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ASSIGNMENT {POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA}

Political parties are essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In the liberal-democratic system, they help to keep government accountable to the public opinion; even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. According to Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002; political parties are important link to between government and the people. It is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of election involving large number of voters. Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device 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 an ubiquitous features of modern politics (Shively, 2008).

The United State of America was the first modern electoral democracy, and it was here the first parties developed. By 1820s, there were well-organised parties, and the Democratic party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. In British, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. Similarly, all over Europe, whenever a reasonably large and varied electorate was established with the coming of democracy, the political parties appeared. The political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movements in the 1920s’

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLIRICAL PARTY

According to political thinkers, there are many definitions pf political parties. According to R. G.Gettel, ‘’Political party is a group of citizens more or less organised, 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’’. Dowse and Hughes (1972) see political parties as associated formally organised with the explicit and declare purpose of acquiring and maintaining legal control either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state. A political party is a group of official or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organisation; a chief object of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008). Finally, a party joins people together in a formally organised structure.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. The main feature of political Party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

2. Political parties has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections

3. Political parties must be national-minded, i.e., in aims and function, it must take into consideration the interest of the nations. A party which falls short of national character and represent only a sectarian outlook cannot be a political party.

4.Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Elitist/Cadre parties

2.Mass parties

3. Ideological party

4. Broker party

5.Charismatic or Personality party.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

According to Ikelegbe, nationalist agitators formed groups and associations, to organise against colonial misrule. Thus, for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay; H.O. Davies, Enerst Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precusors of political parties in Nigeria, were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and there after (Ikelegbe,2010). Two major political parties emerged between 1950-1951. These were the Africa Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The main aim of the AG was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The NPC purpose is to combat ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North.

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 Nigeria nationalism. The party was exclusively based in Lagos and had no national colouration. It won all the three seats allocated to Lagos in the Legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933.

PROBLEMS THAT CONFIRMED PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL PARTIES.

1) The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty.

2) The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities than issues.

3) Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarised the political parties and thereby splitting them into factors.

4) political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during the era,