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(1). POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age. This topic aims at discussing the evolution of political parties in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY

There are so 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 political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies." A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition.

According to Shively (2008), "a political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power." From the above opinions we infer that a political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Political parties capture governmental powers through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as political ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded, i.e., in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation.
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 directs the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

ELITIST/CADRE PARTIES: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.

MASS PARTIES: This is a political party that draws membership from all section of the society and has wide membership.

IDEOLOGICAL PARTY: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.

BROKER PARTY: This is a political party formed with members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

CHARISMATIC OR PERSONALITY PARTY: This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY

The functions of political parties are: (i). Political mobilization and recruitment; (ii). Political education; (iii). Political representation; (iv). Interest aggregation; (v). political stability; (vi). Conflict managements and political integration; (vii). Organization of government; (viii). Provision of alternative government and polices; (xi). Electoral competition and governance; (x). Goal formation.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories (1920), the West African Student Union (1925) and the Lagos Youth Movement (1934).

EARLY POLITICAL PARTIES (1920-1950): Here we have Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) (1923), Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) (1934). The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (1944) was renamed to National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA (1950-1966): Two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which were, the Action Group (AG) and The Northern People's Congress (NPC) respectively. Other parties in this category include Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and United National Independent Party (UNIP).

PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONTED PRE-INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTIES

1. The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty;
2. They 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 factions;
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA (1979): National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), and so on

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC NIGERIA (1989): Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC)

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC: People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Labour Party (LP), etc.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian political parties face some challenges. First, there is high corruption. Second, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalition of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Moreover, the aim or political projects of most Nigerian parties is to have a share in the "national cake" as a system of patronage. Also some political leaders see political parties as a means to further their business interest. There is need for political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians promoting the development of Nigeria

