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Party ideology in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

There is a gap in the South African literature on party ideology. This thesis attempts to fill that gap by examining party ideology in South Africa and will use the left-right spectrum to measure ideology. It will do this by using quantitative and qualitative methodology by engaging in the following approach: manifesto analysis, expert survey and interviews. It looks at thirteen parties as represented in parliament at 2009, that is, the ANC, DA, COPE, IFP, FFP, ID, UDM, ACDP, UCDP, APC, AZAPO, MF, and the PAC. The ideological analysis will be categorized according to three domains: the political, socio-economic and the social-cultural; and will use an intra-domain approach to identify variables within the major ideologies and domains. The findings of this research show that there is a left-right dimension in South Africa. There are right-wing and left-wing parties. Liberalism, socialism-communism, conservatism and nationalism broadly make up the ideologies present among the parties. In the political domain, parties are predominantly centre-right based on liberal and conservative elements; in the socio-economic domain, parties are predominantly centre-left based on modern liberal or social democratic elements; and in the social-cultural domain, parties are made up of centre-right which is based on liberal and nationalist elements, and centre-left which is based on libertarian elements. The predominant ideological position of the majority of the parties does not say something about the non-predominant ideologies of the other parties. In the political domain, there is a centre-left tendency based on participatory democracy, a centre position based on liberal views in politics, and a far right tendency based on centralization. In the socio-economic domain, there is a far left position based on socialism-communism, and a far right tendency based on libertarianism. In the social-cultural domain, there is a centre-left position based on moderate liberalism, and a far right position based on conservatism. It is the argument of this thesis to consider the overall ideology but more importantly to give sufficient attention to domain and intra-domain issues. South African parties must engage more rigorously to identify their own ideological positions instead of projecting their immediate focus on adversarial politics but rather understand what vision and principles they are actually offering to South African citizens and society at large.