

NAME: BABAODEH JULIAN ONYEJUMBI

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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

BRIEF HISTORY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political Party is an invention that was developed in the 19th century with response to the appearance of elections including a large amount of voters. It was developed by politicians as a means to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the party proved to have other uses. The political party became an everywhere feature of modern politics especially in the age of mass participation. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion, even in autocratic system of government, it helps the government maintains its hold on power. It primarily shows that political parties are an important link between government and the people. The first modern electoral democracy was the United States of America and also the first place political parties were developed. By the 1820s, there were well organized parties such as the Democratic Party which was the oldest political party in the party. Political parties in Europe developed whenever a reasonably large and varied electorate was established with the coming of democracy. Just like in Britain, 1867 was the first year there was a reasonably widespread extension of votes. While political parties in Nigeria were developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalists movements in the 1920s.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY

A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that is difficult to establish a single definition. There are as many definitions as there are many political thinkers willing to define it. The textbook highlights about seven definitions by different scholars. It focuses on definitions from thinkers such as R.G Gettel, Herman Finer, Joseph LaPalombara, Agbaje, Edmund Burke, Dowse and

Hughes and Shively. From all the opinions of the above the textbook was able to infer an acceptable definition which is; 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. It also highlighted a few characteristics of political parties such as the aim of capturing governmental power through constitutional means, having broad principles of public policy adopted as what is known as the party's ideology that is the principles that guide the party's every move and decision. It has other characteristics such as that every political party must be national-minded, meaning its aims must include the national interest of the country or nation, it must have an effective organizational structure, it must be in possession of a party's manifestoes and a party constitution. The textbook also educated us on the types of political parties i.e. elitist/cadre parties formed by the most elite in a society, mass parties formed by persons from all parts of society, ideological parties, broker parties made by the lower and upper classmen of society to form a bridge between both social classes, and the charismatic party made up of individuals with charisma. The textbook went on to name ten functions of political parties such as for political education, political representation, political stability, interest aggregation etc.

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

As mentioned earlier, political parties developed in Nigeria following national sentiments, consciousness, and movements. Here nationalist agitators formed groups and associations, to take a stand against colonial misrule. This was the reason for which the parties namely the National Congress of British West Africa Territories (1920), the West African Students Union (1925) and the Lagos Youth Movement (1934), with their founders Herbert Macaulay (proposed father of nationalism in Nigeria), H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria even as they were the beginning of the nationalist movement they also were at the forefront of the political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter. The pre-independence parties in Nigeria were formed due to a number of factors and as well as being a result from certain situations.

Examples of these factors as well as situations are the constitutional development of 1922, to achieve complete autonomy within the British Empire, to seek total independence for Nigeria, to campaign against the constitution of 1946, from cultural associations due to the prospects of the 1951 election following the constitution of that year, for political power in the western region, for control in the North, for the creation of the middle belt region etc. there were also highlighted problems which confronted these political parties such as; the fact that these parties didn't have national interest at the heart of its affairs; it placed too much efforts on personalization rather than on issues; interparty and intra party conflicts split the parties into factions; political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties etc. The political parties of the second republic were recorded (i.e. after the ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978) based on the elections participated in and the states controlled along with the duration said states were held by the political parties. In the third republic, the transition from military to civil rule allowed for two political parties to be registered according to the constitution of 1989. This was the first time, that Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The parties of this republic had all the officials, congresses, and national conventions directed by the government. The fourth republic, which is also the current republic had three political parties (the Alliance for Democracy, the All Nigeria People's Party, and the People's Democratic Party) registered in preparation towards the republic in 1998 by the Independent Electoral Commission. However since the inception of the fourth republic the INEC has registered over 40 more political parties in the country.

The main aim of the chapter is to arrest the rampant idea within political party leaders that the parties under their management are for furthering their personal interests rather to direct their efforts at fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.