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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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ASSIGNMENT

REVIEW OF CHAPTER 15 OF SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEAOF PRESSURE GROUP

Pressure group, also referred to as “The Functionalist Representative,” is a formal or organized body with a common interest whose aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. These groups influence public policy, administration and determine political structures of the society and forms of government. Some examples of pressure groups in Nigeria include; Academic Staff Union for University (ASUU), Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and so on.

Although pressure group may appear similar to a political party, there are numerous differences between the two. Firstly, the aim of a political party is to acquire governmental power whilst the aim of a pressure group is to influence political decisions. Also, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas, pressure groups narrow their goals. In addition, pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions but political parties are accountable for theirs. Fourthly, political parties tend to be more formally organized than pressure groups. Despite these differences, a pressure group may align its interest with that of a political party that is believed to possess the capability to further their interest.

There are various reasons for the existence of a pressure group. Some of which include; to protect the minority from the tyranny of majority of people in the society, to improve the democratic process in the society, to treat the gaps in the democratic process, to tackle political apathy by encouraging participation in the democratic process and so on. In spite of the fact that pressure groups are very essential for the smooth running of the government, some problems may arise in the process of carrying out their activities. For example, where a pressure group insists on remaining rigid leaving no room for compromise, they can potentially monopolize the democratic process. Similarly, a pressure group in the midst of pursuing its own selfish interest may mount too much pressure on the government without considering the government’s limited resources.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Interest groups; this group is often regarded as a sectional group that represents the people in the society. For example, the Convention on Business Integration (CBI) in Nigeria.

Cause groups; these groups refer to promotional groups which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups.

Insider groups and outsider groups; insider groups refer to those groups often consulted by the government. They have access to the government and its machineries enabling them to have an influence on government’s mission and visions. An example is the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). Outsider groups on the other hand have no access or links to the government and its machineries. Thus, they have to rely on other means to have impact. An example of this is the Animal Liberation Front.

Anomic groups; this refers to groups that are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule. They are known for their unpredictable actions which may result in violence.

Associational groups and non-associational groups; associational groups refer to those groups that are usually registered with appropriate authorities. They often have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. Non-associational groups on the other hand, refers to those groups that do not have a formal organization. Their arrangement is by virtue of kinship, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions and so on.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Links government to the people; pressure groups often serve as a link between the government and the governed. Through their ability to always stay informed, they are able to educate the government on the happenings in the society.

Promotes participation in government; pressure groups help to promote public participation in the activities of the government. The activities of pressure groups promote political participation and ensures the citizens are up to date in the activities of the government.

Serving as sources of information to government; pressure groups offer the government valuable information on issues they may not be aware of.

Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies; pressure groups criticize the activities of government as well as ensure that the government does not perpetuate themselves in power.

Promotion of the interest of the minority; pressure groups ensure that the interests of the minority are not tramples upon by the majority. They serve as watchdogs.

Influencing legislation; pressure groups apply pressure to influence government policy, ensure that the government change a policy direction as well as entirely withdraw a policy that does not favor the governed.

PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING

Pressure groups adopt several means to achieve their goals including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action. Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They may lobby government officials directly or indirectly, that is, through their friend spouses, children and so on. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of bills.