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 ASSIGNMENT

Do a two page review of chapter 7 ‘political parties in Nigeria’’, In Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal-democratic systems they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion, even in autocratic systems of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Either way it is clear that political parties are important links between the government and the people. It is an essential political agency. The political party crops up in all aspects of politics.It was first developed in the 19th century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. It was developed as a device by politicians to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the party proved to have many other uses as well and went on to become a ubiquitous feature of modern politics.

Definition of Political Party

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 out its general policies. Political party as defined by Herman Finer is an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. However because a political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. Joseph then defined political party as a formal organization whose self-conscious primary goal is to place and maintain in public office persons who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government while Agbaje defined it as a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices. A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power.

Characteristics of Political Party

* The major or central feature of a political party is to capture government power through constitutional means. The means of capturing power should be peaceful and lawful.
* Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology which also serves as the basis of classifying parties eg. Liberal, communist etc.
* Every political party must be national-minded.
* A political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.
* A political party must have a party manifesto which guides their conduct during and after winning elections.
* Political parties are guided by constitutions which direct the conduct of party ofiicials and members within and outside government.

Types of Political Parties

* Elitist Parties
* Mass Parties
* Ideological Party
* Broker Party etc.

Functions of Political Parties

* Political education
* Political stability
* Interest aggregation
* Organisation of Government
* Electoral competition and governance
* Goal formation etc

Political Parties in Nigeria

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The party was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigerian Nationalism. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1943 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr J.C Vaughan. The party contested and won elections to the Nigerian Legislative Council and Lagos Town Council.

Problems that Confronted Pre-Independence Political Parties

* The political parties were without national outlook
* They placed too much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
* Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during thid era.

Political Parties in the Second, Third and Fourth Republic in Nigeria

The ban on politics was lifted in September in 1978. Following that, about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations, were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. These were The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). After Gen. Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree which two political parties where registered with the constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria and they were Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention. While the fourth republic had parties like All Progressive Congress, Action Alliance, People’s Democratic Party etc.