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A REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7, **“POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA”.**

In a democratic society, political party is an essential political agency in the political process of the political system. According to Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002, political parties are an important link between the government and the people. The chapter discussed the evolution of political parties in Nigeria. According to the writer of this chapter, there are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. This is to say that a political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is very hard to give a single definition. R.G. Gettel defined political party as a group of citizens less or more 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. After considering R.G Gettel’s definition and other definitions given by other scholars in this chapter, the writer deduced that a political party is group of citizens, more or less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Political parties have characteristics or features that show whether the party is actually a good political party. These include; capturing governmental power through constitutional means, having a broad public party adopted by its organization known as the “party ideology”, having party manifestoes which guide their conduct before, during and after winning elections. There are different types of political parties. A cadre/elitist party is a political party that get its membership from the highest ranking of social hierarchy (intellectuals like doctors, lawyers) in a country. It is called ideological party if it is formed with political ideology of the party. Other types are mast parties, broker party charismatic/personality party. Generally, political parties help in political mobilization and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, electoral competition and governance.

How was political parties developed in Nigeria? The main idea for the emergence of political parties in Nigeria was constitutional development, following the growth of the nationalist consciousness, sentiments and movements. In the early period of Nigeria (1920-1950), the elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP, the first ever political party in Nigeria in the year 1923. The Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Herbert Macaulay (known as the father of nationalism), won all the three seats allocated to Lagos in the legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933. This led to the formation of other parties such as The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM); formed in 1934 and The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC). The NCNC which was the major Nigerian party until 1950, was the first political party to be organised to seek total independence in Nigeria. Two major political parties arose between the year 1950 and 1951. The first one, the Action Group (AG) emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (a pan Yoruba cultural society, 1945) and the other one was The Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC). NPC emerged from the jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa (formed in 1949). All these parties have their own objectives on how to impact positively in the society. These pre-independence political parties was not perfect, they had their challenges as well. The political parties before independence were without national outlook, they placed much emphasis on personalities rather issues. There was intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases.

During the second republic, the ban on party politics due to birth of military rule in Nigeria was lifted in September 1978. Out of the 53 aspirants, only 5 were registered to contest in the 1979 general elections. They were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigeria People’s party (NPP), the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria. UPN and NPP were both offshoots of AG and NCNC respectively. Going into the third republic (1989), General Ibrahim babangida announced the change to civil rule decree. For the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The two parties were, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). SDP was alleged to have won the annulled presidential elections of 12 June, 1993. Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). PDP won the 1999 elections and maintained the presidency for 16 years. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, over 100 political parties have been registered by INEC.

In conclusion. One of the bedrocks of politics is political party. As stated in the first chapter of book; “politics and decisions arising from it affect all beings”. This implies that we should seek to know all politics is about so as not be affected ignorantly. In knowing what politics is, we need to know how the political parties operate. Their purpose, functions, advantages, history and others. This chapter discussed a lot on the basis of a political party. Get the book and read the chapter. It is time we stopped being politically apathetic.