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**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**.

Political parties are important features of politics, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinions and also help the government to maintain it’s hold on power. It serves as an important link between the government and the people. Political party was invented in the nineteenth century due to elections involving large number of voters. A political party is a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government **(Joseph LaPalombara).** Some characteristics of political party are: To capture governmental power through constitutional means, every political party must be national minded, Political parties are guided by party constitutions e.t.c. Types of political parties are: Elitist/Cadre parties, Mass parties, Ideological party, Broker party, Charismatic or Personality party. Some functions of political parties are: Political mobilization and recruitment, Political education, Political representation, Political stability, Interest aggregation.

In Nigeria, according to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. For this purpose The National Congress of British West Africa Territories (1920), The West African Students Union( 1925), Lagos Youth Movement( 1934) were formed. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria . **Early Political Parties 1920-1950**: The Nigerian National Development Party was regarded as the first political party formed in Nigeria in 1923. It was led by Herbert Macaulay. The Nigerian Youth Movement was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. **Political Parties in Nigeria 1950-1966:** According to Ikelegbe 2010, two major political parties that emerged between 1950 and 1951 are **Action Group (AG)** which emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. It was started in 1950 but was formally inaugurated in April 1951. Its leader was Obafemi Awolowo and the main aim of the party was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The second was **The Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC)** which emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. The Jam’iyya constituted itself into a political party, The Northern Peoples’ Congress in October, 1951. Its main purpose was combating ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North. Some problems that confronted Pre-Independence Political Parties are: The political parties were without national outlook, The political parties place more emphasis on personality rather than issues, political party defection weakened during the era e.t.c. **Political Parties in the Second Republic In Nigeria:** After the ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978, about 53 political associations wanted to contest the 1979 general elections. Some of them were The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party(NPP). **Political Parties in the Third Republic in Nigeria:** 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. The two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were established by the government. **Political Parties in the fourth Republic:** Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1998 by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) they were, 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). Some other political parties registered by INEC in Nigeria are: Action Democratic Party (ADP), Advance Allied Party (AAP), Coalition for Change (C4C), Democratic People’s Congress (DPC), Social Democratic Party (SDP), United Patriots (UP), Youth Party (YP) e.t.c. There is need to make political parties to be solely focused and directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.