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*Chapter 7: Political Parties in Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of ass participation. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. In their case, political parties are an important link between government and the people. By definition, a political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organisation; a chief objective of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain it.

CHARACTERISTICS

* The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
* Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology.
* Every political party must be national-minded, i.e., in aims and functions, 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.
* Political parties have party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
* They are guided by party constitutions which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. **Elitist/Cadre parties:** This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
2. **Mass Parties:** This political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.
3. **Ideological Party:** This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. **Broker Party:** This is a political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. **Charismatic or Personality Party:** This political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Political mobilisation and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation
5. Political stability
6. Conflict management and political integration
7. Organisation of government
8. Provision of alternative government and policies
9. Electoral competition and governance
10. Goal formation

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements- Ikelegbe, 2010. According to Ikelegbe, nationalists’ agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Thus, for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter (Ikelegbe 2010).

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.