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ASSIGNMENT.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They serve as a link between the government and the people.

One out of the many definitions of political parties is; a 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). Another definition by Herman Finer is; a political party is an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of Political Power. Due to the multi tasks performed by political parties, it is difficult to come up a single definition. Nonetheless, we can infer that a political party is a group of citizens which may be more organized or less, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Characteristics of Political Parties.

1. They capture governmental power through constitutional means through peaceful and lawful means.
2. They are guided by a party constitution which directs the conduct of the party officials and members within and outside government.
3. They have party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
4. They must be national minded; they must take into consideration the interest of the nation.

Types of Political Parties.

- Elitist/ Cadre Parties.
- Mass Parties.
- Ideological Parties.
- Broker Parties.
- Charismatic Parties.

Functions of Political Parties.

- Political education.
- Goal formation.
- Interest aggregation.
- Political mobilization and recruitment.
- Political stability.
- Political representation.
- Conflict management and political integration.
- Government organization.

- Provision of alternative government and policies.

Political Parties In Nigeria.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010). The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by the Clifford constitution (1922) gave rise to its formation in 1923 and was led by Herbert Macaulay (father of nationalism). During the second republic, it was officially launched on September 1978 in Lagos following the lifting of ban on political parties by the military rulers. Their main goal was promoting national unity.

In the third republic, General Ibrahim Babandiga promulgated the transition to civil rule decree whereby two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria (1989). For the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The constitutions, objectives, policies and programmes of both political parties were set up by the military government. The two parties; the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were established by the government. After which, party officials were elected, local government and state congresses and national conventions were directed by government officials.

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC). Their names are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Democratic (APP) now known as All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). However, since the inception of the Fourth Republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC.

Conclusively, Nigeria's political parties currently 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 new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Most party leaders see their political activity as a means to further their business interests. There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.