

Political parties in south africa



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Unravelling the Political Ideologies Associated With ANC, DA and AGANG.

South Africa is constituted by three main parties at the forefront of the political spectrum, namely: The African Nation Congress (ANC), The Democratic Alliance (DA) and Agang. These political parties have formed their policies based on ideologies and principles which they believe will make South Africa a more successful country. It is incumbent upon one, as a citizen of the republic, to analyze the ideologies associated with each of the aforementioned parties. In an effort to address the analysis thoroughly, this essay will closely evaluate the political ideologies associated the ANC, the DA and Agang respectively.

Foremost, to adequately comprehend the nature of the ideologies upheld by the ANC, DA and Agang, one must begin by understanding the concept of political ideology itself. Renowned author Andrew Heywood defines ideology as “ a social-scientific viewpoint, an ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides a basis for organized political action...” (2013: 28). As it apparent in Heywood’s explanation of ideology, there is a close relation between the ideology of a political party and its actions. This relation will be evident in the party’s policies on matters ranging from service delivery to economic growth as well as building alliances.

When the first democratic constitution of South Africa was set out in 1996, Section 19 clearly highlighted that any party that sets out to run for political office, must not infringe on the rights and freedom of the citizens of the country (Parliament South Africa, 2008). Primarily, this is a liberal ideological

perspective. Specifically because liberalism views the individual as the most important element in society, thus stipulating that the freedom of the individual far exceeds the need for authority and control (Heywood, 2013: 32).

Interestingly, one can note that all the political parties to be discussed display liberalism in their manifestos and policies. It must be observed that Liberalism will be an inherent ideology in light of these three political parties.

The African National Congress (ANC)'s ideological stance

As the Liberation movement that rose to ruling party, the ANC boasts on having conquered the struggle for the individual's freedom from oppressive laws. They are fundamentally a liberal party even though they also portray socialist ideals.

The ANC displays the main elements of Liberalism which Heywood lists as individualism, freedom, reason, equality, toleration, consent and constitutionalism. Apart for being the first Democratic Party, ANC takes pride in having been under the leadership of the father of freedom himself, Former President Nelson Mandela in 1994. Nelson Mandela, and the ANC at large believe in freedom to a great extent, this is evident in the historic event of Mandela's imprisonment on Robben Island.

Furthermore, the ANC asserts a necessity to uplift the individual through its programs such as the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) law that aims to place previously disadvantaged individuals in a position of management. They also promise to ensure a better life for the individual by

creating 6 million jobs by 2019 so that each person can be able to fend for themselves (ANC, 2014)

Another aspect is that they are attempting to provide equality of opportunity through opening a gap in the entrepreneurial sphere by ensuring that 75% of goods and service used by business and industry are bought within the South African manufacturing sphere (ANC, 2014). That way, each individual, regardless of background can be involved in the economic sphere.

The introduction of free public education ensures an equality of opportunity for all citizens.

Furthermore, the ANC outlined in their manifesto that they are “ to work with [their] allies and the people to move South Africa forward...” (ANC, 2014).

With the reasoning that an institution’s allies not only fund, but also influence its manner of governance, the ANC’s liberalism can further be accentuated by its alliance with the United States (US) leader of the Liberalist party – Barack Obama. In his visit to South Africa (SA) during 2012 and again in July 2013, the trade and investment opportunities between SA and the US were corroborated, resulting in an R7bn agreement towards renewable energy and a leadership program for the youth (News24, 2013).

The ANC is also a socialist party. This ideology is characterized by six main issues which are community, fraternity, social equality, need, social class and common ownership (Heywood, 2013: 39).

In layman’s terms, socialism involves economic efforts aimed at a group, specifically the entire populace of a country not individuals. ANC’s socialist

ideas are revealed through their continuous emphasis on collaborative efforts towards community upliftment. In the National Development Plan (NDP), the main aim is to reduce the levels of poverty in South Africa (ANC, 2014). There are programs put in place such as the food for all programme, which aims to feed the people in poor communities, the National Health Insurance to provide free basic healthcare, HIV/AIDS programmes (Butler, 2008).

All these ideals by their ANC align with their foundational principles to create a better South Africa for all those who live in it as a brotherhood, as stated by the Freedom Charter of 1955 (South African History, 2005).

The Democratic Alliance (DA) and its ideological stance

As it was unequivocally expressed when the party was formed, the DA is a liberalist party. In the framework for their manifesto, DA places much emphasis on an effective form of governance which, although limited, will ensure a better life for the individuals of South Africa.

Since standing as the Western Cape Minister in 2009, The DA has become a member of the Liberal International and the Africa Liberal Network, which are both have formed with the intention to persuade and propose Liberal principles so that they prevail (DA Abroad, 2011).

The DA strives to achieve a limited amount of interference by the government, which is a crucial component of liberalism (DA, 2013). This will promote the freedom of the individual above all other entities. They are a party that brings to the attention of the citizens, the flaws of government

and regard this as a way to encourage people to give consent in issues that pertain to their government. Stated in their policy is that there should be “ a limited number of political appointments” (DA, 2013). Which comes as a response to the fact that, much of government expenditure that could be used on citizen, is dedicated towards paying salaries of the 11151 executive members of government under the ANC (South African Reserve Bank, 2013).

In an effort to promote equal opportunity, the DA has suggested measures such as putting in place an oversight committee to help reduce corruption and increase accountability to the people (DA, 2013). Also, they will start graduate recruitment programmes to help create opportunities for young people regardless of background and social standing.

The apparent strong leadership by women within the political party comes to represent their feminist views. Feminism promotes gender equality. The mere fact that the DA is led by women in parliament namely Lindiwe Mazibuko, as well in office by Helen Zille becomes indicative of a feminist views of the party.

AGANG and its ideological stance.

On February 12 2013, South African politics witnessed the birth a new political party platform by esteemed academic and activist Dr. Mamphela Ramphele. From its birth, Agang showed Liberal intent. In her launch speech, Ramphele urged South African individual to work in conjunction with the government they have elected to “ build the nation of our dreams” (Independent News, 2013)

Being an academic herself, Ramphela appealed to all South African's on the basis of reason, which is a deliberate liberal persuasion. She says “ our rallying cry during the struggle for freedom was for the people to govern” showing that she recognizes the individual as being the one to give consent to government in how the country should be governed.

In conjunction with that, she laments the fact that the greatest number of people who are unemployed, of the 60percent, the majority is youth. It is further suggested that opportunity for education should be created for all people by radically altering the education system. That can be done through the introduction of higher pass rates, eradication of mud schools and improvement of infrastructure (Agang SA, 2014)

The empowerment of the individual is suggested through the plans to create incentives for companies who invest in rural communities, changing the tax system to favor entrepreneurship (Agang SA, 2014)

Ultimately, Agang is purely liberal and classically appeals to the reason, consent and freedom of the individual while working with the government.

In retrospect, the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance and Agang have great similarities in their approach to politics, all which are justified in terms of the constitution. The variation then exists in the implementation of their ideology when drafting policies. Thus, this solidifies the paramount importance of ideologies in a position of power. Proving that even though, it is all but a matter of perspective, whether it being liberal, socialist or capitalist, ideologies are the foundation of any political action by the ANC, DA and Agang.

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