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MATRIC NUMBER:19/MHS01/184

COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION

COURSE CODE: GST 203

ASSIGNMENT

Do a two page review of Chapter 7, "Political Parties in Nigeria," in Salient issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics.

ANSWER

There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power. Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. It is an important link between the government and the people. It was first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance to elections involving large numbers of voters.

Political parties have some characteristics which includes; to capture governmental powers through constitutional means, they have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization which is known as party ideology, every political party must be national-minded which means that it must take the interest of nation into consideration, there should be an organized body due to the fact that its strength comes from an effective organizational structure, they have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after election, they are guided by a party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Political parties come in different types. The Elitist or Cadre parties. This is the political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. Mass parties. This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Ideological parties. This is the type of political party formed with political ideology or benefits from the basis of the party. Broker party. This is the political party formed with the members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society and it is basically aimed to reconcile 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 is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Political parties perform the following functions. Political mobilization and recruitment, Political education, Political representation, Interest aggregation, Political stability, Conflict management and political integration, Organization of government, Provision of alternative government and policies, Electoral competition and governance and Goal formation.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements. According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West African Territories were formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria and were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties, formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson's constitution established regional executed councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.

Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) is regarded as the first political party formed in Nigeria. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) were formed as political parties after the introduction of the Clifford Constitution. They could not be said to be national parties. Their activities were mainly restricted to Lagos. However, at the end of Second World War, new political parties emerged and replaced the NNDP and NYM. Some of these new parties were in two groups which are the major and minor parties. Some of the major parties were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG). Some of the minor parties were the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Dynamic Party (DP), Bornu Youth Movement (BYM), etc. Most of these parties, if not all, were regional in outlook and based on ethnic sentiments and it can be said that none of them commanded nation-wide support. Some scholars, have argued that NCNC was more of a national party than others. However, they were formed mainly to awaken people's consciousness towards the struggle for political independence.

In conclusion, Nigerian's political parties face some challenges. First, there is an extreme 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 political leaders see their political party activity as a means to further

their business interests. There is need to arrest to trend and make political parties to be fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.