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Do a two page 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 system they help to keep government accountable to public opinion. According to R.G Gettel political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aims at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies. They perform so many tasks that it is difficult to establish a single definition. According to Edmund Burke it is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. So we can say that it 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.

Political parties have essential characteristics which include; their ability to take into consideration the interest of the nation and they must be an organized sect. A political party should have manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections. One of the major features is to capture governmental power through constitutional and peaceful means. They’re also guided by a party constitution which directs the conduct of party officials and member within and outside government.

Political parties are to serve functions such as political education, political representation, interest aggregation, goal formation, good electoral competition and governance, political stability and conflict management and integration so as to ensure peaceful governance. Political parties also vary as they could be mass parties which draw its membership from all sections of the society like most of the parties in Nigeria or Ideological parties from based on political benefits or ideology. Another type of political party includes the elitist party which draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. The charismatic party is one formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Political parties in Nigeria develop from the early 90’s around 1920 to be precise with the formation of Nigerian national development party (NNDP) by sir Herbert Macaulay in 1923. Then the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians. Political parties have increased since the pre independence era till date as Nigeria is a country with a multi-party system. From 1950-1966 two major political parties emerged namely; the action group led by Obafemi Awolowo with the main aim to provide leadership and capture political power in the western region. The other party wad the northern people’s congress formed in 1949 by Dr Dikko, Aminu Kano and some other men. We learn that smaller parties began to emerge from these two major parties. The pre independence political parties were without national outlook and they had so much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.

During the second republic about 4 parties ruled Nigeria till 1983. The first being the National Party of Nigeria which ruled for 4 years and 3 months with the slogan “one nation, one destiny”. The second political party that emerged was the unity party of Nigeria which successfully acted as a strong opposition party that reduced the excesses of the ruling NPN. The third and fourth parties were the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP) and the Great Nigeria People’s Party (GNPP). The NPP whose main support base were the Igbo’s and controlled Imo, Anambra and Plateau while the GPP whose ethnic base was the Kanuri and it controlled Borno and Gongola.

Third republic political parties were formed during the transition to civil rule decree I 1989 thereby being the first time Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The two parties, the social democratic party and the national republican convention were established by the government. Political parties during the fourth republic in 1998 were registered by the independent national electoral commission with only three parties scaling through. The parties include e Alliance for Democracy, all Nigeria People’s Party and the People’s Democratic Party and they all contested in the 1998 and 1999 general elections.

Since the inception of the fourth republic the amount of political parties in Nigeria has really increased although they face some challenges which include extreme level of corruption, failure to perform all that is expected from them, they see political parties as a means to further their own personal interest without considering the mass thereby endangering the development of Nigeria.