NAME: OLIVEIRAAOKORIE UZAMAKA UCHEWNA

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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They help to keep government accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic system of government maintain its hold on power. In either ways, political parties are an important link between government and the people(Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002)

The first modern electoral democracy was the united state of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTIES

There are many definition of political parties as the political thinkers. According to R.G.Gettel , “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as political unit and 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 sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008). Finally a party joins people together in a formally organized structure. From the above opinions we infer that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organizes, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology
3. Every political party must be national -minded, I.e., in aims and function, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation
4. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.
5. Political parties has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members outside and within the government

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Elitist/cadre parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country
2. Mass parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership
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 is political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society
5. Charismatic or personality party: this is political party formed or led by individuals with charisma

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY

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)

The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided four(4) elective seats in its legislative council while the Richard constitution of 1946 retained the four elective seats and established regional executive councils

EARLY POLITICAL PARTIES 1920-1950

The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed In Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism.

PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONTED PRE INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL PARTIES

1. The political parties were without national outlook.
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rathan than issues
3. It led to the collapse of political parties during this era