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***A REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7 “POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA POLITICS.***

Political parties are an essential feature of politics and everything that entails it. It may have started off as just a way to cope with the large number of voters in the nineteen century, and also as a device to help politicians to get elected but political parties have become more than just that since its invention, it is now an (as it was expressed in the book) ubiquitous feature of modern politics. Political parties basically serve as a link between the citizens and the government. It would also be important to point out that political parties first emerged in the United States of America, with the Democratic Party being the first political party in the world. Eventually other parts of the world created political parties whenever there were a large turn outs of voters. Political parties emerged in Nigeria following the growth of nationalist consciousness, sentiments and movements.

The concept political party is seen in different ways by different people, thus resulting to different definitions. People such as R.G Gettel, Herman finer, Agbaje (1999), burke, dowse and Hughes gave their respective definitions and all their opinions can be summed up as political parties being “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”.

The concept political parties also have characteristics peculiar to it. Of all the characteristics the major feature is to capture political power through constitutional means and not by unlawful means. This is the major feature because it is why the parties are formed in the first place. Another characteristic is that political parties have principles which are also their ideology which can be used to classify the parties as either communist, leftist, rightist etc. Political parties aim at placing an individual in office so as to serve the people, if the people are not catered for, the political party basically represents a sectarian outlook. Therefore this is the third characteristic, to be national minded and serve the citizens. Political parties should also be organized have manifestoes to guide their conduct before and after election and should also have a party constitution that direct the conduct of the party.

There are also different types of political parties and this is differentiated based on the members, ideology and concept of the parties. The types are 1: Elitist/cadre parties, which only draw their members from only the high class in the society. 2: mass parties, and as the name suggest it gathers members from every section of the society unlike the cadre, this type of party is aimed to alleviate the suffering of masses. 3: ideology party, a political party formed with an ideology that forms the basis of the party. 4: broker party, draws members from the high and low class of the society and takes the interest of all into consideration. 5: charismatic party, a party led with individuals with charisma, the party revolves round the personal qualities of the leader.

Political parties also have their functions they perform to the citizens and to bring them closer to their goal. They perform political mobilization, representation and education. Coupled with these, they also perform interest aggregation, ensure political stability, conflict management, organization of government, provision of alternative government, electoral competition and goal formation.

Political parties in Nigeria were formed by nationalist consciousness sentiments and movement as said earlier, Political parties were formed to stop the colonial misrule and eventually gain independence from the colonial masters. The first political party Nigerian national development party ( NNDP ) formed was by Clifford constitution in 1923. Political parties were divided into the four republics with new parties forming as new republics emerged. The Action Group (AG) and the Northern people congress ( NPC ) were formed in the first republic. The action group emerged from the egbe oduduwa group and was headed by obafemi awolowo. The NPC emerge from jam’iyya Mutanein arewa. The creation of these parties led to creation of smaller splinter parties such as the northern element progressive union ( NEPU ) and united middle belt congress ( UBMC ). Problems however faced these pre-independence parties, these were absence of national outlook, focused on personalities rather than issues, intra party and inter party conflict and political party defection.

There were 53 parties in the second republic but just 5 were registered these were the national party of Nigeria (NPN) the Nigeria people party (NPP) the great Nigeria peoples party (GNPP) people redemption party (PRP) and the unity party of Nigeria (UPN), also the Nigeria advance party (NAP) was registered to contest the 1983 elections. The political parties in the third republic were just two the social democratic party (SDP) with chief tony Anenih as its national chairman and the Nigerian republican convention with chief tom Ikimi as its national chairman. Three political parties were registered toward the fourth republic which are alliance for democracy (AD) all Nigerians people party (ANPP) and the people democratic party (PDP). Of these 3 parties PDP won the 1999 election and held the presidential post for 16 years. Countless other political parties have also been formed.