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CHAPTER 7

Political parties are an important link between government and the people. It was first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. They are an essential feature in the modern age of mass participation. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. In Nigeria, political parties developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements in the 1920s.

A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power.

Characteristics of Political Party

1. To peacefully and lawfully capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. It has broad principles of public party adopted by its organisation.
3. Every political-party must be national minded.
4. Political parties should be an organised body.
5. Presence of manifestoes which guide their conduct before and after elections.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution.

Types of Political Party

1. Elitist / cadre parties: Membership is drawn from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. For example; doctors, lawyers, lecturers or business tycoons, traditional rulers.
2. Mass parties: Membership is from all sections of the society. For example – people’s party, labour party, workers party etc. They aim at elevating the masses suffering.
3. Ideological party: Political ideology or benefits form the bases of the party.
4. Broker party: Membership is derived from upper and lower class of the society. It aims at reconciling the conflicting interest of the rich and poor.
5. Charismatic or personality party: Formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Functions of Political Party-Political mobilisation and recruitment; political education; political representation; interest aggregation; political stability; conflict management and political integration; organisation of government; provision of alternative government and policies; electoral competition and governance; goal formation.

Political Parties in Nigeria

The precursors of political parties in Nigeria are Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davis, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Obafemi Awolowo. The fulcrum for emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development.

Early Political Parties 1920-1950

Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was the 1st political party formed in Nigeria. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by

Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J. C Vaughan. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) formed in 1944 was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960. It was the first party organised to seek independence for Nigeria. Its first president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively.

Political Parties in Nigeria 1950-1966

Two major parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 namely Action Group (AG) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Action Group emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa and its leader was Obafemi Awolowo. NPC emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. Nigerian multi-party system of the first republic gave rise to the emergence of many political parties.

Problems that Confronted Pre-Independence Political Parties

They were without national outlook; They placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues; Presence of intra-party and inter-party conflicts which political parties and split them into factions; Political party defects weakened hence the collapse of political parties in this era.

Political Parties in The Second Republic

In Nigeria After the ban on politics was lifted on September 1978, 53 political associations sought to contest for 1979 elections but only 5 were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. National Party of Nigeria- the party's main goal was national unity, with the slogan "one nation, one destiny". Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)-an offshoot of Action Group (AG). Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP)- reincarnated from the NCNC, its leader in Nnamdi Azikiwe. Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP)- led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. People's Redemption Party (PRP). A sixth party, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to contest the 1983 elections.

Political Parties in the Third Republic

Nigeria General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decrees through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the 1989 constitution of Nigeria. The two parties were Social Democratic Party (SDP) with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman and National Republican Convention (NRC) with Chief Tom Ikimi as its national chairman.

Political Parties in the Fourth Republic

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth Republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The registered parties include-the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). PDP won the presidential elections in 1999 and maintained its hold on the presidency for 16 years.

Challenges facing political parties nowadays

Extremely high level of corruption; Forging conditions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration due to the regulatory framework for the establishment of a national system for sharing out the 'national cake' as a system of patronage. Most party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests.