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**CHAPTER SEVEN: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. However, a political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization; a chief objective of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power. A party joins people together in a formally organized structure. We infer 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.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY**

The central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

Political parties should have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, referred to as party ideology.

Political parties must be national-minded in aims and functions.

Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength form an effective organizational structure.

Political parties should have manifestoes to guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

We have the types of political parties, namely;

Elitist/Cadre parties

Mass parties

Ideological party

Broker party

Charismatic or Personality party

**FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

Political mobilisation and recruitment

Political education

Political representation

Interest aggregation political stability

Conflict management and political integration

Organisation of government

Provision of alternative government and policies

Electoral competition and governance

Goal formation

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, the National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Student Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, they were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter.

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.

Nigeria’s political parties nowadays, face some challenges. There is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. The regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Moreover, the aim or political project for most Nigerian parties has been the development of a national system for sharing out the “national cake” as a system of patronage. This is why the parties are established as coalitions of various factions of regional and economic rent-seekers. Most part leaders see their political activity as a means to further their business interests. There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.