

Political Party Manifestos, platforms and Programmes: The Nigeria Perspective

2019-2023

**Dakusuk, Markus Jimwan, PhD
Yilret Academy, Jos, Plateau State.
mdakusukjimwan@gmail.com**

Apat, Kiden Tanimu, PhD

**Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University, Illisan Remo, Ogun State.
apatk@babcock.edu.ng**

ABSTRACT

Political party manifestos and programmes have long been important primary documents of political parties in established democracies all over the world. Indeed, they are meaningful sources of information regarding party's position on a wide range of developmental issues. Certainly, the idea that political parties provide the voters with an outline of their policy plans in their manifestos before election lies at the heart of mandate models of representative democracies. Political parties through their manifestos and programmes, enable voters to generate a plurality of opinions in policy debate, elaborate projects or proposals for society, and transform policy options into political decision. This study relied on documentary research design and relied on secondary data drawn from arrays of documents. Saliency competitive theory was adopted and reviewed to explain the subject matter. The study adopted content analysis in its approach to the study. The analysis was synthesized through scholarly works from books, published journals and internet. The study recommended that it is incumbent on every political party to ensure that manifestos and programmes are carefully and adequately designed and written in a more coherent manner, unadorned language to enable voters understand the broad policy frame that a party intends to pursue when in office.

Keywords: Party, manifesto, platform, programmes

Introduction

It is adjudged that political parties are critical institutions of democratic governance, and indeed important pillars of democracy (Simbine, 2002; Okoosi-Simbine, 2006). Habu (2014) rightly observes that political parties are very essential to democracy, especially as they are the compelling forces of any representative democracy. Omotola (2009) averred that one of the most complex and critical institutions of democracy is the political party. According to him, political parties as ‘makers’ of democracy, have been so romanticized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them. In other words, the existence of vibrant political parties is a sine-qua non for democratic consolidation in any policies (Dode, 2010). However, a cursory look at the political landscape of Nigeria reveals quite interesting scenario in the emergence of political parties and their activities. Political parties recruit political personnel by selecting and nominating candidates who stand for public office in an election. They aggregate plurality of different interest into a reasonable policy options, and thus channel conflicts between government and opposition. Parties enable people to generate a plurality of opinions in public debate, elaborate and expatiate projects proposals that are germane for societal sustainability, and transform policy options into political decisions. Political parties provide the link between voters and government and gives the people the opportunity to ventilate their grievances as well as convey the aspirations and support.

Political parties rely on manifestos and programmes which enable them to presents their positions on issues that are important to the electorates. The utmost goal of political party is to ensure that it win election. To achieved this, a group of people who hold certain fundamental principles of public policies as well as common political beliefs are determined to take part in the struggle for power in order to offer alternative public policy, develop manifestos, programmes as well as platforms through which they appeal to the electorate to support their ideals and aspirations to form the government through the ballot box (key, 1964, Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Katz, 1981; McCormick, 1984; Byrne, 1985) cited in Habu (2014).

It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the role of political party manifestos and programmes with emphasis on Nigeria perspective.

Objective of the Study

The primary goal of this study is to determine whether manifestos, platforms and programmes play a central role in the democratic process in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted the documentary research design. The study relied on secondary data drawn from arrays of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study such as books, journals, magazines, conferences and seminar papers and newspapers. Other sources of secondary data were reports and other publications related to the problems of study.

Theoretical Framework

The Saliency Theory of Party Competition

Saliency theory originates from Budge and Farlie in 1983. They built on earlier studies of parties electoral strategies by Robertson (1976) and Budget and Farlie (1977). Other authors especially Petrocik (1996) and Riker (1993) deal with similar questions of agenda formation in political campaign which tend to deals with manifestos and programmes of political parties as compare to one another.

Budge and Farlie (2001) argued that parties hardly talk about their opponents in election campaigns, and even less so about their opponents' problems; rather they try to focus the electorates' attention on the issues that are advantageous to themselves. Making these issues salient for the voters will pay on Election Day. The salient theory rests on a very specific belief about how party elites perceive the voters' preferences. In mapping policy preferences, Budge (2001) argues that party strategists see elections as overwhelmingly favouring one course of action on most issues. Hence, all party programmes and manifestos endorse the same position with only minor exceptions. The above submission by Budget can be seen in the manifestos of some key selected political parties. In Nigeria, APC, LP and PDP have a semblance in manifestos and programmes.

The theory also gives an understanding of voting behaviour and strongly draws on the concept of ownership; arguing that certain parties are perceived by voters as being more competent than their opponents in specific policy areas. This give room for the electorates or voters to decide which political party policies and programme can address the fundamental issues confronting the society.

Conceptual Clarifications

Party Manifesto

The word "manifesto" stems from the Latin word "*manifestum*" which means to make intentions public. Manifestos have long been an important documents of political parties in established democracies and are central to competitive electoral process all over the world. They remain a meaningful source of information regarding party's position on wide range of developmental issues. It is an integral part of party campaigning which outlines the vision of a political party along with a clear political message and a pledge to the people to deliver on programmes when voted into power (Habu, 2014).

Indeed, manifesto is a political document issued by a political party containing its point of view on current issues and situation prevailing in the country and at the international environment. It is based on a party's fundamental policies and basic ideology enshrined in its constitution. When voted into power, it is expected that the party would be guided by its manifesto.

Party Programmes

Succinctly put, party programmes are the agenda that the political parties set out to implement when given the mandate. They illustrate the political ambition and basic values, demand and suggestions of a party. They represent the identity of the party and offers a general orientation to the citizens and voters the guiding principles and ideas of a party. The party programme is the product which a political party offers to the voters (John, 2023). With its programmes, the party justifies its existence and explains how it differentiates itself from others. Party programmes enable the voters to evaluate if a party has sufficient sensibility for societal problems and if they are able to propose adequate suggestions for the resolution of problems and challenges.

Party Platform

A party platform is sometimes referred to as manifesto. Party platform is a document that specifies the key principles and proposed programmes of a political party and its core ideologies. The platform actually provides real and concrete insight into how party officials and candidates stand on critical issues that affects the various sectors of the economy, education and foreign affairs agriculture, social policies among others. They describe what government stands for and how it should serve the people. Party platforms are marketing tools as well as political ideologies that are used both to rally the voters and convince undecided voters (Habu, 2014).

Habu (2022) observes that at the onset of drafting the party platform, political parties have to make an inventory of “concrete” party policy (governmental or parliamentary documents, formal party decisions, etc). This stock of party policy is evaluated and areas requiring updates and additions are identified. What we refer to as “latent” policy, i.e. views and ideas that have hitherto not been written down, may be added and all the proposals needed are given a coherent framework.

Comparison of Political Party Manifestoes and Programmes

An overview of four political parties will be narrowed down in this paper. The rationale for selecting the four political parties was based on their enormous performance during the 2019 general elections. The major and leading political parties are All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), All Progressive Congress (APC), Labour Party (LP) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Political parties compete against each other basically by emphasizing on different policies and programmes, identifying how these policies and programmes can be tackled if voted into power.

Manifestoes of Major Political Parties in Nigeria on some Selected Key Issues

Policy/- Programmes Framework	Political Parties			
	APGA	APC	LP	PDP
Economic	Restructuring through diversification of the nation’s mono-cultural economy by linking the world with investment opportunities, trade	Sustain a sound macro-economic policy environment run an efficient government and preserve the independence of the Central Bank; make information technology,	The party aims to implement consistent and creative policy measures to genuinely reform and transform the economy, rather than relying on IMF and World Bank dogma. The Labour Party plans to question Nigeria’s debt buy-back and seek debt	State will play a crucial role in the economy in order to achieve a self-reliant and just society, encourage privatization of the economy; poverty reduction, self-sufficiency in food production, full and

	and technology transfer	manufacturing, agriculture and entertainment key drivers of our economy	relief, while avoiding new loans. The party proposes a review of the country's tariff structure to encourage local industries and agricultural production. The Labour Party emphasizes the importance of maintaining essential infrastructure, including transportation, power, and telecommunications. The party aims to ensure economic considerations play a key role in Nigeria's foreign policy. The Labour Party plans to build a strong economy that would create jobs, increase income, and reduce poverty. The party aims to link its manufacturing and production policies to create jobs and stimulate economic growth	gainful employment for all citizens; diversifying the economy to reduce reliance on oil; improve on efficient tax collection systems; and reduce the gap between the rich and the poor to create middle class to strengthen the economy and democracy
--	-------------------------	---	---	---

The People's Democratic Party economic policy aims to establish Nigeria as Africa's leading economy with a projection of 10 percent "sustained growth" per annum. The PDP favours free-market policies which support economic liberalism, and limited government regulation. It envisaged that the party will strive to achieve a self-reliant economy that will depend on the strength of the nation's resources. The economic policy is centred on people and seeks to:

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

All Progressive Congress aims to sustain a sound macro-economic policy environment, run an efficient government and preserve the independence of the Central Bank; restore and strengthen financial confidence by putting in place a more robust monitoring, supervising and regulating of all financial institutions; make our economy one of the fastest growing emerging economies in the world with a real GDP growth averaging 10% annually; embark on vocational training, entrepreneurial and skills acquisition scheme for graduates along with the creation of Small Business Loan Guarantee Scheme to create at least 1 million new jobs every year, for the foreseeable future; integrate the informal economy into the mainstream and prioritize the full implementation of the National Identification Scheme to generate the relevant data; expand domestic demand and consider undertaking associated public works programme; embark on export and production diversification including investment in infrastructure; promote manufacturing through agro-based industries and expand sub-regional trade through ECOWAS and AU; make Information Technology, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Entertainment key drivers of our economy; balance the economy across regions by the creation of 6 new Regional Economic Development Agencies (REDAs) to act as champions of sub-regional competitiveness; put in place a N300bn regional growth fund (average of N50bn in each geo-political region) to be managed by the REDAs, encourage private

sector enterprise and support to help places currently reliant on the public sector; amend the Constitution and the Land Use Act to create freehold/leasehold interests in land along with matching grants for states to create a nationwide electronic land title register on a state by state basis; create additional middle-class of at least two million new home owners in our first year in government and one million annually thereafter; by enacting a national mortgage system that will lend at single digit interest rates for purchase of owner occupier houses in different States of the Federation.

The All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) economy policy is tailored towards building sound democratic foundations for economic growth and development and, at the core of the foundation, will be the diversification of the nation's mono-cultural lifeline through the development of solid minerals, manufacturing for export to the West African sub-region and agriculture for food sufficiency. Its emphasis is on the diversification of economy. Its economic policy did not give an ideology and policy direction concerning the economy.

Policy/Programmes Framework	Political Parties			
	APGA	APC	LP	PDP
Energy	The All Progressive Grand Alliance has no energy policy in its manifesto	Generate, transmit and distribute energy to at least 20,000mw within four years and increase to 50,000mw to achieve 24/7 power supply without interruption within ten years whilst ensuring a development and sustainable renewable energy	Ensure an electricity generating capacity of not less than 40,000mw in Nigeria with adequate transmission and distribution networks within the next five-years. This would entail building new plants and expansion of existing ones	Engage the private sector in the generation and distribution of energy; equip and motivate the National Electric Power Plc to be more effective as it plays a leading role in the energy sector; maintain and equip the nation's energy generation and distribution plants to enable them supply energy without interruption; promote the supply of energy through the solar system; intensify the implementation of rural electricity supply schemes; ensure that all the 774 local government headquarters are link to National Grid

On energy under the APC led government, the Nigerian power sector has degenerated to its worst level in the last nine and half years. Industries and homes ratio 4,000mw of electricity despite promises made by the All Progressives Congress (APC) government to increase power generation to 40,000mw; what citizens are experiencing most recently is an increase in tariff and monumental and constant failure in the National Grid. The PDP's government has not made any reasonable impact on the energy sector. It was only able to involve the private sector in the distribution of energy in 2013 without any competitive basis.

The manifestoes of these four political parties do not have any well articulated agenda for energy sector that can undoubtedly address the humongous challenges of the energy crisis in the country. Despite the huge endowment, the nation depends on a few resources, especially hydro and gas for the generation of electricity.

Policy/Programmes Framework	Political Parties			
Internal Security	APGA	APC	LP	PDP
	All Progressive Grand Alliance did not present its stand with regards to internal security	Need to urgently address capacity building of law enforcement agencies in terms of quantity and quality to safeguard the sanctity of lives and property, establish a well-trained, adequately equipped and goal driven serious crime squad to combat terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, ethno-religious and communal clashes nationwide; begin wide consultations to amend the constitution to enable States and LGs to employ State and community police to address the peculiar needs of each community; push for more support in the security and economic stability of the sub-region (ECOWAS) and AU as a whole and maintain a strong, close relationship with UK, USA, Canada and other nations of the world.	The roles of the police and other paramilitary bodies in law enforcement shall be tailored towards deepening professionalism the security apparatus of the state; intensify the re-training of armed forces personnel; involve military in human terrain disaster relief operations; improve on terms and conditions of service of personnel.	The party shall promote policies aimed at guaranteeing security of lives and safety of property; ensure discipline, probity and accountability among security agents; improve police-community relations; promote professionalism within the police; prison security agencies; provide a more humane prison system

Regarding security, the APC and PDP hold a similar position on internal security. The major kernel in both parties is on strengthening conventional security apparatus in the country. Little or no emphasis has been made on how to deal with the underlying threats to human security that are essentially responsible for the current situation in the country. It is astonishing that APGA has no stand with regards to internal security of this country in their manifesto.

Policy/Programmes Framework	Political Parties			
Agriculture	APGA	APC	LP	PDP

	APGA has not yet provided it stands on agriculture	Modernize the sector and make Nigeria from being a country of subsistence farmers to that of a medium/commercial scale farming. Create a national food inspectorate division, with a view to improving nutrition and eliminating food borne hazards; inject more money to the agricultural sector to create more agro-allied jobs; guarantee a minimum price for selected crops and facilitate storage of agricultural products.	Production – centred growth for food security and export-moving Nigeria from consumption to production	It aims at transforming the sector through self-sufficiency in food production throughout the year; making agriculture profitable; the promotion of agriculture as a major source of industrial raw materials, and foreign exchange earner; providing infrastructure for storage; creating and strengthening necessary institutions; the protection of farmers against hazards
--	--	--	--	--

On agriculture, APGA has not provided any policy direction. In a country where more than sixty per cent of the population is engaged in agricultural production, it is very astonished that a political party seeking to govern the country did not articulate a plan for positive transformation in the agricultural sector.

The APC has embarked on a massive and comprehensive re-organisation and revolutionization of the agricultural sector. The main aim is to sustain agriculture as the strategic engine and prime-mover of national economic development to feed the nation. That could be seen by the efforts of state governors, encouraging farmers to venture themselves into mechanized farming; massive engagement in irrigation farming.

Similarly, the PDP has facilitated access to cheaper and better agricultural inputs, including farm tools, chemicals, fertilizers, improved seedlings and livestock breeds; encourage plantation agriculture; embark on massive irrigation farming, promote aquaculture; facilitate farmers access to agricultural loans, purchase of mechanized farming implements.

The Labour Party (LP) has proposed in its agricultural programmes in the way that each of the local government areas would have had enough tractors, agricultural organisations, working as the intermediary to the farmers and government actors in encouraging potential farmers to produce enough foods in our states that can feed not only Nigerians but be one of the sources of food donors and suppliers to African continent and beyond.

Gap between Manifesto and Reality on Ground

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Alliance for Progressives Congress (APC) have been the dominant power at the centre and in the states. The Labour Party, ANPP, SDP, APGA, YPP have produced governors and members of the national and state assemblies and local government chairmen. It is self evident that political parties have become instruments for grabbing power with little or no regards for the principles of the parties. They have become mere agencies to mobilize support of the people for

elections. The political elites take advantage of the fact that political party manifestos and programmes do not shape choices of the electorate and hardly influence electoral outcomes, especially as the electorate is easily manipulated along religious and ethnic as well as regional lines. Campaigns are not issue-based but on personalities that also induce support through monetary means.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that political parties remained the engine room of a democracy. For democracy to thrive, it needs strong and sustainable political parties with reliable manifestos, platform and programmes that will give room for effective policy choices by the citizens. This will help in generating a better understanding of the issues and proffer solutions which will ensure that political parties become accountable to citizens in accordance to their outlined manifestos and programmes.

For a democratic sustainability, political parties must improve their level of performance to have the trust and confidence of the electorates.

Recommendations

It is incumbent on every political party to ensure that manifestos and programmes are carefully and adequately designed and written in a more coherent manner and clear language to enable readers understand the broad policy framework that the party intends to pursue when elected into office.

It will not be wrong for government to make it a must for every political party leadership to interface with the policy development centre at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru during the design of party manifesto, platforms and programmes. This will reduce failure to provide an in-depth presentation of the manifestos, platforms to the general public.

REFERENCES

- ARSA (1950). Toward a more responsible two-party model. Washington: American political science association. Benoit, Kenneth and Micheal Laver, 2006 *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Budge, I. (1982). Electoral volatility: Issues effects and basic change in 23 post-war democracies. *Electoral Studies*, 1(2).
- Budge, I Falie, D. (2001). Theory and measurement of party policy positions. In I. Budge, et al (eds.). *Mapping Policy Performances*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Budge, I., & Farlie, D. (1977). *Voting and party competition*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Budge, I., & Farlie, D. (1983). Party competition – selective emphasis or direct confrontation? Alternative view with data. In H. Daalder & P. Mair (eds.), *Western Europe Party System*, London: Sage.
- Dode, R. (2010). Political parties and the prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria: 1999 – 2006. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 4(5).
- Eleazu, U. (1977). *Federalism and nation-building: The Nigerian experience 1954 – 1964*. Edition, Illustrated Publishers, Stockwell.
- Habu, S. G. (2014). Political party manifestos and programmes in Nigeria; in Olu, Sam, Okechukwu and Jubrim, (eds.). *Political Party and Democracy in Nigeria*. Jos: Vintage Art Gallery Ltd.

Katz, R. S. (1981). *A theory of parties and electoral systems*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Key, V. O. (1964). *Politics, parties and pressure groups*, 5th ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party systems and voter alignments*. NY: Free Press.

McCormick, R. L. (1984). *Political parties and the modern state*. NY: Rutgers UP.

Nnoli, O. (1980). *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Okoosi-Simbine, A. T. (2006). *How citizens view political parties in Nigeria: A study of some selected states*, NISER Monograph Series No. 2, Ibadan, NISER.

Omotola, S. J. (2009). *Nigerian parties and political ideology*. *Journal of Alternative Perspective in the Social Science*, Vol. 1 No. 3.