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**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA.**

Political parties are an essential feature of politics as it serves as an important link between the government and its people. In Liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion and in autocratic systems, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Political parties were invented in the 19th century and the first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America where the first parties were developed. In 1820’s, there were well-organized parties and the democratic party that can trace its roots back to that time are the oldest party in history. Political parties in Nigeria came about in the 1920’s by following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements.

Political parties have different definitions; According to 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 said the political party is “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.’’ LaPalombara defined political party as ‘’ 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.’’ and many other opinions. From these opinions we can deduce that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means. Some characteristics of political parties are; Capturing governmental power via constitutional means but they must be peaceful and lawful, Political parties always have broad principles of public policies which are adopted by its organization, Every political party must be national-minded, They should be organized and have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections, Political parties should be guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Types of political parties are; Elitist/cadre parties draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country and they often boast of members who are intellectuals like doctors, lawyers, lecturers, etc. Mass parties draws its membership from all sections of society and have wide membership. They take names such as; peoples party, labour party, etc and their manifestoes are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses. Ideology party is formed with political ideology which forms the bases of the party. Broker party draws its members from upper and lower classes of the society with the aim of reconciling the conflicting interest of the rich and poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all. Charismatic or Personality party is led/formed by individuals with charisma and it revolves around the interest of the leader. Some functions of political parties are; Political education, Interest aggregation, Political stability, Goal formation, Political representation, Provision of alternative government and policies, Organisation of government, etc.

Political parties emerged due to constitutional development. Clifford constitution(1992) provided four elective seats in its legislative council, Richards constitution(1946) retained the four elective seats and established regional assemblies and Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils. The Nigerian National Development(NNDP) was the first political party to be formed in 1923 and was led Herbert Macaulay. In 1934, Nigerian Youth Movement(NYM) was formed by group of Nigerians and led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan with the aim of promoting national consciousness and Nigerian unity. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon was formed in 1944 and was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 after some parts of Cameroon broke away. Between 1950 and 1951, Action group which emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa(a Yoruba cultural society)with Obafemi Awolowo as its leader and Northern Peoples’ Congress which emerged from the Jam’iya Mutanein Arewa with Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam as leaders. Asides these main parties some other parties were created.

Political parties formed before independence had problems such as; Placing emphasis on personalities rather than issues, Lack of national outlook, Political party defection, etc. After the ban on politics was lifted in September 1978, 53 political associations aimed to contest the 1979 elections, 5 0f which were registered by Federal Electoral Commission. They were National Party of Nigeria(NPN), Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), Great Nigeria Peoples Party(GNPP), Peoples Redemption Party(PRP) and Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN). Unity Party of Nigeria was an offshoot of the Action Group which gave free health services, free education at all levels, rural development, full and gainful employment to woo the masses. Nigerian People’s Party(NPP) was formerly the NCNC with its main support from the Igbos and their aim was to work towards full employment of citizens and to promote economic, social and political equality of all sections of the country. Nigeria had a constitutional two-party system which was introduced by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida in 1989. The two parties were Social Democratic Party(SDP) and National Republican Convention(NRC). In the 4th republic, so many political parties were registered by the INEC and few are: Action Democratic Party(ADP), Peoples Progressive Party(PPP), United Patriots(UP), Peoples Democratic Party(PDP), All Progressives Congress(APC), etc. Although the political parties in Nigeria face some challenges such as Corruption we hope to be great again one day.