

IDEOLOGY AND THE PARTY SYSTEM IN NEOLIBERAL DEMOCRACIES: NIGERIA AND THE UNITED STATES

Ambrose Ihekwoaba EGWIM¹

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Redeemer's University,
Ede, Osun state, NIGERIA

Abstract

The paper examines the role and significance of ideology for party systems and electoral support in the 21st century neoliberal democracies with references to Nigeria and the United States of America. We argued that critical national issues serve as basis for political party support rather than ideology. The seemingly post-cold war global consensus on the neo-liberal ideology, the convergence on the ideological centre in the absence of any serious contemporary alternative to the market economy, and the catch-all strategy adopted by political parties have led to the mainstream parties sharing their policies. Emphases have shifted from ideological differences to performance in governance in mobilize party support. Effectiveness in handling national policy issues is far more critical in winning elections than proffering a different ideology from the mainstream party.

Key Words: Ideology, Neo-liberalism, Nigerian Politics, Party Support, Two Party System

Introduction

Nigerian politics seems to be gradually moving towards a two dominant party system as is the case in the United States of America. Between 26th November, 2013, when five People's Democratic Party (PDP) governors defected to the newly registered All Progressives Congress (APC), and 28th October, 2014, when a sitting Speaker of the House of Representatives formally declared his defection to the APC, there was a dramatic change in party membership and tendency towards a two dominant party system. Having adopted the U.S. form of democracy, it was expected that their system would be an example which the emerging Nigerian two dominant parties must emulate.

There were complaints that the PDP and APC do not offer much in terms of alternative policies. The argument; still ongoing, is that the major parties in a two dominant party system must articulate clearly alternative visions and strategies in an ideologically-driven manifesto. This suggests that such parties must have distinctly opposing values and ideologies.

The importance of ideology for party electoral support seems to have declined with the dominance of the market economy over other systems in the 21st century. However,

these diminishing roles of ideological differences, and the emerging emphasis on performance in governance for party electoral support in neo-liberal democracies are yet to be given their deserved scholarly treatment. The aim of this paper is to examine the role and significance of ideology for party systems and party electoral support in neoliberal democracies with specific references to Nigeria and the United States of America.

The questions on the lips of many Nigerians during the formation of the APC had been, what was APC going to do differently from the ruling party, and what was new on its programme? There were complaints that the opposition did not offer much in terms of alternative policies to the ruling party, the PDP, which they displaced in the 2015 general elections. Many Nigerians had expressed concern about the gale of defections by politicians, expressing fears that Nigerian politicians lacked ideology. Soludo (2014) argues that the APC was an alliance of convenience by disgruntled politicians lacking any progressive ideology aside their inordinate ambition to grab power at the centre, that the 'soul of the party' was not really different from the much derided PDP, and that it lacked a sophisticated manifesto. One may infer that Soludo (2014), was referring to a clear articulation of the vision and strategy in an ideologically-driven manifesto. In that regards Agbaje (2013) asserts:

I have traced the foundations, evolution and (lack of) ideology of Nigeria's major political parties and concluded that we are yet to evolve a political party system in its normal characterization in which there are clearly defined parties with contrasting visions, ideologies and policy platforms and with stable membership and programmes (http://businessdayonline.com/2013/09/nigerian-political-party-system-2/#.VGEXo_nF-38).

Barry and Smith (2010:7), argue that 'multi-party system, in an environment of generally low-elite level polarization may pose challenges to ideological communication between elites and masses... in environments of low elite-level polarization, two-party systems may facilitate ideological identification'. Meaning that Nigerians should begin to witness more ideologically inclined parties, that the divisions between the two poles of the ideological spectrum should form an important dimension of conflict among elites in Nigeria as a result of the registration of the APC and tending towards a two-party system.

The United State party system is often cited as an example which the emerging Nigerian two-party system must emulate. It is not clear; however, that the two American parties represent divergent ideologies. The major parties seem to be pragmatic. However, some scholars have observed that U.S. political elites have grown more polarized: 'Democrats and Republicans in Congress more consistently oppose each other on legislation' (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006 in Treier and Hillygus, 2009:679), the party platforms are more ideologically extreme (Layman, 1999 in Treier and Hillygus, 2009:679), and issue activists are more committed to one political party or the other (Stone, 1991 in Treier and Hillygus, 2009:679).

In contemporary American politics, Republican politicians *consistently* line up on the conservative side of an issue while Democratic politicians consistently line up on the liberal side, across different policy domains. With just the liberal or conservative label, then, we can quite accurately predict a politician's stance on policy issues as disparate as taxes, health care, or abortion. Put another way, the belief systems of political elites in the United States today are captured with a single dimension of ideology (Treier and Hillygus, 2009:679).

'In fact, ideology and party identification are more strongly aligned now than they were just two or three decades ago' (Saunders and Abramowitz, 2007 in Treier and Hillygus, 2009:679). According to Bafumi and Shapiro, (2009:1) 'what has not been fully appreciated in the twentieth/twenty-first century history of voting studies in U.S is how partisanship returned in a form more ideological and more issue based along liberal-conservative lines than it has been in more than 30 years'. There are contrary opinions to the notion that Republicans and Democrats are diametrically opposed political parties, the idea that they are bitter political opponents and that they fight over everything according to Ron Paul, (2011) is false. 'The truth is that they are the same party':

We don't have a good democratic process...what happens if you come to the conclusion, as millions of Americans have, these parties aren't different, they're all the same. The monetary policy stays the same. The welfare system stays the same. The foreign policy stays the same. They get pretty disgusted. There is but one party (http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-06-06/entertainment/bal-ron-paul-democrats-adrepublicans-are-the-same-party-20110606_1_ron-paul-political-parties-democrats).

With the global consensus on the neo-liberal ideology and the absence of any serious contemporary alternative to the market economy, the mainstream parties seems to have converged ideologically to the centre sharing their policies only differing in strategies of implementation in seeking the public support. Emerging emphasis for electoral support also seems to have shifted to performance in governance, personalities of the candidates, local and international issues of economy, corruption, terrorism and foreign policies rather than ideology. Opposition disagreement with the mainstream party key on matters of policies rather than disagreement over fundamentals/ideological issues as was the case during the cold war. Though, it seems we are already witnessing post - neoliberal or post-globalization era.

The tenets of globalization are now being questioned in the rich and democratic West which clearly constitutes a threat to the world order and this pattern of party competition. The 'multilateral system is facing challenges' according to Davies, (2018). Ruchir (2016), called it time of 'popular backlash against open markets', an 'era of deglobalization.' The new anti-globalization idea is called "Populism". Inglehart and Norris (2016:7), argued that populist leaders like Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Norbert Hoffer, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders are altering established pattern of party competition in contemporary Western societies. Brinded (in Cox, 2017:10), notes that 'Brexit, President Trumps victory are cause for worry, as well as the recent rise of 'anti-system, populist' and 'quite extreme

political parties’ in western Europe not just because of the threat it posed to Europe alone but to globalization more generally’.

Methodology

Three criteria were used to select the countries for this cross-national comparative study. The first criterion required a resort to market economic policy that had loomed large and shaped the socio-political landscape this 21st century. The second criterion was the presence of two dominant parties, characterized by two visions of governance, strategies, or policy implementations. The third criterion was the ability of the electorate to have informed decisions about which of the two visions and strategies presented by the two parties best addressed and articulated their broad concerns, hopes and aspirations. It was based on the above criteria that we selected Nigeria and the United States of America. The “cases” in our data were not actually countries, but moments of time in the party systems within them. Data were sourced from books, journals, official documents, including party platforms (manifestos), speeches, open letters to the electorate, and policy documents. These were collated from various institutions and sources, such as Centre for American Studies, the National Orientation Agency, the National Planning Commission, National Electoral Institute, and the National Legislative Institute.

Liberalism and Neo-liberalism in Major Political Parties Ideology in US and Nigeria

In the history of political parties in the United States, stand on local issues seem to have formed the bases for party formation, party differentiation, party support and party system dynamics rather than ideology. What scholars understand under issues are ‘general or specific political questions which arise in a political system’ (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008: 161 in Walczak, 2012:14), ‘matters upon which the electorate’s opinions are clearly divided’. In the early decades of American history; the constitutional era for example, the extent of federal power dominated politics (the nature and power of the federal government visa - vice the state government).

TABLE 1: FEDERALIST VS. ANTI-FEDERALIST THE VITAL ISSUES

Issues	Federalists	Anti-Federalist	Notes
National vs. state governments	Favoured a strong central government with the power to control commerce, tax, declare war, and make treaties	Sought to limit the role of the national government, favouring local control	This issue never finally settled until the Civil War; was the basic philosophical point of contention between the emergent two Parties.
French Revolution	Opposed the Revolution and opposed American support for the antimonarchy group	Supported the popular forces in the French Revolution and Favoured American assistance	The debt of America to France for its assistance during the American Revolution is seen as

			due and unpaid by the anti-federalist
Jay Treaty	Supported as an effort to build better relations with Britain	Opposed. More positive relations with France are Favoured.	Jay Treaty was seen by the anti-federalist as an attempt to dump cheap British imports in the American market
Alien & Sedition Acts	Supported as necessary to prevent growth of anti-federalist and to limit criticism of Federalist officials	Opposed, along with the enlarged army, as a threat to citizen's individual liberties.	Criticized by Jefferson and Madison in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, where doctrine of nullification was first explained.
Hamilton's economic plans	Supported enthusiastically	Opposed. Hamilton's plans were seen as aiding his cronies, Northern states which had not yet paid off their debts, and as generally weakening the power of the states.	The proposal to establish the national bank became the point of greatest contention and provided the first open break between Jefferson and Hamilton.

Source: Goldfield, et al, (2017) Anti-Federalists and the Federalists in *The American Journey: A History of the United States*. <http://faculty.polytechnic.org/gfeldmeth/chart.feddr.pdf>

In the late 18th and early 19th century, the Federalists and Anti federalists were like the modern day Republicans and Democrats, although their names were formally the Democratic-Republicans. In the 1850s disagreement over the issue of slavery, resulting in the Civil War, ended nearly three decades of competition between the Whigs and the Democrats.

TABLE 2: ISSUE OF SLAVERY IN THE 1850'S PARTY PLATFORMS

<i>The Democrats' Platform</i>	<i>The Republicans' Platform</i>
1840, 1844, 1848 All efforts by abolitionists . . . to interfere with questions of slavery . . . are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences and . . . have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the	1840, 1844, 1848 [Republican Party not yet formed.]

people and endanger the stability and permanency of the union.	
1852 The Democratic Party will resist all attempts at renewing – in Congress or out of it – the agitation of the slavery question [i.e., will oppose all efforts to abolish slavery].	1852 [Republican Party not yet formed.]
1856 The Democratic Party . . . will abide by and adhere to a faithful execution of the acts . . . settled by the Congress of 1850: “the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor.” . . . [We support] non-interference by Congress with slavery in state and territory, or in the District of Columbia [i.e., we oppose all congressional attempts to abolish slavery in any area of the nation].	1856 As our Republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, it becomes our duty to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it for the purpose of establishing slavery in the territories of the United States. . . [W]e deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislation, [or] of any individual or association of individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.

Source: *Authors’s 2018, Extracted from Civil Rights Platforms*

In 1930s the level of involvement of the government in economy laid the foundation for the seemingly ideological inclinations of the Republican and Democratic parties.

TABLE 3: LIBERAL VIEWS VERSUS CONSERVATIVE VIEWS IN U.S

Issue	Liberal View	Conservative View
Abortion	Legal and open to all women	Immoral and should be banned
Gun control	Heavy restrictions	Few restrictions
Taxes	Higher, progressive	Lower, flatter

Affirmative action	Necessary to make up for centuries of discrimination	Unfair because it reversely favours some and excludes others
Gay marriage	Should be legal	Should be illegal

Source: <http://www.sparknotes.com/us-government-and-politics/political-science/political-ideologies-and-styles/section4/page/3/>

Throughout much of American history, central issues divided the interests and opinions of the people that led to the foundation of the two dominant party system. Scholars generally agree that the U.S. party system has undergone major realignments at particular strategic points but none has produced a complete change from the liberal ideology (Hartz 1955, Schlesinger Jr. 1962, Horowitz, 2004).

The *social consensus theory* put forth by Hartz (1955), explains the phenomenon of two dominant party system in U.S by arguing that America is characterized by basic agreement, having accepted the constitutional framework. The two parties have evolved within this consensus, according to Hartz, to offer different policies that can appeal to the majority. The basic argument being that the whole of American political development has occurred within a liberal bourgeois consensus. According to Horowitz, (2004) 'faced with communism and fascism liberalism unconscious shifted its strategies in the New Deal era what he called 'neo-liberalism'. The argument being that the "New Deal" era was within the liberal ideological paradigm.

The new liberalism became a rallying cry for the long-range goals of communism and fascism...With the support of the New Deal and with the victory in the Second World War, liberalism shifted gears into neo-liberalism... neo-liberalism attempted with great success to fuse the romantic individualism of the nineteenth century with the mechanistic collectivism of the twentieth century (Horowitz, 2004:205).

In that regard Schlesinger Jr. (1962) argues that:

Such words (*Liberal / conservative*) in the American consensus tend to be counters in a game rather than symbols of impassable divisions of principle... Even those Americans who privately reject the liberal tradition - like the Communists of the '30's and '40's or the McCarthyites of the '50's - can succeed only as they profess a relationship to liberalism. They wither and die in a liberal society when their antiliberal purposes are fully exposed and understood.

Schlesinger argues further that the crucial distinction in the American two-party system does not lie in the attitude toward the role of the state or in the question of civil freedom and private property. Ambiguity and even interchangeability of position testify

according to Schlesinger Jr. (1962) to the absence of deep differences of principle in American society. Nwangwu and Ononogbu, (2014:63) in that line argues that:

Political parties on the same locus in the ideological spectrum may have different programmes and policies of achieving basically the same socio-economic objective as it is the case with the Conservative and Liberal Parties in the United Kingdom. By the same token, the strategic goals of the Republicans and Democrats in the United States (US) are fundamentally the same on several issues of national interest as both are right-wing political parties... Thus, when a country has determined *a priori*, the course of its development, parties can share similar ideological orientations; it is the strategies for fulfilling these that will differentiate the various parties from each other.

The summary of the whole thing being that ideological consensus breeds political parties that share similar 'principles' but differ in strategies. The broad ideological consensus in the United States encourages just two large parties, with overlapping points of view, whose main focus is to win elections, not to represent vastly different sets of beliefs (ideological parties often profess broad political beliefs and values that are radically different from the mainstream). In U.S, parties rally on local and international issues in seeking the electorate support. The efficiency or otherwise of the incumbent leader on the existing condition is a major decider. Blinder and Watson (2014:14-16) point to the significance of economic factors in American presidential contests. Their study on elections since the end of the Second World War reveals that presidential candidates operated with distinct advantages or disadvantages, depending on whether their party or their opponent's party recently governed in a period of prosperity or economic hardship. In many instances the state of the economy appeared to make as much or more of an impact on the presidential race than the candidates' personal attributes, campaign strategies, or debating skills.

Fukuyama, (1992 in Spellman, 2011:155) wrote extensively about the end of ideological conflict, of a new era where nations the world over would embrace Western-style democratic politics, market economics, and a broad social consensus based on competitive individualism. There has been a growing liberal consensus in Nigeria and the world over owing to the collapse of communism and the absence of any serious contemporary alternative to the market economy. This is reflected in Yar'adua (2007):

Over the past eight years Nigerians have reached a national consensus in at least four areas: to deepen democracy and the rule of law; *build an economy driven primarily by the private sector, not government*; display zero tolerance for corruption in all its forms, and, finally, restructure and staff our government to ensure efficiency and good governance (Inaugural Address of Umaru Musa Yar'adua May 29, 2007).

Soludo (2015) traced the foundation of market economy in Nigeria back to the Babangida regime (1985-1993):

... The foundation for the current market economy we operate in Nigeria was laid by that regime (liberalization of markets including market determined exchange rate, private sector-led economy including licensing of private banks and insurance, de-regulation, privatization of public enterprises under TCPC, etc). Just abolishing the import licensing regime was a fundamental policy revolution. Despite the criticisms, these policy thrusts have remained the pillars of our deepening market economy...

Since 1999 return to democratic rule under the PDP, government policies have bestowed more thrust on the private sector participation in the economy (privatization, deregulation, commercialization, liberalization, trade, globalization, transparency, anti-corruption, etc.). In that regards Soludo (2015) notes:

Under our democratic experience, President Obasanjo ...consolidated and deepened the market economy structures (consolidation of the banking system which is powering the emergence of a new but truly private sector-led economy and simultaneously led to a new awareness and boom in the capital market; telecommunications revolution; new pension regime; debt relief which won for Nigeria policy independence from the World Bank and Paris Club; deepening of de-regulation and privatization including the unbundling of NEPA under PHCN for privatization; agricultural revolution that saw yearly growth rate of over 6% and remains unsurpassed ever since; sound monetary and fiscal policy and growing foreign reserves that gave confidence to investors; establishment of the Africa Finance Corporation which is leading infrastructure finance in Africa; backward integration policy that saw the establishment and growth of Dangote cement and others; established ICPC and EFCC to fight corruption, etc) <http://saharareporters.com/2015/01/25/buhari-vs-jonathan-beyond-election-chukwuma-charles-soludo>

The hegemonic strand of the neoliberal ideology and the seemingly neo-liberal consensus in the 21st century Nigeria means that the political parties can only differ in effective governance and policies than ideology (disagreement on policies rather than disagreement over fundamentals) to seek the public support. It is not surprising; therefore, to see how in the buildup and the actual conduct of the 2015 general election Nigerian party system comes to resemble that of the US.

Nigerian politics witnessed a shift towards a two dominant party system (political system in which only two parties has a reasonable chance of winning office in the national elections). With the emergence of the APC in the Nigerian political scene July 31, 2013, only four political parties – People’s Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Grand Alliance

(APGA), Labour Party (LP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) were in control of at least one state government out of the 36 states (APC 16 States, PDP 18, LP 1 and APGA 1). Though APC and PDP lost Anambra and Ondo state to APGA and Labour Party respectively, the country moved to two strong political forces from the build up toward 2015 general election, Mimiko (LP) and Obi (APGA) defected to the PDP. Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, there has been absence of parties with clear ideological underpinnings. According to Agbaje (2013) the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria's ruling party since 1999 is a centrist, non-ideological "rally" united by money and power rather than any shared vision, ideology or ideas.

Ideology declined as a means of party generation of support at the end of the cold war. With the end of the cold war it is difficult for a party in the neo-liberal dominated era to negate the private sector as the engine of growth of the economy more especially in the dependent economies of Africa. Steger, (2002:8-9), identified the concept of 'globalization' as the new, dominant buzzword of a capitalist, neoliberal ideological project that draws largely upon the economic philosophies of Adam Smith (1723-1790), David Ricardo (1772-1823), and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). According to Steger, the guiding principles of this neoliberal project include 'the primacy of economic growth, the importance of free trade to stimulate growth, the unrestricted free market, individual choice, the reduction of government regulation, and the advocacy of an evolutionary model of social development anchored in the Western experience and applicable to the entire world'. Steger asserts that 'globalism not only represents a set of political ideas and beliefs coherent enough to warrant the status of a new ideology, but also constitutes the dominant ideology of our time against which all of its challengers must define themselves'.

The dominance of the neoliberal ideology is made possible by 'the rapid descent of conventional ideologies largely caused by such cataclysmic events as the information revolution, the collapse of Soviet-style communism, the 9-11 attacks, and the ensuing US-led global War on Terror' (Steger, 2005:26).

By the mid-1990s, large segments of the population in the both the global North and South had accepted globalism's core claims, thus internalizing large parts of an overarching normative framework that advocated the deregulation of markets, the liberalization of trade, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the dissemination of 'American values,' and, after 9-11, the support of the global War on Terror under US leadership (Steger, 2005:14).

According to Usman, (2013:48 in Nwangwu and Ononogbu, 2014:63) 'the global dominance of capitalism as the preferred system of economic organization, means most of the world's countries have adopted some variant of capitalism – whether the America's free market capitalism, China's state-led capitalism or Nigeria's crony capitalism...' When a country has a shared basic ideological agreement (ideological consensus) the mainstream political parties share policies within the same ideological paradigm only differing in the strategies of implement to seek the public support making them look alike. The driving idea behind globalization is free-market capitalism - the more you let market forces rule

and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient your economy will be. 'Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world' (Friedman, in Steger, 2005:17).

Parties are essential to democracy, because they are an essential part of representation but in the 21st century with the collapse of communism and globalization they do not have to be ideologically different to fulfil those roles. The major political parties can merely be differentiated based on their stand on issues and promise of efficiency in governance. Giving rise to issue based parties rather than ideological parties. It becomes difficult for the APC to distinguish itself from the PDP by indicating its ideological departures. The campaign promises being to run a more disciplined, more efficient, less corrupt government than the PDP, if elected into office, and of course to zone the Presidency to the Northern part of the country. An ideological based party should have differentiation from the PDP by a revision of the current neoliberal growth model. The APC is seriously defending the rein of market economy.

Some analysts argue that having seen the manifest capitalist tendencies of the PDP, APC should have tended to the left-of-the centre or socialist, to express the opposite of the PDP (Soludo, 2014). The argument was that to some extent the ideologies of the military-guided Third Republic two party system, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) in the '90s were distinct – 'a little to the left and a little to the right'. It should be noted that the said ideologies were imposed by the military and the politicians were to choose between any of the two parties depending on their ideological leanings or stay out of politics. The ideological leaning of the parties was mere cosmetic.

The explanation for the seemingly lack of ideological difference between the PDP and APC may be seen in the dominance of market economy. The two parties operate under the same ideology – neo-liberalism. Their difference lies in the idea that power must shift to the north which required the southern support to be a reality. Like the PDP, APC had chosen to adopt the catch-all strategy which de-emphasized ideology in the era of globally consensus on the neoliberal ideology to gain votes. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria showed how the party system came to resemble that of the U.S. within the global consensus on the neo-liberal ideology. There was a solid commitment of various factions of the Nigerian ruling class to neo-liberalism, across boundaries of political parties. A review of the manifestoes of the extant parties in Nigeria reveals this pervading feature.

TABLE 4: CORE DIMENSIONS ON ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES THAT WON EXECUTIVE OR LEGISLATIVE SEATS IN NIGERIA (1999-2011)

Source Document	National Orientation Agency (2010), Source Book on Political Parties' Manifestoes & Constitutions
1. Accord (A)	The state will play a leading role in facilitating a private sector led economic growth and in doing this, the party accepts that government should continue to vigorously pursue the current economic reform agenda in line with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) its

	counterparts at the state and local government levels i.e. SEEDS and LEEDS (p.2).
2. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	<p>We subscribe to the following core values, which are consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: a) honour and dignity of man and ownership of his God-given rights to life, property, freedom and happiness, b) Equity and social justice c) private enterprise.</p> <p>We believe in the role of the state as an impartial umpire and a regulator of institutions, processes, interests and rights and subscribed to its limited role in the private and personal affairs of citizen (p.75).</p>
3. Alliance for Democracy (AD)	<p>v. Create a suitable environment for foreign investment to flow into the country.</p> <p>ix. Put the organized private sector into more confidence so that they can be genuinely involved in the revamping and management of the national economy.</p> <p>xvii. Encourage and promote private entrepreneurship as a way of activating the latent potentials of our people to participate more in the national economy (p.232).</p>
4. All Nigerian Peoples party (ANPP)	The ANPP believes in the divestment of government from commercial entrepreneurship (p. 272).
5. All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	APGA will work for the creation of a national economy that is people-centred and private-sector-driven (p.347).
6. Democratic People's Party (DPP)	Commercialize existing rolling Mills in order to enhance their efficiency (p.571).
7. Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	CPC recognize and accept that globalization is a reality and has tremendous potentials, provided its applications are tailored to suit our stage of development and competence. We appreciate that in today's world, globalization is continuously redefining the roles and partnership of public and private sectors (p.492).

8. KOWA Party	We are committed to developing a market-oriented economy with emphasis on free enterprise but fair and equitable regulated market (p.703).
9. Labour Party (LP)	The party shall engage the phenomena of globalization and liberalization by adopting a cautious and step to step approach based on the country's national interest (p.742).
10. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	The creation of a national economy that is highly competitive, responsive to incentives, private sector -led, broad-based, diversified, and market-oriented and open, but based on internal momentum for its growth, is the aim of the PDP. To get there PDP will sustain the private sector-led economic growth strategy, create and maintain a stable macroeconomic environment for private enterprise to thrive, continue the divestment of government holding ventures where the private sector can operate (p.1261-2).
11. Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN)	Shall recognize the role of market in all economic activities but would strive to avoid the tyranny of free market fundamentalism. Shall promote foreign investment and provide ample incentives (p.1318).
12. Progressive Peoples Party (PPA)	In general, our economic strategies will emphasize active interventions by the state where necessary and desirable, to correct for observed failures of market forces (p.1437).

Source: Author's, 2018

The political class has bought into the tenets of neo-liberalism even though its political party machinery functions without any well-articulated stand in relation to this world view ... it nonetheless constitutes the underpinning philosophical commitment of the dominant political class' (Ichimi, 2014:35). The manifesto of the All Progressive Party (APC), that of the People Democratic Party (PDP) and those of the other parties reflects the tenets of neo-liberalism showing that Nigeria political elites and the emerging political parties are committed to liberalization policy.

TABLE 5: CORE DIMENSIONS ON ECONOMIC POLICIES OF SELECTED MINOR PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Source Document	National Orientation Agency (2010), Source Book on Political Parties' Manifestoes & Constitutions
Action Alliance (AA)	AA government will encourage every Nigerian to make the maximum use of the talent endowed upon him/her by nature. The

	economy shall be free, subject only to minimum intervention where the interest of the society so dictates (p.37).
Advance Congress of Democrats (ACD)	Shall recognize the role of the market in all economic activities, but will strive to avoid the tyranny of free market and the excesses of market fundamentalist...Shall promote foreign investment and provide ample incentives (p.119).
African Political System (APS)	The APS believe in free trade and participatory economy. We believe that for our economy to thrive, the Nigerian economic space must be opened up for local and international investors (p.207).
Change Advocacy Party (CAP)	... The focus would be to create a market- based economy driven by small and medium scale business and regulated by a reformed public sector (p.407).
Justice Party (JP)	... The expansion of the economy translates to attracting foreign capital investment... Government primary responsibility is to create the enabling atmosphere for business and commerce to thrive; Justice Party government shall issue those enabling instruments that will release the creative potentials of our people (p.682).
Liberal Democratic Party (LDPN)	We believe that planning by governments of their own economic activities is a necessary, provided however it is not used to stifle the autonomy of the private sector of the economy and the price mechanism of free market which also requires the maintenance of free competition We believe in the need for the free movement of people, goods, capital and services; for the international division of labour and for international cooperation on the widest possible scale in monetary, social and technological matters. We advocate regional economic groupings provided they do not become instrument for regional protectionism...(p.756)
Mega Progressive Peoples Party (MPPP)	The Mega Progressive Peoples Party will ensure that Nigeria is not disadvantaged in the global trade arrangements and policies (p.807).
Movement for the Restoration and Defense of Democracy (MRDD)	Industrialization is one of the cardinal programmes of the MRDD, whose objective shall include the development of promotion of a) private entrepreneurship... commercialization of commercially-driven, viable public enterprises... (840)

Source: Author's, 2018

It is also difficult to distinguish between the neo-liberal economic policies of the party at the centre and those of the state governments including those controlled by the opposition parties. Nigerians whether conservatives, liberals or progressives agree on the basic aims of deepening democracy and the rule of law; restructuring and staffing the government to ensure efficiency and good governance, an economy driven primarily by the private sector, not government; and displaying zero tolerance for corruption in all its forms. The emerging two dominant political parties changed to umbrella organization covering people with divergent ideologies. Rather than developing distinct ideological positions, the two parties developed policy platforms. While the personalities of the presidential candidates remained at the forefront of election campaign discourse, the candidates and their political parties differed on certain key local and international issues that were important to voters.

TABLE 6: WHERE THEY STOOD ON KEY ELECTION ISSUES, NIGERIAN PDP/APC

Issues	Goodluck Jonathan (PDP)	Muhammadu Buhari (APC)
Security	Said Boko Haram can be defeated in April. Seeks greater regional and international cooperation to tackle the insurgency, terrorism, piracy and organized crime.	Said the government has been ineffective and lacks the will power to fight Boko Haram. Pledged to end the insurgency within months if elected.
Economy	Said he will continue with his economic blueprint known as the "2011-2015 Transformation Agenda". Viewed economic diversification as a key step towards addressing the fall in global oil prices.	Said government's economic policies had worsened the lives of Nigerians. Promised to pick "competent hands" to run the economy. Pledged to tackle poverty by closing the wealth gap through shared economic growth.
Corruption	Said "we are fighting corruption. It is not by publicly jailing people. Yes, we believed in suppressing corruption, but our emphasis is in prevention."	Said one of his key priorities is to wipe out corruption. "If Nigeria doesn't kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria".
Employment	Promises to create 2 million jobs each year. Launched YouWIN scheme for young entrepreneurs and Sure-P initiative aimed at helping graduates find jobs.	Promised to create 20,000 jobs per state, totalling 720,000. Pledged support for the agricultural sector and soft loans for small manufacturers to boost job creation.
Infrastructure	Credited his administration with reviving the railway system and improving road infrastructure.	Pledged to complete stalled road projects and improve infrastructural development

		nationwide, especially in the north-east.
Energy	Said government's privatization of the power generation and distribution companies will ensure regular power supplies in the future.	Said he will tackle a sector "riddled with corruption and mismanagement" and adopt a market-based approach. Favoured exploration of non-oil sector.

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31111572>

The dominance of market economy and consensus on the neo-liberal ideology has shaped political and social discourse in the 21st century. Ideological differences play diminishing role in party system and electoral support as neo-liberalism solidified its position of dominance owing to the collapse of communism. Political parties compete for elections in an atmosphere that suggests that fundamental ideological issues are settled. There is a consensus on the political agenda, a convergence of commitment to some normative values and ideas by the political class, which is distinctively neoliberal.

The two major parties, the All Progressive Congress and People’s Democratic Party in Nigeria, and the Democrats and Republican parties in the U.S., tenaciously defend the reign of the market economy: free enterprise, privatization, deregulation, commercialization, liberalization, foreign direct investment, and reductions in government spending. Political discourse differs only on personalities, policy effectiveness and strategy of implementation. The post-cold war global consensus on the neo-liberal ideology had led to the convergence on the ideological centre. In the absence of diametrically opposing political ideologies, well-articulated in the form of manifestos, support of political parties in the neo-liberal democracies of the 21st century anchor largely on effectiveness and performance in governance.

Conclusion

Political parties need not be solely ideological in their make-up and operation to be effective and present alternative choice to the electorate. They can also be issue based. Differentiation of the major political parties should be based on their stand on issues and efficiency in governance giving rise to issue based political parties rather than ideological parties. Hence, the parties share ideology, the electorates should rely on effectiveness in office to guide their choice of candidates and parties. The rating of individual political party should be based on the effectiveness of their policies while in government. In the era of de-emphasis on ideologies the personality of individual contestants should be given prominence in the internal selection of candidates by the political parties.

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Biographical Notes

Ambrose Ihekwoaba EGWIM, *PhD.*, is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, NIGERIA. Email: egwima@run.edu.ng, ambroseegwim@yahoo.com