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2-PAGED REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7, POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are essential features of politics. Their presence is to keep the publics’ opinion accountable to the government; they are the link between government and the people. They also help the government maintain its hold of power. The political party exists in all aspects of politics. Politicians developed it in the nineteenth century due to the large number of voters during elections. Their main reason was to help themselves and their friends get elected but it gradually became a feature of politics. The first modern electoral party took place in the united states of America and by 1820s the parties were well organized. The democratic party is the oldest political party in the world. In Britain in the year 1867, there was a widespread extension of votes for the first time and with time so in Europe, whenever there is a large electorate with the coming of democracy, political parties were sure to appear there.

There are many definitions of who political parties are and what they do. E.g., Political party according to R. G. Gettel is a group of citizens more or less organized who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies. These political parties perform so many tasks that it is difficult to establish a single definition. A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization; the organization’s object is to ensure that its officials attain or maintain power. The party also joins people together in an organized structure.

The characteristics of these political parties include: the major feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. The capturing must be peaceful and lawful. Another characteristic is that they always have broad principles of public policies adopted by its organization (this is referred to as party ideology). Political parties also have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections. Every political party must be national-minded.

Types of political parties include the elitists/cadre parties, mass parties, ideological parties, broker party and charismatic/personality party.

Functions of political party include; political mobilization, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration, and organization of government.

Political parties developed following the growth of nationalists’ consciousness and their movements. The nationalist formed groups and associations to organize colonial misrule. For this purpose, the National Congress of British West African Territories, West African Students Union and Lagos Youth Movement were formed in 1920, 1925 and 1934 respectively. Clifford and Richard constitution provided for 4 elective seats, while Macpherson constitution established regional executive councils. The Nigerian National Development Party was the first political party formed in Nigeria in 1923 due to the elective of Clifford constitution. The party was led by Herbert Macaulay and it was based in Lagos. Campaigns were aided by Lagos Daily News. The Nigeria Youth Movement was formed by groups young Nigerians. The party contested and won elections and it was later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizens. It was the first party to seek independence for Nigeria. In 2010, 2 major parties emerged between 1960 and 1961 were the Action Group and Northern People’s Congress. They emerged from cultural associations because of prospects of 1951 elections. AG emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1950. The leader was Obafemi Awolowo. The main aim was to provide leadership in western region. NPC emerged from Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. In 1949 by Dikko, M. Yahaya, Amino Kano and Abubakar Imam. The main aim was to combat ignorance and injustice in the northern region. The multi-party system gave rise to many political parties. Some were formed based on disagreements in the major parties.

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties include that the parties were without national outlook, they placed much emphasis on personalities rather issues and intra-party and inter-party conflicts bin most cases polarized the political parties thereby splitting them into factions.

The ban of politics was lifted in 1978 and 53 political associations sought to contest in the 1979 election. 5 of them were registered to contest while the sixth was registered to contest in the 1983 elections. NPN launched in September 1978 comprised of social clubs, tribal union. Their aim was national unity. They won and ruled for 4 years and 3 months. The Unity Party of Nigeria was an offshoot of AG and its main support base is the Yoruba land. The aim was free education, health services to all citizens. It was a strong opposition party that reduced the excesses of NPN. The Nigerian People’s Party main support base were the Igbos and the members were largely old NCNC politicians led by Nnamdi Azikiwe. Their main aim was to work towards full employment for all Nigerians. The party won gubernatorial elections and controlled Imo, Anambra and Plateau.

General IBB promulgated the transition to civil rule through which 2 political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of federal republic of Nigeria. Thus, for the first time Nigeria had a constitutional 2 party system which were Social Democratic Party and National Republican Convention. The two parties were approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council at the federal capital Territory, Abuja. SDP was with chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman. Its campaign was directed towards progressivism, populism and change from bad leadership. They won the election of June 12, 1993 and controlled both the senate and house of representatives. NRC was with chief Tom Ikimi as its national chairman and the party favored more private initiatives. It paid less attention to free education and other welfare services.

Three political parties were registered in preparation for the 4th republic in 1998 by Independent National Electoral Commission. They include Alliance for Democracy, All Peoples Party (which changed to All Nigerian People’s Party) and People’s Democratic Party. AD contested during 1998 and 1999 general elections and gained power in 6 states of south western federation for 4 years by winning governorship elections. APPP won 9 gubernatorial elections in north west and middle belt zones. It won different state and national assembly seats. PDP has its major aim maintaining and preserving integrity. It won the presidential elections of 1999 and maintained the stronghold on presidency for sixteen years. Since the inception of the 4th republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC.

During recent times, the political parties face some challenges like high level of corruption which has made politics competitive. The regulatory framework for parties should be changed so new parties don’t forge coalitions of the wealthy and the aim which has been the development of a national system for sharing out the national cake as a system of patronage should stand firm. Political parties are not to further business interests so there is need to arrest this trend and make them foster cohesion amongst Nigerians.