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19/LAW01/146

Political parties in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the growth of national consciousness and movements gave rise to political parties. Political parties was organised to fight against colonial misrule, constitutional development. There are different definitions of political parties from different political thinkers. According to Herman Finer, it is an organised group which has voluntary membership, its concerted energy is employed by the pursuit of political power. Agbaje, see it as a group of persons who are indeed by policy and opinions in support to, general political cause, which in pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratic feasible to the government and its offices. Edmund Burke defines it as a body of men united by the purpose of promoting by their jointly endeavors national interests upon some particular principles they all agreed on. As we can see, there are different definitions from different scholars.

The main aim of political parties is to capture power but there are other characteristics like they are national minded which means they consider the nations interest. They have their party manifestos that guides their conduct before and after winning elections. They have their own code of conduct that guides the officials in a political party. There are different types of political party; cadre parties, their members are drawn from the highest rank in the social hierarchy; mass parties, they draw their members from all ranks in the society, ideology parties, thisnoarty is formed to promote ideological interests, brokers party, they draw their members from both the rich and the poor so that the conflict between this two social status could be resolve by carrying out policies that promote social justice, charismatic party, this led by a person with personal qualities of a leader.

The first political party in Nigeria was formed during the colonial era, this was NNDP, Nigerian National Development Party in 1923. It was led by the father of Nigerian nationalism Herbert Macaulay, it was a Lagos based political party. It won seats in Lagos legislative council in 1923,1928 and 1933. Another party during this period was NYM, Nigerian Youth Movement formed in 1934 and led by Ernest Ikoli,Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C Vanghan, the party contested and won election to the Nigerian Legislative council and Lagos Town council in 1938. The NCNC, National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon which was changed to National Convention of Nigerian Citizens when some Cameroons broke away from Nigeria, it was led by Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. This party was not major until 1950.

In 1950, there were two main political parties, Action Group(AG) and Nigerian People's Congress (NPC). They bother emerged from cultural associations. AG emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a pan Yoruba culture society formed in 1945. Its leader was Obafemi Awolowo. The main aim was to capture power and provide leadership to the Western region while NPC emerged from Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa which was formed in 1949 by Aminu Kano, Dr. Dikko,M. Yahaya Gusau and Abubakar Imam. Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa constituted into NPC in October of 1951. The aim of this party was to fight against ignorance, idlenessand injustice in Northern region and to capture power to Northern region. The multi party system in Nigeria gave rise to smaller political parties which were splintered from the major ones, this was as a result of disagreements in those parties. Parties like NEPU, Northern Element Progressive Unionformed in 1950 and led by Aminu Kano, UMBC United Middle Belt Congress formed in 1955 and led by Late J.S Takar. The United National Independent Party (UNIP) led by Eyo Ita was a splinter of NCNC in cooperation with AG.Most of these parties were not successful because they had no national outlook, they focussed more on personality instead of issues and inter group and intra group conflicts.

There were about 53 political associations that wanted to contest for the 1979 elections in the Second Republic, but only five were registered by Federal Electoral Commission. The National Party of Nigeria, which was formed in 1978, it comprised of social clubs,trade unions, former leaders of NPC. It sought to promote national unity by providing food, shelter and quality education. It won the presidential election for 4 years and won gubernatorial elections in 7 states. The Unity party of Nigeria (UPN), the were opposition part to NPN, its main am was to provide free education, free health services for all citizens and full employment for all able bodies and developed rural areas. It won gubernatorial elections in five states. Nigerian People's Party (NPN), was born out of NCNC. Its main purpose was to work towards full employment of all citizens and promote social, economic and political equality of all sections of the country. It won gubernatorial elections in three states. The Great People's Party of Nigeria (GNPP)led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. It won gubernatorial elections in two states. The People's Redemption Party (PRP) reincarnated fromthe Northern Elements Progressive Union led by Aminu Kano. The Nigeria Advance Part was also a party in the second republic but was registered to contest in 1983 elections, it was led by lawyer Tunji Braithwaite.

The Third Republic had two major; the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention(NRC). The SDP registration was approved by Armed Force Ruling Council with Chief Tony Anenih as their national chairman, the party predicted its campaign of populist, people's welfare and change from bad leadership, corruption, underdevelopment and crisis. The party won presidential election of 12th June 1993. The NRC,was registered through the approval of Armed forces Ruling Council with Chief Tom Ikimi as their national chairman, this party favoured private initiatives and cared less about free health and education.

The Fourth Republic, three political parties were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Alliance for Democracy, they sponsored and contested throughout Nigeria during 1998 and 1999 general elections and won political power in six states in the south-west region between 1999 and 2003 and several Dtates Assembly seats and Local government elections. All Peoples Party (APP) won nine gubernatorial elections in northwest and middle belt zones during the 1999 elections and won several State Assembly and National Assembly seats. It aligned with AD present joint candidate during the 1999 Presidential election. The People's Democratic Party had the major aim of maintaining and preserving integrity, United sovereignty of Nigeria. It won he presidential elections in 1999 and maintained its stronghold presidency for sixteen years.