

# The Game Theory and the Politics of Cross-carpeting in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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## Abstract

Politics, no doubt is a game of number. Therefore, the support base of political parties in terms of quantity of supporters is a determinant to winning election. The study adopted the theory of games as a theoretical model to unfold the scheming mechanism embedded in the new dimension of cross-carpeting by Nigeria's political actors. Whereas the game theory is anchored on the rationality of the behaviour of the players participating in the game, such assumption may just be a theoretical construct against the backdrop of incessant cross-carpeting among Nigerians political actors. The study affirmed that, while cross-carpeting is a feature of multiparty democracy like Nigeria, it can only be relevant when elected office holders respect the "rules of the game" that guide cross-carpeting. Therefore, indiscriminate cross-carpeting by the political actors is antithetical to democratic consolidation.

**Keywords:** Game Theory, Political party, Cross-carpeting, Ideology, Conflict

## 1. Introductory Notes and Problematic

Both Political parties and political actors (politicians) are generally considered crucial elements of a democratic regime. Robert Dahl (cited in Awofeso and Irabor, 2016) for instead observed that the existence of political parties competing for power within a framework that guarantees equal chances for all is one of the fundamental characteristics of a democratic regime. Political regimes that do not allow political opposition and competition among political parties for the votes of the people are not 'competitive' and as a consequence not democratic (Doorenspleet, 2003). On the other hand, political parties are expected to conform to certain generalised political imperatives of inter-party movement. It is this structure and defining modalities for intra-party and inter-party interrelationships that enhance multi-party system in pluralist democracy. Therefore addressing the issue of cross-carpeting has become pertinent because of its consequences on democracy.

The notion and definition of political parties in terms of "conflict of claims, of values, of interest, and of goals" (Ake, 1973), seem to explain the applicability of the theory of games to new patterns of cross-carpeting in Nigeria. Since politics is synonymous with conflict, political parties are essentially conflictual and prone to crisis in the struggle for power, which is centre on individual interest. Defined as a body of thought dealing with rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition (Neumann and Monrgenstern, 1944), the game theory, believes in mathematical models to political studies. The game theory is depended on two or more players. In this kind of games, it is impossible for one person to make a choice. Therefore, there is bound to be divergent interest among the players participating in the game.

Thus, the nexus between the game theory and cross-carpeting in Nigerian politics is centered on the possibility of interest that accommodates the two concepts. A further justification for this approach is the fact that cross-carpeting is a fallout of the crisis engender by the struggle for power by different political actors. This position notwithstanding, parties are the major instrument for harmonization and coordination of different groups in a multi ethnic society.

It should be recalled that ethnic affiliation and religion preferences underscored cross-carpeting in the pre-independence and post-independence periods (1966-1960). When the first episode of cross-carpeting occurred in 1951, it was a calculated strategy to stop Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, from becoming the premier of Western Region (Awofeso and Irabor, 2016). In the First Republic (1960-1966), personality rivalries between members of leadership of parties exert great influence on cross-carpeting. This was the case of the Action Group between Chief Ladoke Akintola and Chief Obafemi Awolwo which led to eventual splitting of the party into separate and distinct parties (Awofeso, 2014: 142-9). By the second and third republics, political patronage and money politics necessitated the need for politicians to cross from one party to the other. Cross-carpeting of this scenario was that of Chief Akin Omoboriowo who was elected as the Deputy Governor of Ondo State under the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria but left the party to the National Party of Nigeria to contest as its gubernatorial candidate (Sodeine, 2009).

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the political space saw the liberalization of the party system to multi-party system. This is evident with the registration of more than fifty to sixty political parties (Slizbeat, 2012). However, out of fifty to sixty parties in Nigeria, few of them are recognized in the country, while others are just minority groups. This is as a result of frequent cases of cross-carpeting among Nigeria's political actors each time they perceived any treat to their political fortune.

## 2. Conceptual Clarifications/Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The Concept of Political Party

Due to the variables in this paper, it is proper we begin by interrogating the popular perception among scholars that political party is limited to a group of people with common ideas and ideology with the objective of capturing political power. Such definition, scholars like Duverger (1969) and Neumann (1956) have argued only portray political party as conflict-free. It is contended that the interest of the dominant socio-political forces or the creating authority that saw to their formation will usually have overriding influences on relationships between various organs and structures of the party (Ake, 1973). In other words, since political party is a product of the society, they are not free from the inherent societal factors which relates to origin of the party and the identification of interest between hegemonic forces in the party and the larger society. Hence, the definition of political party in this paper is centered on the inter-relation of power with parties. Accordingly Neumann (1956: 71), refer to a political party as:

The articulate organization of society's active agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views as such, it is the greatest intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to officials governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the large political community.

The above position finds concurrence in Durverger's (1969:96) position that a "party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed through the country (branches, caucuses, local associations, etc) and linked by coordinating institution". Doorenspleet (2003) provided four contextual platform of conflicts within groups which are applicable to our understanding of conflicts within political parties. First, every imperatively coordinated group has people with positive and negative dominate roles leading to two quasi-groups with opposite latent interest. Second, the different quasi-groups organise themselves into parties, trade unions, factions with manifest interests. Third, these quasi-groups will be in constant conflicts over the preservation or the change of the existing status quo. Lastly, this conflict would lead to changes in the structure of their social relations, through changes in the dominance relations. Evidently, this situation is apt of most developing democracies where the institution of political party is either weak, underdeveloped or yet to be fully institutionalized. One important explanation for this was the excessive premium placed on political power. The more political power is valued, the more intense the struggle for it.

### 2.2. Cross-carpeting

In politics, cross-carpeting is used to describe the practice where a person gives up allegiance to political entity in exchange for allegiance to another. The term 'cross-carpeting' has been used interchangeably with concepts like party defection, party switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party-jumping (Blunt, 1964; Chang, 2009; Fashagba, 2014; Awofeso and Irabor, 2016). In his work, Blunt (1964) used the term 'political defection' in place of cross-carpeting, having also party switching in mind. He defined political defection as a situation in which a legislator switched from his original party to run either under another party or as an independent candidate. Relatedly, Chang (2009) defined party switching while also defining cross-carpeting as any situation in which political actor who had been elected on a certain party platform changed his political allegiance before the next general election. Succinctly, Awofeso and Irabor (2016) averred that cross-carpeting is the act or practice in which government representatives elected on the platform of a political party crosses or move to another party. From the above thesis, cross-carpeting refers to one's abandonment of his/her previous position or association, offers to join another party (an opposition or ruling party) for personal gain. In this regard, political party defectors are usually regarded as political prostitutes without political principle, morality, conscience and lacking in political ideology to champion the cause of leadership for the wellbeing of the society and political development of the country.

Remarkably, Desposato (2006: 62-63) gives three reasons why cross-carpeting warrant study. First, frequent cross-carpeting makes it clear that parties *do* matter- otherwise politicians would not bother to switch parties. Second, and most importantly, cross-carpeting provides explanation for politicians underlying preferences, including their incentives for belonging to political parties. Finally, cross-carpeting poses a normative problem for representation in democracy. Moreover, it should be noted that the phenomenon of cross-carpeting is no respecter of the age of a democracy. It occurs both in the established and in new democracies (Chang, 2009). However, the frequency of its occurrence varies from country to country. For instance, Evans and Hadley (2010) argued that only 20 switches took place in the American Congress from the 1940s to the 1990s. By contrast, cross-carpeting is reported very frequently in most African new democracies including Nigeria.

### 2.3. Ideology

Ideology is fundamental to the existence of political parties. Ideally, it serves as the benchmark, principle or a template on which party activities is carried out. Thus, at the very heart of the success or otherwise of political party is the important question of political ideology.

The concept of ideology seek to explain the empirical condition under which certain concepts, belief systems, moral ideals, and religious and scientific ideals became socially influential and in turn affect the course of human affairs (Bevir, 2010). It is a system of doctrines that seeks to explain and change the world or a given society or state (Chukwumerije, 2009). According to Nnoli (2003), Destutt de Tracy used it to describe a new scientific discipline that systematically studies ideas, emotions and sensations – the science of ideas.

Over time, the concept of ideology has changed and has been linked to political ideology. As a result of the changes, ideology has come to be presented as a subject representing social or political action. Building on this notion, Chukwumerije (2009) opined that ideology seeks to interpret the working and structure of society and posit the need for a change in the existing situation through a programme of practical politics predicated on the comprehensive theory of human nature and requiring a long social struggle for attainment of its goals. It is the durable convictions held in common by party members in respect to the most desirable form, institutions, spirit and course of action of the state, determines the natural attitude of a party towards every public question (Iyare, 2004:81).

Strickler and Davies (1996:1025), similarly, argue that “ideology functions as planks”, that is, single issue statements within the platform, the exact ideological orientation of which is often used as a bargaining chip in seeking party unity. Here, the platform connotes a statement of the official party position on a variety of issues. In most cases, ideologies originate from seemingly irreconcilable antagonistic settings, tend to be exclusive, absolute and universal in character; and can be personalised and turned into a sacred belief similar to religious beliefs.

Essentially, parties are formed by individuals that share the same political ideology, that hold a common vision and mission statement. Empirical studies have revealed that Fourth Republic political parties in Nigeria are composed of persons with different ideologies who do not only misunderstand themselves but are regularly feuding (Iyare, 2004; Omotola, 2009). This could be attributed to flawed and wobbly foundations of these parties since 1960 which according to Omotola (2009) have been largely responsible. Thus, while Omotola (2009) is of the opinion that this faulty origin of political parties is responsible for parties ideological barrenness, it is emphasised further that poverty of ideology is significantly accountable for the prevailing cross-carpeting of the political actors in the Fourth Republic.

### 2.4. The Game Theory

The game theory which has its root in mathematics was popularised by John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern "Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour" (1944). The theory was introduced to political science by Duncan Luce and Howard Raiffa, Martin Shubik and Anatol Rapoport (Varma, 2006: 286). The theory owes its genesis to palour games like chess, chicken or poker, is essentially a study of conflict situations between two or more opponents or players dealing with rational decision strategies, where each player seek to maximize gains and minimize losses (Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). In other words, there are players of the game- they could be individuals or institutions- in a contest or competition where each participant is expected to choose alternatives which have effect on each other's gains or losses. Players has to make an effort to look into the problem from another person's point of view, without which he is not in a position to take any further decision for himself. The situation is thus, both of practical importance and intellectual challenge. The generic definition of a game is given as follows:

$$G = (X, Y; Z)$$

Where G = the functional form or stylization of a game;

X stands for player I, the maximizing player;

Y stands for player II, the minimizing players;

$X = (x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n)$  is the set of strategies or moves of the first participant or first actor or player I;

$Y = (y_1, y_2, y_3, \dots, y_n)$  is the set of strategies or moves of the second participant or second actor or player II;

V = the pay-off or outcome or objective of the game

(Luce and Raiffa, 1967).

Clearly, the above function as a universal measure of preferences as it raises question of the existence of a numerical index which will reflect accurately the choice of an individual in situations of risk. Every games has its participants, contestants or players; each of them consciously or unconsciously has to makes a series of moves or uses several strategies as actions or reactions; and the contest has its reward or outcome envisaged or extracted by the participant.

Strategy is the core concept of the theory of games. It assumes rationality in the behavior of players. The assumption is that the players are not only thoroughly rational but completely self-aware of the priorities among his purposes and has complete knowledge of the strategies available to him in pursuit of the pay-off and is invariably engaged in the attempt to maximize his pay-off in a manner consistent with his own pay-off formation or ranking preference (Riker, 1966). In other words, strategy is an overall programme of actions which a player adopts in order to achieve a desired outcome or series of outcomes under adverse or conflict conditions. More generally, it can be represented by any function that associates a payoff for each player with every possible combination of actions as represented below.

Table 1: Strategies available for two players in a game.

		Player II	
		Chooses Left	Chooses Right
Player I	Chooses Up	4, 2	-1, -1
	Chooses Down	0, 0	3, 4

*Normal form or payoff matrix of a 2-player, 2- strategy game (Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944).*

In the accompanying example, there are two players; one chooses the row and the other chooses the column. Each player has two strategies, which are specified by the number of rows and the number of columns. The payoffs are provided in the interior. The first number is the payoff received by the row player (Player I in our example); the second is the payoff for the column player (Player II in our example). Suppose that Player I plays *up* and that Player II plays *left*, then Player I gets a payoff of 4, and Player II gets 3.

Indeed, Neuman and Morgenstern (1944) noted that there are not one but several types of game theory such as zero-sum two persons games, non-zero-sum two persons games, zero-sum n-person games and non zero-sum n-person games. In a zero-sum two persons games, there are only two players, and the gains of one always equal to the loss of the other. The sum of outcomes for the players being zero. The normal form of a zero-sum two persons game function is given by a triplet  $(X, Y, A)$ , as follows:

$X$  is a nonempty set, the set of strategies of Player I

$Y$  is a nonempty set, the set of strategies of Player II

$A$  is a real-valued function defined on  $X \times Y$ . (Thus,  $A(x, y)$  is a real number for every  $x \in X$  and every  $y \in Y$ ).

The interpretation is as follows. Simultaneously, Player I chooses  $x \in X$  and Player II chooses  $y \in Y$ , each unaware of the choice of the other. Then their choices are made known and player I wins the amount  $A(x, y)$  from player II. Depending on the value involved,  $A(x, y)$  will be the payoff. If  $A$  is negative, player I pays the absolute value of this amount to player II. Thus,  $A(x, y)$  represents the winnings of player I and the losses of player II.

In non-zero-sum two persons games and zero sum n-person games involving two or more persons in the contest, the players may share the division of the awards and the gain of one need not be equal to the loss of the other. Such a structure will require that the pay-off is divisible and some principle of distribution is applied. In non zero-sum n-person games where there are three or more players, the game situation develops new feature where it becomes possible for two or more of the players to cooperate against the others by pooling their resources and making collective decisions during the play. This is described in game theory as players “ganging up” against the front-runner in order to reduce his chances of winning. Neumann gave the basic values for three players in a non zero-sum n-person game as:

$$v_1 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

$$v_2 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

$$v_3 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

If two players form a coalition against the third, they are each entitled to a premium of  $D/6$ , while the third player suffers a penalty of  $D/3$ , where

$$D = v(\{1,2\}) + v(\{1,3\}) + v(\{2,3\}).$$

The rules of the game describe how the resources may be utilized. In ordinary games, rules indicate some established understanding or verbal statement prescribing the accepted conduct on the part of the players. In game theory, rules are laid down by those who are powerful enough to apply them and therefore greater attention is paid to the resources implications of rules rather than to its prescriptive requirement (Luce and Raiffa, 1967). A rule of the game, therefore, can be defined as the distribution of resources and the strategic responsibly open to each player in the employment of these resources (Varma, 2006).

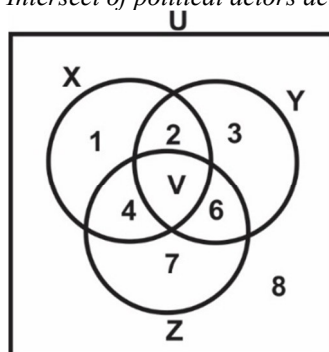
### 3. Game Theory and Cross-carpeting in Nigerian Politics: The Nexus

A model is a working intellectual construct by which social or physical situation can be represented (Varma,

2006). These situations can be real or hypothetical. Thus, a model stands for an ideal which is to be achieved or pattern which is to be followed. While difficulty may be encountered in trying to apply such mathematical model to political situations, what we do is to begin with the formal model of the game theory and determine the precise meaning of terms within the framework supplied by the model. Parties are group of people that share similar ideology and philosophy, therefore, we make use of the mathematical set to explain the behavior of Nigerian political actors.

As rightly observed by the game theorist (Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944; Shubik, 1964; Luce and Raiffa, 1967), individuals participating in a game are only interested in maximizing their gains and minimize losses. Political party in this sense can be seen as a group of individual persons seeking office through elections, the goal is to win power, or reelection for those who are already in power. As such, the character composition of parties is of no different, the only difference is of nomenclatural relevance of parties. In relation to this position, we give example of intersection and union of elements in set diagram. Elements in the set are hereafter regarded as political actors, does not correspond to the value of their number.

*Intersect of political actors across political parties*



Where U = political parties,

X = Labour Party (LP)

Y = Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Z = All progressives Congress (APC)

V = payoff or outcome

Thus, the intersection of X, Y and Z denoted by n is the set that contains those elements that are in X, Y and Z. Therefore:

LP n APC (X and Z) = 4

LP n PDP (X and Y) = 2

PDP n APC (Y and Z) = 6

LP n PDP n APC = V which every political actors adopted to maximize their gains.

In relation to carpet crossing in Nigeria politics, the interpretation of the above set diagram can be analysed from two perspective. First, as Aleyomi (2013: 74-75) had noted, there is a mass movement of Nigeria politicians from different political parties into the ruling party towards the time of the general election. The idea is to participate in party primaries of the ruling party. On the other hand, there is another movement that starts after the party primaries. Those who lost in the party primaries move to their former parties or to new ones or even to form a new party under which they intend to contest the coming election. Incessant cross-carpeting by Nigeria's political actors, therefore, reflects their continuous thirst for political advantages. These advantages according to Desposato (2006) as well as Awofeso and Irabor (2016) may include: electoral advantages (party image, financial); institutional advantages (access to key posts, opportunities for career advancement); and distributive advantages (access to government largesse). Until his recent decampment to the All Progressive Congress, the former vice-president Atiku Abubakar was a major bigwig in the People's Democratic Party. When he was denied nomination form to contest the 2007 general election under the PDP platform, he decamped to the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria. He returned to the PDP where he formed a splinter group (New PDP) under the chairmanship of Kawu Bareje. Erstwhile governor of Borno State, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff was the former chairman of the Board of Trustees of the defunct All Nigerian Peoples Party, (ANPP) one of the parties that merged to form the APC, defected to the PDP where he has formerly been a member. Another case in point is the former governor of Ogun State, Ggbenga Daniel who hooped from the PDP to the People's Party of Nigeria (PPN), Labour Party (LP) and back to the PDP. Former governor of Kano state, Senator Rabiu Kwankwaso was among the five PDP governors that defected to the APC in November 2013, which led to All Progressives Congress (APC) victory in the 2015 general election. He defected back to the PDP on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2017.

One key aspect of the game theory is the inter-dependence among the decisions of the different players participating in the game, where the decisions of each player are contingent upon the decisions of others (Shubik,

1964; Luce and Raiffa, 1957). Since each player is interested in winning the game, player has to base his decision on the expectation of what the other players are likely to do. In essence, whatever choice a player makes depends inextricably on the choice made by other players. Arising from this perspective, will consider the relation of subset of the Cartesian Product of a set. Note that each number in the values represent a member in the party.

$$X = [0, 1, 2]$$

$$Y = [4, 5, 6]$$

Where  $X = APC$ ,  $Y = PDP$

Therefore, the relation of APC to PDP denoted by  $x$  is given as:

$$[0, 4], [0, 5], [0, 6]$$

$$[1, 4], [1, 5], [1, 6]$$

$$[2, 4], [2, 5], [2, 6]$$

By interpretation, APC multiply members of the PDP to its advantage, is a political strategy to garnered more support to win election.

This explains the contagious effect of cross-carpeting among Nigerian politicians. In the society, there are people of immense influence who can galvanize popular support to a party. Having the support of such people in a political party can attract the attention of other politicians to the party (Kamara, 2012). For instance, following the decampment of the fraction of the PDP bigwigs (New PDP) to the All Progressive Congress on November 25th 2013, there was massive cross-carpeting of thirty-seven members of the House of Representatives from the PDP to the APC. This is not forgetting the eleven PDP senators who also switched to the APC and other series of decampment that accompany this period (Olukotun, 2014). Cross-carpeting therefore, is a calculated decision strategy of Nigeria's politicians on the trend of the personalities that defects which in turn determine their decision.

Another dimension of the theory of games applicable to Nigeria's party politics is the "non zero-sum n-person games" where it becomes possible for two or more of the players to cooperate against the others by pooling their resources and making collective decisions during the play. This is to mean players "ganging up or forming proto-coalition or coalition" on the front-runner in order to reduce his chances of winning. A coalition, then, becomes a game-within-a-game, in which players exercise rules in order to enforce agreements and keep less advantaged member from breaking away in response to higher bids from adversary players (Varma 2006). We adopted Neumann basic values for three players in a non zero-sum n-person game to explain party coalition. Note that each value represent a party.

$$v_1 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

$$v_2 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

$$v_3 = 1/3(v(\{1, 2\}) + v(\{1, 3\}) - 2v(\{2, 3\})),$$

If two players form a coalition against the third, they are each entitled to a premium of  $D/6$ , while the third player suffers a penalty of  $D/3$ , where  $D = v(\{1,2\}) + v(\{1,3\}) + v(\{2,3\})$ .

The alliance of the defuncts Action Congress of Nigeria, All Progressive Grand Alliance, All Nigeria Peoples Party and the Congress for Progressive Change to form the All Progressive Congress is a calculated attempt of the game theory to garner more supporters over the PDP to win the 2015 general election. With the merger of these four parties, a supposedly multi-party system is coalescing to two party system where there is a ruling party and a weakening opposition party. Moreover, with the proposed formation of a mega party by the PDP and other minority parties to challenge the perceived domination of the APC, there seem to be no end in sight to the politics of alignment and re-alignment in Nigerian politics.

From this angle, one can introduce Neuman and Morgenstern zero sum game. In a zero sum game, there are only two players, and each participant's gain (or loss) is equally balanced by the losses (or gains) of the other participant (Neuman and Morgenstern, 1944). Thus owing to the winner-takes-all nature of party politics in Nigeria, political opponents usually had to choose between crossing the carpet to join the ruling alliance or suffer exclusion and lack of access to resources.

However, while the game theory assumes in the rationality of the behaviour of the players, rational decision maker in the game may just be a theoretical construct. Giving this position, Riker (1966) averred that the rationality of politics does not transcend to its stability. This explains why Nigeria's politicians easily switch parties once their individual interests are threatened. In essence, Nigeria's party are bereft of effective party control over its members, the violation of entrenched fundamental principles, rules and regulations guiding the conduct and behaviour of every member of the party.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study has dwelt extensively on the theory of games as a model for explaining cross-carpeting in Nigerian politics. The paper established that Nigerian political parties are bereft of ideology and this accounts for the selfish interest of politicians in moving freely from one party to the other each time they perceived any risk to

their political fortune. Similarly, lack of ideology was also observed to be the major cause of intra-party conflict that led to frequent cross-carpeting of politicians from one party to the other. It also established that cross-carpeting from opposition parties to ruling party weakens the quality of opposition party. One pre-requisite to combat incessant cross-carpeting is to de-emphasise the excessive premium placed on political power. When politics becomes less lucrative, ideology will begin to gain popularity across the polity. This will keep political practitioners back on the track and guide against incessant cross-carpeting. Based on the fact that cross-carpeting is usually triggered by intra or inter party conflict, it is recommended that political parties should be re-engineered from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of mediating and reconciling interests and conflicts. Also, party organisation should not be subordinated to the interests of a few leaders. Political actors should accord legitimacy to the party and party should acquire an independent status and value of its own.

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