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Chapter 7: political parties in Nigeria

Political parties first developed in the 19th century. Political parties are an important link between government and the people due to appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters and so politicians developed the idea of political parties to help themselves get elected. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in 1920.

There are so many definitions of political parties which can be subsumed under the definition that a political party has: a group of citizens, more or less organised having some agreement in broad principle of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Characteristics of political parties

1. Capture governmental power through constitutional means peacefully
2. Party ideology
3. National minded
4. Organised body so as to establish rapport with the masses
5. Have party constitution which serves s guide in conduct of their political affairs

Types of political parties

1. Elistist/cadre party: draws its members from highest intellectuals in a country.
2. Mass parties: draws members from all sections
3. Ideological parties: formed with political ideology
4. Broker party: members are drawn from upper and lower classes of the society with their aim been to reconcile conflicting interest of rich and poor
5. Charismatic/personality party: formed by ,embers with charisma

Functions of political parties

1. Political parties
2. Political education
3. Political mobilisation and recruitment amongst others

Political parties of 1st republic: Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements who formed associations to organise against colonial misrule. The fulcrum for party formation was constitutional development. In 1923 NNDP was regarded as the 1st political party was formed. Herbert Macaulay led the NNDP party and is regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism and the party was based in Lagos and was formed mainly by its leaders and its political activities and campaigns aided by its newspaper “Lagos deity news” NYM was formed in 1932 by group of young Nigerians and was led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C Vaughan whose sole aim was the promotion of Nigerian unity and national consciousness and the achievement of complete power within the British empire. National council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) FORMED IN 1944 LATER named national convention of Nigerian citizen in 1960 after some parties parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first political party to be organised to seek total independence for Nigeria. Its first president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. The party was the major Nigerian party until 1950.

During 1950-1966; 2 major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which were action group (AG) and Northern’s people congress (NPC). These parties emerged from, cultural associations following Macpherson’s constitution.

Action group emerged from Omo Oduduwa and Egbe Omo Oduduwa was formed in 1945 as a pan Yoruba cultural society; the main aim of AG was to provide leadership and capture political power in the western period and started as the political wing of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1950.

NPC emerged from Jam’iyya mutanein arewa in October 1951 its main aim being to combat ignorance, idleness and injustice in the northern region as well as gain control of the government in the north, the Nigerian multi-party system of the first republic to rise to the emergence of other political parties apart from the three major ones.

Challenges that confronted pre independent political parties

1. Placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues
2. Political parties defection weakened or led to collapse of political parties.

Political parties of 2nd republic: politics ban was lifted in September 1978. National party of Nigeria(NPN) was launched officially in September 1978 in Lagos their aim being national unity. Unity party of Nigeria emerged from AG and its main support base the Igbo’s.

The great Nigeria people’s party (GNPP) was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim ethnic base “kanuri”.

Political parties of 3rd republic: transition to civil rule was promulgated by Gen. Ibrahim Babaginda through which 2 political parties were registered under the military government. SDP (social democratic party) and national republican correction (NRC) was established by the government party officials.

Political party in 4th republic: 3 political parties were registered in 1988 by INEC (among several political associations and later on so many other parties were also registered by INEC.