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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

A political party, is the foundation on which politics is built. It is a framework or a group of individuals which makes up a party where matters are discussed and a means by which electoral candidates are produced. There are many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. According to R.G. Gettel, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies.” Herman Finer on his part, defined political party as “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.” Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as “a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government. “according to Agbaje, “” a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible of government and its offices. Along with other scholars, definitions were made which cannot be over emphasized as political parties mean so much to different individuals.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded.
4. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.
5. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Elitist/cadre parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
2. Mass parties: this is political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.
3. Ideological party: this is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. Broker party: this is political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. Charismatic or personality party: this is political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation
5. Political stability
6. Conflict management and political integration
7. Organization of government
8. Provision of alternative government and policies
9. Electoral competition and governance
10. Goal formation

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness, sentiments, and nationalist movements. According to Ikelegbe, nationalist’s agitators formed groups and associations to organize against colonial misrule. The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties` formation in Nigeria was constitutional development.

The formation of political parties in the country, started as a result of various tribes trying to seek for a better like of their states, following the formation of the Action Group, which was formed by the Yoruba’s and the Northern people’s congress which was formed by the Northern people and so on. The pre-independent political parties were faced with problems which includes:

1. The political parties were without national outlook.
2. The political parries placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into fractions.
4. Political parties’ defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH REPUBLICS IN NIGERIA

During this era, after the ban on political parties in September 1978, political parties took part in the elections of 1979 to rule over various states and also in the gubernatorial elections. Following from that time till after independence in 1999, many political parties were registered which are to be listed among a few Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party (ANRP), All Blending Party (ABP), All Grand Alliance Party (AGAP), Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC) etc.