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Write a two page review on chapter seven in Salient Issues In Government and Nigeria’s Politics

Meaning Of Political Party

The definition of political party differs as the political thinkers do. According to R.G. Gettel, political party is a group of citizens who act as a political unit who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies. A political party is a group,of officials or would –be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization with the chief aim of attaining or maintaining power.

Characteristics of a Political Party

1. The major aim of a political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means

2. They are guided by broad principles of public policies referred to as party ideology

3. Every political party must be national conscious with the sole aim of the nation’s interest at heart.

4. The party should be a well organized structure

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

Types of Political Party

1. Cadre Parties: This party draws its members from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. They boast of intellectual members.

2. Mass Parties: This party draws its membership from all sections of the society; they have a wide membership.

3. Ideological Party: This political party is formed from political ideology which is the basis of the party.

4. Personality Party: This party is headed or formed by individuals with a likeable personality.

5. Broker Party: This party is drawn from members of upper and lower classes of the society with the sole aim reconciling the conflicting interest of the rich and poor.

Functions of Political Parties

1. Political mobilization.

2. Political education

3. Political stability

4. Conflict management

5. Interest aggregation

The development of political parties in Nigeria began due to the unending growth of nationalist consciousness and movement. Various associations were formed by the nationalist agitators against colonial misrule. Hence, the National Congress of British West Africa territories was formed in 1920, West Africa Students Union in 1925 and Lagos Youth Movement in 1934.

Early Political Parties (1920-1950)

The first political party formed was the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) in 1923. This was as a result of the new elective policy of Clifford’s constitution in 1922. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 with the aim of promoting Nigeria’s unity and national consciousness and the achievement of autonomy within the British Empire. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944 but it was later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in 1960 after some part of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. It was the major political party until 1950.

Political Parties in Nigeria (1950-1966)

Two major parties- Action Group (AG) and Northern People’s Congress (NPC) emerged between 1950-1951. These parties emerged from cultural association, the Action Group emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa which was formed in 1945, the Northern People’s Congress emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa which was formed in 1949. The multi party system gave rise to the emergence of many political parties apart from the major three. These smaller parties broke out due to disagreement.

Problems Confronted by Pre Independence Political Parties

1. The political parties placed more emphasis on personalities rather than issues

2. Inter- and intra- party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties splitting them into fractions.

3. Political party defection led to the collapse of political parties during that era

4. Political parties were without national outlook

Political Parties in the Second Republic in Nigeria

In 1978, the ban on politics was removed, after that 53 political parties sought to contest for the 1979 general elections. Five of these parties were registered by the federal electoral commission.

Political Parties in the Third Republic in Nigeria

After Gen. Ibrahim Babagida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree and two political parties were registered, Nigeria now had a constitutional two party system. The constitutions and objectives of these parties were set up by the military government.

Political Parties in the Fourth republic in Nigeria

Three parties among the various parties were picked and registered by the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC). These parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP), and People’s Democratic Party (PDP).

The political parties in Nigeria face various challenges such as corruption, power struggle, competition and the likes. All these destroy the purpose of political parties and endanger the country.