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**CHAPTER SEVEN (7) - POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA.**

Political parties is an essential feature of politics because it helps to keep government accountable to their citizens and also it helps them to perform their duties efficiently. The concept political party has different meanings which has been defined by different political thinkers like; R. G. Gettel, Herman Finer, Agbaje, Joseph La Palombara, Edmund Burke, Dowse and Hughes. Politics as defined according to Herman Finer, “an organized body with membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”. The first modern democracy was the United State of America where by the first party was created. The first party is known as Democratic Party and it is also known as the oldest political party in the world. In Nigeria, political parties came into existence with the growth of nationalist’s consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movement in 1920s.

The characteristics of politics include the following; capturing governmental power through constitutional means which has to be peaceful and lawful. Secondly, the party ideology which is a broad principle of public policy adopted by an organization classifies parties as either communist, liberal, labour etc. More so, the party must be national-minded. Furthermore, the political party should be an organized body. In addition, political parties should be able to be faithful to their manifestoes during and after elections. Lastly, political parties should follow their party constitutions.

The different types of political parties are as follows; elitist/Cadre parties which draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. The party boosts of members from intellectuals. More so, mass parties is a political party which draws its members from all sections of the society and usually tend to have wide membership with a goal of alleviating the hardship of the masses. Thirdly, ideological party which is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party. The broker party is a type of party which is formed from upper and lower class of the society with an aim to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor through social justice. Lastly, charismatic or personality party is formed by individuals with charisma. The functions of political parties are as follows; political mobilization and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration, organization of government, provision of alternative government and policies, electoral competition and governance and goal formation.

In Nigeria, the political parties were formed by different nationalists who include; Herbert Macaulay, H. O Davies, Earnest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo etc. The political parties came into existence because of the constitution. The Nigerian National Development Party was known as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria through the 1922 constitution which was led by Herbert Macaulay. As development became better so also was the political party increasing and becoming better. According to Ikelegbe; 2010 two major political parties were formed between 1950 and 1951 which are Action Group”(AG) and Northern People’s Congress(NPC) which emerged from cultural association because of the prospects of the 1951 election following the Macpherson’s constitution.

Problems that confronted the pre- independence political parties are; political parties were without national look, the political parties had much emphasis on personalities rather issues, the problem of inter- party and intra- party conflict caused splitting in the parties and also political party’s defection weakened the collapse of parties. In the second republic of Nigeria, ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978 which brought about 53 political associations which were registered by the Federal government. Five of the associations include; National Peoples Party, The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party Nigeria (UNP). In the third republic of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through two political parties which are Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRP) which was set up by the military government. In the fourth republic of Nigeria, three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth Republic in 1998 by the Independent Electoral Commission which are; Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP) which changed to All Nigeria’s People’s Party and also People’s Democratic Party (PDP).