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ASSIGNMENT

In about 2 pages, review chapter 7, political parties in Nigeria, In salient issues in government and Nigeria’s politics.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties are an important link between the government and the people (Dickerson and Flanagan 2002). In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. In liberal democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s.

There are as 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 defined political party as an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. However, 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(1999), 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. Edmund Burke defines political party as a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed (Burke 1975). Dowse and Hughes (1972) see political parties as associations formally organized with the explicit and declare purpose of acquiring and maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state. A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008).

There are some characteristics of political parties. They are:

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

2. Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology.

3. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

4. Political parties are guided by party constitutions which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

5. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

There are five types of political parties. They are:

-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 its membership from all sections 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 its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

-Charismatic or personality party: This is political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Political parties perform the following functions:

-Political education

-Political representation

-Political stability

-Goal formation

-Political mobilization and recruitment

-Organization of government

-Electoral competition and governance

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010). 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 Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

The Nigerian National development (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian youth movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The National council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944.The first president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively.

According to Ikelegbe, 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were the action group and the national people’s congress. The action group emerged from the egbe omo oduduwa. It was formed in 1945. The cultural association was formed in 1949. The united middle belt congress led by Late J.S.Tarka, was founded in 1955,

Political parties before independence in Nigeria were not without some challenges. Some of them are:

-The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty.

-The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues

-Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions.

-Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

Political parties in the second republic in Nigeria:

The ban on politics lifted in September, 1978. About 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the federal Electoral commission. These were the national party of Nigeria, the the Nigerian peoples party, the great Nigeria peoples party, the peoples redemption party and the unity party of Nigeria. A sixth party, the Nigerian advance party was registered to contest the 1983 elections. The NPN was launched in September 1978 in Lagos. In 1979, the party won gubernatorial elections in 7 states.

Political parties in the third republic in Nigeria:

General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule degree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria, 1989. The two parties, the social democratic party and the national republican convention were established by the government. The registration of SDP was approved by the armed forces ruling council with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman. The National republican convention was registered through the approval of the armed forces ruling council with Chief Tom Ikimi as its national chairman.

Political parties in the fourth republic in Nigeria:

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent national electoral commission (INEC). The names of the registered parties are the alliance for democracy, all people’s party, and the people’s Democratic Party. Since the inception of the fourth republic, however, other political parties have been registered by INEC. So, Nigeria now has the following parties.

As things stand now, Nigeria’s political parties face some challenges. First, there is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Second, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration.