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**Chapter seven : political parties in Nigeria.**

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They help governments accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic system of government, the help government to maintain its hold on power. It was first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. The first modern electoral democracy was the United states of America, and it was here that the first parties developed.

**Conceptual clarification of the idea of political party.**

There’s no specific definition of political party there are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers . according to **R.G. GETTEL, “** political party unit and who by 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.**”** **DOWSE AND HUGHES ( 1972 ) “** see political parties as 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 personal 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 groups of citizens into an organisation; a chief object of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain powerQ **( SHIVELY, 2008 ) .**

**Characteristics of public party.**

1. Political parties has party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
2. Every political party must be national-minded , I.e., in aim and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation. A party which falls short of national character and represents only. A sectarian outlook cannot be a political party.
3. The major or central feature of political party is to Capture government power though constitutional. But capturing power buy some violent or unlawful means cannot be allowed in the arena of the political parties. The means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful.

**Types of political parties.**

1. Elitist / cadre parties.
2. Mass parties
3. Ideological party
4. Broker party
5. Charismatic or personality party

**Functions of political party**

* 1. Organisation of government
  2. Political stability
  3. Goal formation
  4. Interest aggregation
  5. Political representation e.t.c.

**Political parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiment, and nationalist movements. The national Congress of British west Africa territories was formed in 1920, the west African students union in 1925 and the Lagos youth movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli , Nnamdi Azikiwe , Obafemi Awolowo and other were precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four elective seats and established regional executive councils , and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian legislative houses.

**Problems that confronted pre- Independence political parties**

1. Political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
2. Intra- party and the inter- party conflict in most cases polarised in political parties and thereby splitting them into fractions.
3. The political parties were without national out look . They had regional support and ethical loyalty
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political during this era.

As standing now , Nigeria’s political parties face some challenges. First , there is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Move over, the aim of political project of most Nigerian parties has been the development of a national system for sharing out the **“ national cake”** as a system of patronage.

There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.