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19/MHS10/001

CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties play an important link between government and the people. Political party crops up all aspect of politics. It is an invention that first developed in the 19th century in the response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters.

Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements in the 1920s.

Below are some characteristics of political parties

1. The central feature of political party is to capture government power through constitutional means
2. Every political party must be national-minded. For example, in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation
3. Political party should be an organized body
4. Political parties have party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

There are also different types of political parties

1. Elitist/cadre parties: This political party draws membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. For example members of intellectuals- doctors, lawyers.
2. Mass parties: These are political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. It is also can be referred to as people party, labour party.
3. Ideological party: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party
4. Broker party: This political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. The basic aim is to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and poor.
5. Charismatic/personality party: This political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader

Political parties perform the following functions below;

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation
5. Political stability
6. Conflict management and political integration
7. Organization of government
8. Goal formation

Political parties in Nigeria

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010). Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davies, Ernest ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe Obafemi Awolowo and other were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter.

Early political parties 1920-1950

The Nigerian national development party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria (1923). it was led by Herbert macauley regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigeria Youth Movement(NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and D r. Jc. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon(NCNC) was formed in 1944

Political parties in Nigeria 1950-1966

According to Ikelegbe 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. these parties emerged from cultural association because of the prospects of the 1951 elections. The two political parties were the action group (AG) and the northern people congress(NPC).

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties

1. The political parties were without national outlook
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues
3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in cases polarized the political parties and splitting them into factions
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era