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MATRIC NUMBER: 19/MHS11/063

DEPARTMENT: PHARMACY

COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION

COURSE CODE: GST 203 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, political parties are an important part of politics. In liberal-democratic system, they help to keep government accountable to public opinions which shows that political parties are an important link between the government and the general public. The political party crops up in all aspects of politics. It was invented in the nineteenth century due to the involvement of a high number of voters. The first modem electoral democracy was the United states of America where the first political parties developed. In Britain in 1867 was when there was a reasonable widespread extension of the votes. Political parties in Nigeria developed after the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist’ movements in the 1920s. They are an important link between government and the people {Dickerson and Flangan}.

***CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY***

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 {R.G.Gettel}. Herman Fisher defined political party as an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. 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). A party joins people together in a formally organised structure. Opinions gathered explains that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organized having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Political parties come in different types:

* The Elitist or Cadre parties: This is the political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
* Mass parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Ideological parties. This is the type of political party formed with political ideology or benefits from the basis of the party.
* Broker party: This is the political party formed with the members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society and it is basically aimed to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.
* Charismatic or Personality party: This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma

**Characteristics of a political party**

* To capture governmental power through constitutional means
* Political parties always have a broad principle public policy adopted by its organization
* Every political parties must be national minded
* Political party should be an organized body
* Political party has party manifestoes which guides their conduct during and after elections

***Functions of a Political Party***

Political parties perform the following functions. Political mobilization and recruitment, Political education, Political representation, Interest aggregation, Political stability, Conflict management and political integration, Organization of government, Provision of alternative government and policies, Electoral competition and governance and Goal formation.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements. According to Ikelegbe, nationalists’ agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Thus, for this purpose, The National Congress of British West African Territories were formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria and were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties, formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executed councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses. Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) is regarded as the first political party formed in Nigeria. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) were formed as political parties after the introduction of the Clifford Constitution. They could not be said to be national parties. Their activities were mainly restricted to Lagos. However, at the end of Second World War, new political parties emerged and replaced the NNDP and NYM. Some of these new parties were in two groups which are the major and minor parties. Some of the major parties were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), Northern People’s Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG). Some of the minor parties were the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Dynamic Party (DP), Bornu Youth Movement (BYM), etc. Most of these parties, if not all, were regional in outlook and based on ethnic sentiments and it can be said that none of them commanded nation-wide support. Some scholars, have argued that NCNC was more of a national party than others. However, they were formed mainly to awaken people’s consciousness towards the struggle for political independence.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA**:** After the ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978, about 53 political associations wanted to contest the 1979 general elections. Some of them were The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party (NPP).

 POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA**:** General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria. The two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were established by the government.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC**:** Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1998 by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) they were, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Some other political parties registered by INEC in Nigeria are: Action Democratic Party (ADP), Advance Allied Party (AAP), Coalition for Change (C4C), Democratic People’s Congress (DPC), Social Democratic Party (SDP), United Patriots (UP), Youth Party (YP) etc. There is need to make political parties to be solely focused and directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.

In conclusion, Nigerian’s political parties face some challenges. First, there is an extreme high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Second, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Most political leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests. There is need to arrest to trend and make political parties to be fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.