OBIA-AMAUWA JENNIFER EBERECHI

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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They serve as an important link between the government and the people {Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002}. The political party is an invention that was first developed in the 19th century as a response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. The first modern electoral democracy was the **“United State of America”** where the first parties were developed. Later, by the 1820s, there were well-organized parties, and the **“Democratic Party”** which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movements in the 1920s.

There are however, many definitions of political parties as there are many political thinkers. Some of these definitions include:

* **R.G. Gettel** defined political party as a group of citizens more or less organized, who acts as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying its general policies.
* **Herman Finer** defined political party as an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power
* **Edmund Burke** defines political party as a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.

There are some characteristics of the political parties which are:

1. The major feature of a political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means
2. They have broad principles of public policy which is adopted by its organization, referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded, i.e., in aims and functions
4. Political parties are guided by the party’s constitution which directs the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

There are also different types of the political parties:

* **Elitist/Cadre Parties-** which draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
* **Mass Parties-** which draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership which is aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses
* **Ideological Party-** formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party
* **Broker Party-** its members are drawn from both the upper and lower classes of the society with the basic aim of reconciling 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 party is formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

The functions of the political party also include; **“political mobilization and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration”** and so forth,

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was the Constitutional development which included the; **“Cliffeord’s constitution of 1922, Richard’s constitution of 1946 and Macpherson’s constitution”**

**Early Political Parties (1920-1950)-** the Nigerian National Development Party {NNDP} was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria through the elective principle introduced by Clifford’s Constitution which led to its formation in 1923. After that, the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan with the party’s objectives published in 1938. The NCNC party which was formed, became the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. Its first president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikwe.

**Political Parties in Nigeria (1950-1966)-** the two major parties that emerged between 1950 and 1966 were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The Action Group emerged from the “Egbe Omo Oduduwa” formed in 1945 as a pan Yoruba cultural society with its leader as Obafemi Awolowo as the general secretary. The Northern Peoples’ Congress emerged from the “Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa”. The cultural association was formed in 1949 by Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusua, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam. Some smaller were formed as a result of disagreement that arose in the major parties and they include; “Northern Element Progressive Union {NEPU}, United Middle Belt Congress {UMBC}, United National Independent Party {UNIP}.

There were some challenges which were faced by Pre-Independence Political Parties which were that; “the political parties were without national outlook, they placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues; intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most case polarized political parties and therefore splitted them into fractions”.

**Political Parties in the Second Republic In Nigeria-** examples are: “The National Party of Nigeria{NPN}, Nigerian People’s Party {NPP}, The Great Nigeria Peoples Party {GNPP}, People’s Redemption Party {PRP}.

**Political Parties in the Third Republic Nigeria-** examples of the two constitutional parties in Nigeria for the first time in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989 were “Social Democratic Party {SDP} and the National Republican Convention {NRC}”.

**Political Parties in the Fourth Republic-** examples are “Alliance for Democracy {AD}, All Peoples Party {APP} and the People’s Democratic Party {PDP}. Other examples include: “Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party {ANRP}, Action Democratic Party {ADP}” and so forth.