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ASSIGNMENT: Do a two-page review of chapter 7, “political parties in Nigeria”, in salient issues in government and Nigeria’s politics.

ANSWER:

In the modern age of mass participation, political parties are an essential feature of politics. Political parties first came to being in the nineteenth century as a result of response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. Politicians developed the idea of political parties as a device to help themselves get elected. Political parties are an important link between government and people. They have a huge responsibility in different governments for example, the liberal-democratic system helps to keep government accountable to public opinion; the autocratic system of government helps the government maintain its hold on power.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was where the first political parties was developed. The Democratic Party is the oldest party in the world that can be traced to the 1820s. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movements in the 1920s.

It is exceedingly difficult to establish a single definition of political parties, but some scholars have attempted to define for instance; According to R.G. Gettel, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organised, 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.” Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as a “formal organisation 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.” Agbaje defined political party as “a political party as 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. 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 organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

* The major feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
* Every political party must be national-minded.
* Political party should be organised body.
* Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* Elitist Parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest election of social hierarchy in a country like doctors or lawyers.
* Mass Parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have 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 political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
* Charismatic Party: This political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* Political education.
* Political representation.
* Political mobilisation.
* Interest aggregation.
* Organisation of government.

The evolution of political parties in Nigeria as follows:

Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) - 1923 - Herbert Macaulay - Lagos

Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) - 1934 - Ernest Ikoli -

National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) – 1944 - Herbert Macaulay -

Action Group (AG) - 1950 - Obafemi Awolowo -

Northern People’s Congress (NPC) - 1951 -

United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) - 1955 - J.S. Tarka -

National Party of Nigeria (NPN) - 1978 - - Lagos

Alliance for Democracy (AD)