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**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are said to be 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 system if government, they help government maintain its hold on power. The first modern electoral democracy was the United state of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well organized parties, and the Democratic Party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world.

According to R.G Gettel, “political party is 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.”

Characteristics of political parties are as follows:

1. The major or central feature of political is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organizations, which is referred to as party ideology.

3. Political party is an organized body as it derived strength from an effective organizational structure.

4. Political parties have party manifestos which guid their conduct during and after winning elections.

There are different types of political parties, which are: Elitist/ cadre parties; which draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country, Mass parties; which draws its membership from all sections of the society and have membership, Ideological party; this is the political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party etc.

Functions of political party includes:

a. political mobilization and recruitment

b. Political education

c. Political representation

d. Interest aggregation

e. Political stability

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalists 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 Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the west African students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth movement in 1934. Hebert Macaulay, H.O Davies, Ernest Ilkoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe etc.

The Nigerian National Development party(NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principal 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 Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan.

The political parties in Nigeria between 1950-1966 are as follows: two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 were Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s congress(NPC).

Problems that confronted 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 rather than issues;

3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions

Political parties in the second republic are NPN,NPP,GNPP,PRP etc. Third republic includes SDP,NRC. Fourth include ANRP, APP