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Introduction :

Political parties is an essential feature of politics. It is an important link between the people and the government. Politicians developed the idea of political party in the nineteenth century as a device to help themselves and like minded friends get elected. This chapter aims at discussing the evolution of political party in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification of the Idea of Political Party

There are various definition of political parties because of the many tasks it performs in the political process. According to R. G. Gettel "political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who acts 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 defines political party as "an organised body with voluntary membership its concerned energy bring employed in the pursuit of political power".

According to Joseph LaPalombra political party is "a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or coalition, the machinery of government. " and many more.

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 am effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Characteristics of Political Party

1. The means of capturing political power must be peaceful and lawful.
2. They always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization which is referred to as party ideology.
3. They must be national-minded.
4. They must be organised.
5. They must have party manifestoed which guide their conduct during and after winning election.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and member within and outside government.

Types of Political Party

1. Elitist/Cadre Parties.
2. Mass Party.
3. Ideological Party.
4. Broker Party.
5. Charisma or Personality Party.

Functions of Political Party

1. Political mobilization and recruitment.
2. Political education.
3. Political representation.
4. Political stability.
5. Interest aggregation.
6. Organization of government.
7. Conflict management and political integration.
8. Provision of alternative government and policies.
9. Electoral competition and governance.
10. Goal formation.

Problems that Confronted Pre-Independence Political Party

- i. The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support ethnic loyalty
- ii. They placed so much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
- iii. Intra-party and intra-party in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions.
- iv. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse in political parties during this era.

Conclusion