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***ASSIGNMENT: A TWO PAGE REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7 “POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA”***

T Political parties are fundamental features in politics. In democratic system, they help to keep the government accountable of public opinion while in autocratic system, they help the government maintain its hold on power. They serve as a link between the government and people. It first developed in the 19th century as a means to help politicians and their like-minded friends get elected but it proved to have many other uses overtime. They first modern electoral democracy was held in United States Of America and that was where the first parties developed. By 1820s, more well organized parties were formed and the first political party called “DEMOCRATIC PARTY” was created. The year in which there was a reasonably widespread of votes was in 1867 in Britain. Political parties in Nigeria came about as a result of the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in 1920s.

It is difficult to give a single definition of political parties due to the fact that it performs various task. There have been various definitions of political parties given by different scholars but I will state that of R.G Gettel who defined political parties as “a group of citizens more or less organized, who acts as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies”. Political parties have various characteristics but just to mention few; they gain power through peaceful means, they have political ideologies or principles adopted by members of the parties which serves as the basis of classifying parties as leftist, rightist, liberal, communists, labour, conservative etc, they must be national minded i.e they must take into consideration the interest of the people, political parity should be an organized body as that is the only means in which it can derive its strength , political parties have manifestos which guides their conduct during and after winning elections and lastly, political parties are guided by political constitutions

There are various types of political parties which includes; Elitist or Cadre parties (it is a political party that draws its members from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. They boast of doctors, business tycoons, lawyers, lecturers etc), mass parties (they have wide membership and they draw their members from all sections of the society. They take names like people’s party, labour party, workers party, etc and they aim at alleviating poverty), ideological party (they are formed with political ideologies which forms the bases of the party), broker party (it draws its members from the lower and upper class of the society. It aims at reconciling the conflicting interest of the rich and poor by carrying our policies of social justice for their interest) and charismatic party (it is led by leaders with charisma. It evolves around the leader’s qualities).

Political parties have functions in which they carry out. They include; political education, political stability, political representation, organization of government, political recruitment and mobilization, goal formation etc. The National Development party(NNDP) was the first party to be formed in Nigeria based on the principle of Clifford constitution in 1923 and was led by Herbert Macaulay who is known as the Father Of Nigerian Nationalism.it won all the seats in Lagos and its campaign was aided by Lagos daily news which was launched in 1925. In 1934, National Youth Movement was formed and its major objectives was to promote national unity and consciousness. In 1944 the National Council Of Nigerian And Cameroon was formed but was later renamed the National Convention Of Nigerian Citizens in 1960. Its first presidents were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikwe respectively. Its main purpose was to seek total independence for Nigeria and it also fought against Richard constitution. Between 1950 and 1951 there were two major parties, Namely; Action group(AG) whose leader was Obafemi Awolowo and was formed in 1950. The main aim of action group was to provide leadership and to gain power in the western region and also Northern People’s party(NPC) which was formed by Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam. The main aim of NPC was to fight against ignorance, idleness and injustice in the north and to also gain control of the government in the northern region. The multi-system party of the first republic gave rise to smaller parties like NEPU(Nigerian Element Progressive Union). Political parties before Nigeria gained independence faced various problems which include; they were without national outlook but had regional support and ethnic loyalty, they only laid emphasis on personalities rather than issues, the conflicts between the inter and intra party polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into fractions, they collapsed due to political party defection etc.

During the second republic the ban placed on political parties were lifted and 53 political associations wanted to contest the 1979 general election but only 5 of them were registered by Federal Electoral Commission. They are; National Party of Nigeria(NPN) which was formed in 1978 and held by tribal unions, social clubs etc. The main goal was national unity and their major programmes was provision of food, shelter and qualitative education. They won the elections and ruled for four years, The Unity Party Of Nigeria which was an offshoot of action group and their main aim was provide free education for all levels, free healthcare services for all citizen, full employment for all able-bodied and rural development, The Nigerian people’s Party and their main support base was the igbo. They reincarnated from NCNC. Their main aim was to provide free education, to promotes economic, social and political equality for all.

During the third republic only two parties were registered. They were; Social Democratic Party(SDP) and National Republican Party(NRC). The NRC programmes favored more the private initiatives and more state regulations while SDP programme favored more public ownership and control of economy. In the fourth republic only three parties were registered and they were; Alliance for democracy(AD), All People’s Party(APP) later called All Nigeria’s People’s Party in 2002 and lastly people’s Democratic party. Many more parties have emerged since the fourth republic.