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### Chapter Seven: Political Parties in Nigeria

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. It is an important link between the people and government. It is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large number of voters. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America. The Democratic Party is the oldest political party in the world.

There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. From the different opinions on the definition of political parties, we infer that a political party is a 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.

#### Characteristics of Political Parties

- 1) Political parties must take into consideration the interest of the nation
- 2) Capturing governmental power through constitutional means
- 3) Political parties always have a party ideology
- 4) Political party should be an organised body

#### Types of Political Parties

- 1) Elitist Parties: membership from the highest echelon of society
- 2) Mass Parties: - draws membership from all sections of the society
- 3) Ideological Parties: - formed with political ideology or benefits
- 4) Broker Party: members are drawn from upper and lower classes of the society
- 5) Charismatic Parties: formed or led by individuals with charisma

#### Functions of Political Parties

- 1) Political education
- 2) Political stability
- 3) Conflict management and political integration
- 4) Organization of government
- 5) Electoral competition and governance.

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties' formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The party was exclusively based in Lagos and had no national colouration. Other political parties emerged, such as; The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), 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
- 2) The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues
- 3) Intra-party and inter-party conflicts polarised the political parties

The ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978. Five political groups were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission; these were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), the People's 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. General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989. The two parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC).

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, however other political parties have been registered by INEC. There are some political parties in Nigeria: Action Alliance (AA), All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Change Advocacy Party (CAP), Democratic Alternative (DA), Hope Democratic Party (HDP), United Democratic Party (UDP), United People's Congress (UPC), Youth Party (YP).