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CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

 Political parties in liberal-democratic systems help to keep government accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic systems of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power.

Political parties are an important link between government and the people. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well-organized parties, and the Democratic Party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists’ movements in the 1920s.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY

 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 aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies.”

Herman Finer: “political party is an organized party with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”.

Joseph LaPalombara: “a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government.”

Agbaje (1999): “a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its office.”

Edmund Burke: “political party 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.”

Dowse and Hughes: “political parties are associations formally organized with the explicit and declare purpose of acquiring and maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state. A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization.

Characteristics of Political Party

1. To capture government power through constitutional means.
2. Party ideology.
3. National-minded.
4. Derives strength from an effective organizational structure.
5. Has a party manifesto which guides their conduct during and after elections.
6. Guided by party constitution.

Types of political parties

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

Functions of Political Party

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