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ASSIGNMENT

Do a two-paged review of chapter 7, “Political Parties in Nigeria”, In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics.

The political party is an important characteristic of politics. The political party happen to be an invention that was first developed in the 19th century. It was formed as a response to the appearance of elections involving mass participation. The idea was strictly developed at that time as a device to help politicians and their like-minded friends get elected but as of now, the party has proven to have many other uses as well and went on to become an ubiquitous feature of the modern politics.

The political party was first developed in the United states of America. The oldest political party is the democratic party in the world. Also, whenever a reasonably large and varied electorate was established with the coming of democracy, all over Europe, the political parties appeared. The political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness, sentiments and movement as at the 1920’s.

There are several definitions of political party given by political thinkers. R.G Gettel said, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies”. Also, Herman Finer defined a political party as “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”. But, from the above opinions from several political thinkers, it can be inferred 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. There are several functions of these political parties; they help the government maintain its hold on power, they help to keep the government accountable to public opinion amongst many others.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A POLITICAL PARTY

1. The central characteristics of the political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties are guided by party constitution.
3. Political party should be an organized body because it only derives its strength from an effective and strong organizational structure.
4. Political parties have party manifestoes saddled with the responsibility of guiding their conduct during and after winning elections.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTY

- A. Mass Parties: This type of political parties draws its membership from every sectors of the society and also has wide membership. They take members from Labor party, workers party, people's party etc and they aim at alleviating suffering.
- B. Elitist/cadre parties: this is a political party that draws in membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. Members of this party boasts are; doctors, lawyers, lecturers or business tycoons.
- C. Ideological parties: this is formed by political ideology or benefits which forms the bases of the party.
- D. Broken party.
- E. Charismatic or personal party.

Functions of political party.

- A. Political education
- B. Political mobilization and recruitment
- C. Political stability
- D. Political representation
- E. Goal formation
- F. Electoral competition and governance

Political parties in Nigeria.

This developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalists' movements. The National Congress of British West African Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O.Davies etc were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, were in the forefront of political activities and part formation in the 1920s and thereafter.

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. The party was based in Lagos and had no national coloration. It won all the three seats allocated in Lagos legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928, 1933. The party was formed mainly by its leaders and political activities and campaigns were aided by a newspaper called Lagos Daily News launched in 1925.