monstrous PDP. Nigerians immediate reprieve for the socio-economic squalor they found themselves is hinged on the growing popularity of the APC. However, the purported rescue mission of the APC is debatable. The recruits into the party's fold are politicians of diverse origins, who were suspicious of each other before now, mainly coming from the much criticized PDP. The furore generated by the defection of some governors in and out of PDP, 37 members of the House of Representatives, former vice president Atiku and others is no eureka. The uniting intention and ulterior motive may be their undoing. The question now is: Will it not be old wine in a new bottle? The belief of the electorate in these emerging structures will be put to test in less than 6 weeks. The outcome of the process will usher in another chapter in Nigeria's democratic drive.

### **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF IDEOLOGY**

Thus far, our review has focused on the dimensional structure and discursive contents of left-right ideology as well as its motivational antecedents or functional substructure. However, much evidence suggests that acquisition of the discursive superstructure—which requires both exposure to the ideological menu communicated by institutional elites as well as the ability and motivation to absorb the messages—has important downstream social and political consequences.

## **Effects on the Evaluations of Issues, Parties, Candidates, and Other Attitude Objects**

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of ideological orientation is its influence on political attitudes and behaviours such as voting. Many studies have shown that those who identify as liberal tend to adopt issue positions that are conventionally recognized as left-of centre, evaluate liberal political figures more favourably, and vote for candidates of the left, whereas those who identify as conservative tend to adopt positions that are right-of-centre, evaluate conservative political figures more favourably, and vote for candidates on the right. In fact, ideology and partisanship (which typically has an ideological thrust) are among the strongest and most consistent predictors of political preferences.

Moreover, left-right differences in evaluative preferences emerge in many areas outside the realm of formal politics. For instance, [1] found that self-identified liberals were significantly more favourable concerning foreign films, big cities, poetry, tattoos, and foreign travel, whereas conservatives were more favourable concerning fraternities and sororities, sport utility vehicles, drinking alcohol, and watching television. Findings such as these strengthen the case that ideological divides are, among other things, personality divides, but the direction of causality is still unknown. We suspect that ideological identifications both reflect and reinforce social and personal preferences, styles, and activities, but this is speculative and requires empirical confrontation using experimental and longitudinal research designs. At a higher level of abstraction, ideology also predicts citizens' general value orientations, with leftists exhibiting greater egalitarianism and openness to change than rightists.

## **Ideology as a System-Justifying Device**

It should be clear by now that we regard ideology as not merely an organizing device or a shortcut for making heuristic judgments about various political objects; it is also a device for explaining and even rationalizing the way things are or, alternatively, how things should be different than they are. Thus, political ideologies typically make at least tacit reference to some social system, either as an affirmation or a rejection of it. The



power of ideology to explain and justify discrepancies between the current social order and some alternative not only maintains support for the status quo, but also serves for its adherents the palliative function of alleviating dissonance or discomfort associated with the awareness of systemic injustice or inequality. Sighted from Political Ideology: Its Structures, Functions and Elective Affinities. (J.T. Jost, C.M. Federico, and J.L. Napier. 2009).

## **WHAT IS PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY IDEOLOGY**

### **THE PDP**

The People's Democratic Party is a political party in Nigeria. Its ideological strand generally lies towards the right wing of the centre, of the political spectrum. It has won every Presidential and general election since 1999, maintains the same ideological stand, and has remained the dominant party in the Fourth Republic amidst controversial circumstances. The party has a neo-liberal stance in its economic policies and maintains a centre-right conservative stance on most social issues, such as same sex relations and religious beliefs.

The People's Democratic party of Nigeria are Conscious of the following Ideological principles:

Our historic mission is to build a modern democratic state founded on Justice, Equity and Fair play.

Realizing the need to;

- i. Make fundamental break with past mistakes in order to realize the optimum potentials of the Countries future;
- ii. Build a qualitatively better society based on the principles of democracy, human rights and social justice under the rule of law;

Committed to;

- i. Restructuring Nigeria in the spirit of true federalism and responsible tiers of government, so as to achieve a just and equitable society;

ii. Resolving such fundamental issues as proper devolution of powers between the three tiers of government;

Covenant as follows:

#### 1. The Indivisibility of the Nigerian Polity

i. We affirm our belief in the unity of Nigeria under the Federal System of Government. We shall, therefore, continuously promote political tolerance, accommodation and compromise, religious harmony, as well as inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic accommodation and co-operation.

ii. The Party shall also promote geo-political balancing as a fundamental principle of power sharing in the country, in line with the principle of federal character.

iii. The Party shall uphold the principle of power rotation in our polity at all levels.

#### 2. Supremacy of the Constitution

We affirm our belief in the supremacy of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the sovereignty of the Nigerian nation and its people. We hereby affirm our commitment to strict observance and enforcement of the provisions. As a political party, we shall conform to the spirit and the letter of the provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the constitution of the People's Democratic Party as amended

#### 3. Independence of the Judiciary and Operation of the Rule of Law

We affirm our belief in the supremacy of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the sovereignty of the Nigerian nation and its people. We hereby affirm our commitment to strict observance and enforcement of the provisions. As a political party, we shall conform to the spirit and the letter of the provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the constitution of the People's Democratic Party.

#### 4. Sanctity of Human Dignity

We affirm our belief in respect of fundamental human rights, as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution and International Protocols and Conventions. We are against all forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, place of origin, or ethnicity, race, beliefs, etc. The PDP will strive to protect the rights of vulnerable groups in society, including women, children, senior citizens, physically challenged and minorities.

#### DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES

We shall remain strongly committed to:

- i. Democracy and good governance;
- ii. Freedom, human rights and human dignity;
- iii. Justice, equity, popular participation, inclusiveness and the rule of law;
- iv. Integrity, transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs;
- v. Sustainable development through the creation of an enabling environment for private sector led economic development.

#### DIRECTION OF POLICY AND MEASURES

##### 1. Political Objective

The political objective of the People's Democratic Party is to:

- i. Seek political power for the purpose of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria and promoting the security, safety, welfare, and well-being of all Nigerians.
- ii. Promote and establish political stability in Nigeria and foster national unity and integration while safeguarding our culture and historical values;
- iii. Provide good governance that ensures probity and participatory democracy;
- iv. Guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens and persons resident in Nigeria.

- v. Promote and nurture democratic ideals and traditions on a sustainable basis;
- vi. Provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise;
- vii. Offer equal opportunities to hold the highest political, military, bureaucratic and judicial offices in the country to all citizens, and protect, defend and safeguard the interests of all including minorities.

## 2. Governance

The party shall be committed to:

- i. The principle of participatory democracy that lays emphasis on the welfare of our people:
- ii. The principles of social justice and the equality of opportunities for all Citizens;
- iii. The promotion and defence of the Nigerian Federal System of government;
- iv. The principles of accountability and transparency in order to restore confidence in the institutions of government, discipline and leadership by example as basis for public life and personal integrity as an important moral value in the conduct of public affairs;
- v. Fostering the spirit of oneness among our people by treating all Nigerians fairly and equitably, regardless of their social, political or economic status; and
- vi. The preservation of Nigeria as a multi-religious state whilst guaranteeing freedom of religion and good conscience.

## 3. Economy

At the root of Nigeria's political and social problems is poverty and low access to economic opportunities. The improvement in the well-being of Nigerians is the ultimate objective of the PDP's economic policy, and to make accessible to every Nigerian the basic needs of life. The focus would be to create a market-based open-economy, driven by small and medium scale businesses and regulated by a reformed private driven public sector.

At the very foundation of the above objective of the party is the pursuit of a strong, virile and diversified economy built to stimp rural/ urban migration through investment in

modern agricultural methods. PDP's economic policy is centred on people and seeks to realize the Millennium Development Goals while aiming to:

- i. Develop a middle class driven by small business owners, professional class with access to credit.
- ii. Create easy access to transferable property rights in urban and rural areas.
- iii. Protect the weak and poor through initiatives that are designed to integrate them in the economy.
- iv. Improve private investment in physical and social infrastructure.

The PDP aims, altogether, at establishing the leading economy in Africa and one of the 20 leading and largest economies in the World by 2020; an economy that experiences rapid and sustained growth of not less than 10% per annum.

#### 4. The Judiciary and the Administration of Justice

The Party shall:

- i. At all times uphold and defend the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- ii. Uphold the principles of separation of powers as enshrined in the Constitution;
- iii. Uphold the Independence of the Judiciary;
- iv. Ensure the security of lives and property