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Review of chapter 7: political parties in Nigeria

Political parties have become ubiquitous in modern politics. They generally serve as important links between government and the people.

According to R.G. Gettel, A 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. Other anthropologists-cum-philosophers have stated different definitions clearly emphasizing on the principal aim of every political party; to get a representative in office and obvious pursuit of political power. Some of these statesmen include herman finer, edmund burke, joseph lapalombara and agbaje. Due to the diverse functions the political party serves in it's political setting, a single definition cannot be established.

Characteristics of political parties

- The major feature of any political party is constitutional capture of power (i.e licit)
- A political ideology; this serves to describe the shape and behavior of the political party
- A political party must be national minded
- A political party should be an organized body
- Party manifestos are part-and- parcel of every political party
- Every Political party is guided by a party constitution which directs the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Types of political parties

- Elitist/cadre parties: this seeks to draw its membership form individuals that are of the highest echelon in the state.
- Charismatic or personality parties: this includes individuals with charisma.
- Mass parties: this parties have wide membership as they draw their individuals from all sections of the community
- Ideological parties: Here, the political ideology of the party drives it, it directly forms the base of the party
- Broker party: In this political party, members from both top class and lower class are interested; they serve to promote reconciliation and social justice among individuals.

Functions of political parties

- Political mobilization and recruitment
- Political education
- Political stability
- Organization of government

Political parties in Nigeria

The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was Nigeria's first political party. Formed in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay to take advantage of the new Clifford Constitution, which succeeded the 1914 Nigerian Council. The NNDP successfully organized various Lagos interest groups into a single group that was able to compete politically. The (NNDP) ran many candidates for seats in the 1922 elections for the Lagos Legislative Council, winning three seats. The party won all the seats in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933. Though, the party's major function was to put candidates into the legislative council, it had a broader objective of promoting democracy in Nigeria, increasing higher Nigerian participation in the social, economic and educational development of Nigeria. The party continued to dominate politics in Lagos until 1938, when the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) overtook it in elections.

In the early 1950s, two major political parties emerged. They are; the Action group (AG) and the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). The Action group party was led by Obafemi Awolowo while the NPC was jointly led by Aminu Kano, Mallam Gusau, Abu-Bakar Imam and Dr. Dikko.

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties

The major problem during the pre-independence era as regards political parties was the parochial nature and narrow-mindedness in decision making. The political parties were without National Outlook. Most political parties were also personality parties. Also, conflicts or defections always left their marks in splitting the parties.

Political parties in the second Republic in Nigeria: The ban on politics was lifted in September 1978, in which about 53 political associations sought to contest the general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission and they are NPN, NNP, GNPP, PRP, UPN, NAP.

Political parties in the third Republic in Nigeria: There was a transition to civil rule decree in which two political parties were registered in accordance to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These parties were SDP and NRC.

Political parties in the fourth Republic in Nigeria: Three political parties were registered in preparation for the fourth republic in 1988 by INEC. These registered parties are AD, APP, PDP and ANPP.