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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION

CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are good essential feature of modern age government. It helps in connecting the ruler and the ruled, that is the government and the citizens. According to Dickerson and Flanagan, political parties are an important link between government and the people. Political parties has been in existence and has been evolving since 19th century.the first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, where the first party was developed.democratic party is the oldest political party world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movement in the 1920s.

Many scholars have defined political party in their own knowledge perspective. For this reason, there is no particular definition of political party According to R.G Gettel, ‘political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies.’ to Agbaje, ‘a political party is 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. Put in one way, political party party is a group of citizens, more less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

The major feature of political parties is their aim, which is, to capture governmental power though constitutional means. They have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology. Political parties are national-minded in aims and functions. They are an organized body.they have party manifestoes which guides them before and after winning the election. They are also guided by party constitution.

There are different types of political parties. They include;

* **Elitist/Cadre parties**; it is made up of intellectuals like doctors, lawyers, ;lecturers, or people who are business tycoons, traditional rules, etc
* **Mass parties;** it involves people from any sector of the society,e.g peoples’ party. They aim at alleviating poverty in the society.
* **Ideological party**;it is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
* **Broker party**; it constitutes both upper and lower classes of the society. It aims at justice by solving the conflicts between the rich and the poor.
* **Charismatic or Personality party**; in constitutes individuals with charisma.

Functions of political party includes; 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, goal formation.

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Therefore, National Congress of British West African Territories(1920), West African Students Union in (1925), and Lagos Youth Movement(1934) was formed. Constitutional development led to the emergence of political parties’ formation. Clifford constitution(1922) provided for 4 elective seats in legislative house, Richards constitution(1946) retained 4 elective seat and established regional assemblies, and Macpherson constitution(1951) established executives councils, and provided a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.

Clifford constitution(1922)’s elective principle gave rise to Nigerian National Development Party, known as the first political party in Nigeria. It was led by Herbert Macaulay, the father on Nigerian nationalism. Nigerian Youth Movement was formed in 1934.One of its objectives is ‘promotion of Nigerian unity and national consciousness and the achievement of complete autonomy within the British Empire. National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon(NCNC) was formed in 1944. this was the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. It was the major Nigerian party until 1950. Action Group(AG)and Northern People’s Congress(NPC) emerged between 1950 and 1951. The main aim of AG was to provide leadership to capture political power in the western region while the main aim of NPC was combating ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North. The Nigerian multi-party system of the first republic gave rise to the emergence of many political parties apart from the three major political parties; Northern Element Progressive Union(NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress(UMBC), and United National Independent Party(UNIP).

The Pre-Independence political parties went through some problems which includes; they were without national outlook, they had regional support and ethnic loyalty, they placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues, intra-party and inter-party conflicts polarized the parties which resolved them into fractions, and political party defection weakened or led to collapse of political parties in that era.

In second republic, some political parties came into existence;National Party of Nigeria(NPN), Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN), etc. In third republic, Social Democratic Party(SDP), National Republican Convention(NRC),, etc was formed. Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1988 by Independent National Electoral Commission(INEC). they includes; Alliance for Democracy(AD), All People’s Party(APP), and People’s Democratic Party(PDP). Several political parties was formed and registered since the inception of the Fourth Republic.

Presently in Nigeria, political parties are facing different challenges; high rate of corruption, regulatory framework for the establishment of parties is poor, party leaders sees their political party as a means of promoting their personal interests, etc. For the betterment of Nigerian Political parties, all these challenges should be handled correctly.