

# Understanding OPDO's Political Ideologies to Transform Oromia

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## 1. Introduction

The successes of any political organizations determined by the political ideologies<sup>2</sup> it peruses and implements in particular region or countries. Political ideology refers to a set of doctrines or beliefs that are shared by the members of a social group or that form the basis of a political, economic, or other system. During the last two decades few writers doubted the relevance to OPDO political ideologies in the straggle of Oromo people. For instance Ezekiel Gebissa(2017) in his article said that a quarter of a century later, the party that means OPDO hasn't demonstrated any affirmative reason for its continued existence. Other writers such as Sandra F. Joireman and Thomas S. Szayna said that OPDO is viewed with suspicion by many Oromos because of its origins and closeness to the EPRDF. It is completely wrong to suspect or undermine any political party without understanding its political ideologies.

Political organization should be evaluated and challenged by its political ideologies that show their relevance or effectiveness of the party. The perception or understanding of many people varies on the political foundation of OPDO. Few people said that OPDO established to serve the interest of other political party such us TPLF/EPRDF. The other scholars argues that OPDO formed with rational political foundation to transform Oromo straggle to higher level by filling the gap created at the beginning of 1990s. The confusion to word OPDO emerged from lack of understanding properly the political ideology of the organization.

The writer beliefs on consolidating the political ideologies of OPDO to realize the social and economic transform in Oromia National Regional State. The ideologies followed by OPDO have been vibrant, systematic, pragmatic and problem solving in the last two decades. The objective of this brief article is to identify the fundamental political ideologies of Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO). The article consists of four sections including introduction. The second

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<sup>2</sup> Ideology is a body of ideas that reflects the beliefs and interests of a nation, political system, etc and underlies political action.

section explains the rationale of the establishing OPDO as a leading political organization in Oromia. The third section identifies and describes OPDO's political ideologies. The last section is summary.

## **2. The Rationale for the establishment of OPDO**

Ethiopia political system was not open to different political ideologies since the current Ethiopia formed in 1880s. The political system was characterized as central government structure that does not allow self administration of nation and nationality in the country. The little effort which undertook during the Monarch government was not identity based self-administration. Denying the recognition of nation and nationality in the country encouraged the establishment of various political factions in lines with their respective identities. OPDO<sup>3</sup> was **founded** on March 26, 1990 in North Shoa, Dera District at Gundomeskele. There are three rationale justifications for the establishment of OPDO. The first rationale for the establishment of OPDO was the absence of vibrant, inclusive and broad based political organization that mobilizes Oromo people in the democratic nationalism movement.

The second rationale was the failure of Oromo political party to come together to fight for the common interest or cause of Oromo people. The struggle for Oromo political and social right started with the establishment of Macha-Tulama Association<sup>4</sup>. Since then no effective political organization was successful in mobilizing Oromo people to realize nation economic and political right. The third rationale was lack of alliance with other national political parties to fight for Oromo freedom and national unity. Oromo political organizations were working alone to solve Oromo problem. The struggle for the nation and nationality is the common issues at national level, Oromo political parties failed to form successful coalition to struggle for the common cause of Oromo people at national level.

Toward the end of 1985, TPLF dispatched a company of its elite troops to OLF's western front ostensibly to exchange best experiences thereby improving relations. (Hassen Hussen, 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> The OPDO was created in 1990 after the relations of the existing Oromo Liberation Front with TPLF soured while they were fighting against the Derg regime ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oromo\\_Peoples%27\\_Democratic\\_Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oromo_Peoples%27_Democratic_Organization)).

<sup>4</sup> The formation of the Macha-Tulama Association in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) in 1963 was a major landmark both in modern Oromo as well as Ethiopian history.

The effort of TPLF to form alliance with OLF to remove the military government was not fruitful.

The above explanation indicates that establishing the new Oromo political organization like OPDO was the right choice to consolidate the struggle to remove the dictatorial regime in the country at the same time to form democratic state in Oromia National Regional State. OPDO was established to respond to the age long questions of the Oromo people. Actually, the organization has a great role in bringing the prolonged bitter struggle of the Oromo people to a successful end by ensuring self-governance to the people. According to Wakuma Kudama(2017) the Organization has been playing significant role in improving the livelihood of Oromos.

### **3. Understanding OPDO's Political ideologies**

Consolidating the political ideology of the dominant party is important to speed up economic and social transformation in the given country or region. Understanding or improving our awareness on the right or appropriate political ideologies consolidates the implementation or effectiveness political ideologies. Since its establishments OPDO has been implementing the political ideology that relevant to transform Oromo people. Various reports indicate that the establishment of OPDO has been changing political and economic outcome of Oromo people due to its political ideologies. Ideological identify play the major role on the success or effectiveness of the political party. The following are the major ideologies of OPDO.

- **Purpose drive:** OPDO work with the specific proposes that focused on transforming the life of Oromo people. Most of the time the organization work for its clear and specific outcome. It pays and use all the necessary resources need to realize its purpose. The organization knows the purpose of its existence. The purpose driven activities creates strong public trust in general and its member in particular. The purpose driven activities of the origination enable the OPDO's leader to work with intention than by accident. The party alien with other political parties with clear and specific purpose that benefit Oromo people. Maintaining Oromo people interest with social and economic empowerment is the major purpose of the organization.
- **Pragmatic approaches:** The OPDO political ideologies are pragmatic than theoretical. It works on possible or realistic situation existed on local, regional and international context. The party uses clear means or instruments that enable to achieve its objective.

Peace, rule of law, stability, economic development is the precondition for economic transformation in the region. People freedom realized with reliable peace and rule of law in the region. Any change in the societies needs its own local procedure and process to enhance the life of people. The party belief that the future transformation is based on the knowledge oriented activities implemented today.

➤ **Democratic Nationalism:** Modern democracy<sup>5</sup> has been nationalist from its inception. There are two types of nationalism: democratic and extreme nationalism<sup>6</sup>. The former nationalism is defined as ‘an extreme form of patriotism marked by a feeling of superiority over other nations’ whereas the latter is social political and economic system where there is a government of the people, elected by the people who work for the people’. OPDO promotes and works for the democratic nationalism that respects the right and freedom of all the nation and nationality. OPDO respects other nation and nationalist right when it straggles for the freedom of Oromo People

➤ **Economic and political entitlement:** Entitlement refers to the distribution or exercise of an absolute privilege or right to an economic or political benefit (such as old age pension, social security, unemployment stipend) granted by contract or law, automatically upon meeting the required qualification. OPDO strongly argues that the lack of political and economic entitlement is the major reason for marginalizing Oromo people. So creating fair rule of law and community participation that increase economic and political entitlement is fundamental solution for economic transformation. During the last two decades the party has done various social and infrastructural developments that create the higher political and economic empowerment in the region.

The president of Oromia National Regional State and the chairman of OPDO stressed the importance of economic empowerment saying: "I believe all of us, including you and the Oromo people, must start a major revolution in Oromia, an economic revolution. We have to do all in our power today to confront tomorrow's challenges. Especially, the younger generation, who has both historical and generational responsibilities, must work

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<sup>5</sup> Both democracy and nationalism may co-exist together but the difference is that how you see the other nation matters a most.

<sup>6</sup> In democratic nationalism, in case you express anything against the nation, it will be considered as your individual perception and you are free to do that within limits, however, in a extreme nationalist government the same could be a severe punishable offence. Therefore, democratic nationalism is the right choice of OPDO.

hard. We should be thinking day and night about economic empowerment<sup>7</sup>. OPDO works hard to improve our people life through economic and political entitlement.

- **Consolidate democratic practices:** Oromo people have the right to choose which party maintains their social and economic interest. The necessary institutional framework must be established in the region to promote free, faire and peaceful election. Nobody gave oromo people for any political party. So the freedom of people should be respected to realize their political and social transformation. OPDO works for the creation of democratic political system or environment in the region as well as in the country. OPDO believes by the outcome of fair and free democratic election. Elite democracy does not serve any things for Oromo people. The people need or ask road, education and health services not who is leading the political party in the region. According to OPDO consolidated democratic practice would accelerate economic development.
- **Rule of law:** Rule of law refers to the principle that all people and institutions are subject to and accountable to law that is fairly applied and enforced. The day to day government work based on the principle rule of law. According OPDO argues that rule of law in the region promotes justice, fairness and freedom in the region. The part has done various efforts in building institutional and human capacity for strengthening the rule of law in the region.
- **National unity:** OPDO belief the interest of Oromo people highly maintain with the united and peaceful Ethiopia. Oromia region takes the major share of population and land size of Ethiopia. Acceding to OPDO the future of Oromia transformation highly influences by the economic and social transformation of the country. This enhances the higher utilization of natural resources, promote regional innovation and improve regional competitiveness.
- **Developmental state:** OPDO ideologies based on the active role of government in economic development. Market is important but any market failure would be corrected by government direct and indirect intervention. Government protects the societies from outcome of market inefficiency. OPDO's government works on promoting social justices and controlling income inequality which will not be managed by the market mechanisms.

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<sup>7</sup> A society that is not economically empowered would become servant to others. There is no shortcut to success. We must work hard and do so tirelessly to get ahead in life. That will be the source of our freedom and strength. We have to be economically strong. Simply debating political ideologies won't change us lot."

- **Accommodation of differences opinion:** The political ideologies of OPDO recognize the right to have or exercise different thinking. Different people have different idea based on their experiences and educational background. So having different idea not the problem in the organization. The most important point is respecting the central democratic practices of the organization.

#### **4. Summary**

The ideological identity of OPDO makes the organization successful in the last two decade. The party also changed the life of million people in the region. Understanding the political ideology of this party helps to enhance the social and economic transformation. The youth and the public at large must look closely the political ideologies of political party of the region. The Oromo people deserve the social and economic transformation to improve their welfare. At globalization era knowledge and innovative ideas plays the pivotal role in creating strong nation. Just simple group of people in the name of “Oromuma” without any new idea or unique ideological identity does serve the interest of 40 million Oromo people. The Oromia people want world class mind and thinking that speed up their economic development. OPDO has shown its ideological quality in working hard with the people during the last two decades. Understanding OPDO ideologies transform Oromia in the coming few years.

#### **5. References**

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**God Bless Oromia and Ethiopia!!!!**