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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in this modern age, they are an important link between government and the people (Dickerson and Flanagan,2002). Politicians developed the idea of political parties to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the parties proved to have other uses and went one to become a feature in modern politics.

The first modern electoral democracy was the USA and it was here that the first parties developed. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movement in the 1920s.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY

There are many definitions 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 a political unit and who by the use of political powers 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 organisation; the chief objective of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008). According to Agbaje(1999), “a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general cause. Finally, a party joins people together in a formally organised structure. From the above opinions we infer that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organised having some agreement in board principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* The major feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
* They have parties manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections etc.

Types of political parties

1. Elitist or Cadre parties
2. Mass parties
3. Ideological party
4. Broker party
5. Charismatic or personality party

Functions of Political Parties

1. Political education
2. Political stability
3. Organisation of government
4. Conflict management and political integration

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements(Ikelegbe,2010). The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Student Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for 4 elective seats and established regional assemblies.

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 led to the formation of NDDP.NDDP was led by Herbert Macaulay who was the father of Nigerian nationalism.

Political parties in Nigeria: 1950-1966

According to Ikelegbe,2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress(NPC). These parties emerged from cultural association because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitutions.

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

Political Parties in The Second Republic in Nigeria

The ban on politics was lifted in September 1978. Following that, about 53 political association sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. These were The National Party of Nigeria(NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party(GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party(PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN). The sixth party, Nigerian Advance Party (NAP), contested in the 1983 elections.

Political Parties in The Third Republic Nigeria

General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which 2 political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1898. Thus for the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. Party officials were elected afterward, local government and state congress and national conventions were directed by the government officials.

Political Parties in The Fourth Republic

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission(INEC) among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The names of the registered political parties are the Alliance of Democracy(AD), All Peoples Party(APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigerian People’s Party(ANPP) and the People’s Democratic Party(PDP).

Since the inception of the Forth Republic, other parties have been registered by INEC. So Nigeria has other political parties

CONCLUSION

As things stand now, Nigeria political parties face some challenges. First, there is an extremely 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 the new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as the basis of their registration. Most party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests. There is a need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.