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 **REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7, ‘POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA’. IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS**

Political parties are 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 and in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Political parties are an important link between government and its people (Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002). The political party is an invention that 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 States of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of votes. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movements in the 1920s.

There are many definitions of political parties by different political thinkers. 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” while Herman Finer defined political party as an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

The major feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. The means of capturing such power must not be violent. It must be peaceful and lawful. Also, every political party must be national minded i.e., it must take into consideration the interest of the nation. Political party should be an organised body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organisational structure.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

These include: Elitist/Cadre Parties, Mass Parties, Ideological Party, Broker Party and Charismatic or personality party

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY

Political parties perform some functions such as; political recruitment, political education, political representation, political stability and organisation of government.

According to Ikelegbe, nationalists’ agitators formed groups and associations, to organise against colonial misrule. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. It was formed in 1923. Some other political parties formed between 1950-1966 include The Action Group (1950), The Northern People’s Congress (Oct. 1951) and United Middle Belt Congress (Aug. 1955)

PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONTED PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL PARTIES.

The political parties were without national outlook, they had regional support and ethnic loyalty. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues. The political party defection weakened.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA

The ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978. Five out of the fifty-three political associations that sought to contest in the 1979 general elections were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. They include: The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), The Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). A sixth party, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to contest the 1983 elections.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA

Two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC) were established by the government. The registration of SDP was approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman. While NRC was registered through the approval of the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tom Ikimi as its national chairman.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Since the inception of the fourth republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC. A few of the political parties Nigeria has includes: Accord Alliance (AA), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Change Nigeria Party (CNP), Democratic Peoples Congress (DPC), Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH) Hope Democratic Party (HDP), Kowa Party (KW), Labour Party (LP), Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN), United Patriots (UP), Youth Party (YP) etc.

As things stand now, Nigeria’s political parties face some challenges such as: the extremely high level of corruption making politics a competitive business and most party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests.