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Review of chapter 7

In this chapter, the concept of political parties in Nigeria was stressed as an essential feature of government and an important link between the government and the people. The chapter also aims at discussing the evolution of political parties in Nigeria. The chapter from the introductory part also explores the early history of modern electoral democracy traced down to the United States of America, and it was there that the first parties developed. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of national consciousness and sentiment and nationalist movements in the 1920s.

There are many definitions of political parties as many political thinkers have tried to define the concept but we shall consider few out of the many definitions. We shall also discuss some of the characteristics of political parties. 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 on his own part defined political party as “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy begin employed in the pursuit of political power”. A political party performs so many task in political process that it is difficult to establish a particular definition. According to Agbaje, a political party is a group of persons bounded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is in pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices. A political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization. From the understanding of the few definitions above, we shall extract some of the characteristics or features of political parties. The central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology. Every political party is nation minded. Political body must be an organized body.

The chapter goes further to talk about the types, functions and political parties in Nigeria. Talking about the types of political parties, we have the Elitist party; which draws their membership from the highest social hierarchy in the society, the Mass parties which draws their members from all sections of the society and they have wide membership, the Ideological party which is formed based on political ideology or benefits which from the bases of the party, Broker party draws its members from the upper and lower class of the society with the sole aim of reconciling the conflicting interest between the rich and poor and lastly the Charismatic party led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader. Some of the functions of political parties are as follows; political mobilization, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability etc. Political parties as early said developed following the growth of national consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. Nationalist 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 Students Union in 1925 and Lagos youth movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davis, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

The chapter proceeds to enlighten us more on the early political parties in Nigeria. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was the first political party that was formed in Nigeria in 1923. It was headed by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsaya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944 and later renamed as the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts Cameroons broke away from Nigeria. Its first president and sectary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively.

Between 1950 and 1966, two major parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 Macpherson’s constitution. The AG emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa formed in 1945, as a pan Yoruba society. The NPC emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa formed in 1949 by Dr. Dikko, M Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam. Political parties in the Second Republic in Nigeria were formed following the ban that was lifted in September 1978. Following that, about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral commission. These were The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian’s People’s Party (NPP), The Great Nigerian’s People Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). A sixth party, the Nigerian Advance Party (NPA) was registered to contest the 1983 elections. Political parties in the third Republic in Nigeria were registered in accordance of the Federal Republic of Nigeria when General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree in 1989. Thus for the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system which was set up by the military government. The two parties, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) were established by the government party officials were elected afterwards. The registration of SDP was approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman. The NRC, on the other hand was registered through the approval of the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tom Ikimi as its national Chairman. In the Fourth Republic Parties were registered in preparation towards Fourth Republic in the year 1998. The Independent Electoral Commission among several political associations struggled for registration as political parties. The names of the political parties are Alliance for Democracy (AP), All Peoples party (APP), which in 2002 changed name to All Nigerian People’s Party (ANPP), and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). These parties are well organized and administered at the ward, local government areas, state, zonal and national levels These parties contested the 1998 and 1999 general elections. PDP won the presidential elections and maintained its strong hold on the presidency sixteen years. Since the Fourth Republic, other parties have been registered by the INEC.