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GOVERNMENT

**CHAPTER 7**

An important characteristic of politics today is the existence of political parties. They ensure accountability of the government to the people and maintain its hold on power. According to Dickerson and Flanagan, they serve as a link between the government and their people. Political parties were developed by politicians as a device to help themselves and others with the same interests achieve their political aims.

The first modern electoral democracy was in USA, where the first political parties were developed and by the 1820s, there were well organized parties such as the democratic party which is the oldest political party in the world. Development of political parties in Britain began in 1867.

Political parties in Nigeria developed as a result of the growth of political consciousness and nationalists’ movements in 1920. There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinker. Political parties perform so many functions so it is difficult to define it.

According to Herman Fisher, a political party is an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.

R.G Gettel defines it as 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 politics.

Joseph LaPalombara defined it as a formal organization whose self- conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public offices persons who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* They capture governmental powers through constitutional means
* They have a party constitution which guides their actions
* They have manifestoes
* They are national minded
* They are usually organized

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* Elitist/ cadre parties
* Mass party
* Ideological party
* Broker party
* Charismatic party

Elitist party draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.

Mass party draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.

Ideological party is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.

Broker party draws its members from upper and lower classes of the society. It reconciles the conflicting interests of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.

Charismatic party is formed by individuals with charisma and exceptional leadership qualities.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

* Goal formation
* Interest aggregation
* Political mobilization
* Political representation
* Political education
* Electoral competition and governance
* Political stability

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements.

Associations like the National Congress Of British West Africa (1920), the West African Students Union (1925), the Lagos Youth Movement (1934) were formed by nationalists such as Herbert Macaulay, H. O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo etc. Clifford constitution of 1922 encouraged the development of political parties.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE PARTIES (1920-1950)

The Nigeria Nationalist Development Party (NNDP) was the first political party in Nigeria based in Lagos. It was led by Herbert Macaulay who is seen as the father of Nigerian nationalism. Elective principle which was introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the development of NNDP. It won all the seats allocated the Lagos in the legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928, and 1933. Its political activities and campaigns were aided by a newspaper called Lagos daily news (1925).

In 1934, another party, Nigerian Youth Movement was formed by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J. C. Vaughan. Their main aim was to promote Nigerian unity and national consciousness and to achieve complete autonomy within the British empire. In 1938, they won the legislative council and Lagos town council election.

National Council Of Nigeria And Cameroon (NCNC) formed in 1944 was later renamed National Convention Of Nigerian Citizens in 1960 when some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. It was the first party to seek for total independence for Nigeria. Its first president and secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively. They campaigned against Richards constitution of 1946.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA (1950-1966)

Action Group (AG) and Northern People’s Congress were the major parties within this time. They came up from cultural associations. Action Group headed by Obafemi Awolowo came up from Egbe omo Oduduwa which was created in 1945 and NPC came from Jam’iyya mutanein Arewa formed by Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusau, Mallam Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam in 1949. Other parties that existed during this time include:

1. Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) formed by Aminu Kano in August 1950
2. United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) formed by J.S. Tarka in 1955
3. United National Independent Party (UNIP) formed by Eyo Ita

PROBLEMS FACED BY PRE-INDEPENDENT PARTIES

1. They lacked national outlook i.e they had only regional and ethnic support
2. They were focused on personalities instead of issues facing the society
3. They had inter-party and intra-party crisis
4. Party defection weakened parties and led to collapse

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The second republic began in 1979 but the ban on politics was lifted in 1978. About 53 political parties sought to contest in 1979 general election but only five were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. They were:

1. National Party Of Nigeria (NPN) – created in September, 1978 in Lagos. It was made up of mostly ex NPC members. Its main aim was national unity. They won the presidential election and ruled for 4 years 3 months. They also won gubernatorial elections in 7 states.
2. Nigerian people’s party (NPP) - it was an offshoot of NCNC. It was based in the eastern part of Nigeria. Its aim was to work towards full employment of Nigerians and promote economic, political and social equality of all sections of the country. It won 3 states in the gubernatorial elections: Imo, Anambra and Plateau.
3. Great Nigeria people’s party (GNPP) – it was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. It was based in Kanuri. Its slogan was “politics without bitterness”. It controlled 2 states, Borno and Gongola.
4. Unity party of Nigeria (UPN) – it was an offshoot of AG. Its aims were captured in the four-cardinal point program which are: free education at all levels, free health services for all citizens, full and gainful employment for all able bodied men and integrated rural development. They won the gubernatorial elections in 5 states in 1979 and won 4 in 1983.
5. People’s redemption party (PRP)

However, National advanced party (NAP) was registered in 1983 to contest for the general election.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC

General Ibrahim Babangida initiated the transition to civil rule. According to the 1989 constitution, Nigeria operated a two party system and these two parties were, Social Democratic Party headed by chief Tony Anenih and National republican convention headed by chief Tom Ikimi. SDC was said to have won the annulled presidential election of June 12, 1993.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Three political parties were registered by INEC Independent National Electoral Commission in preparation for the fourth republic in 1998. They were: Alliance For Democracy (AD), All peoples party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria people’s party (ANPP) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP). AD gained political power in the south west between 1999 and 2003 by winning the governorship elections in 6 states. APP won 9 gubernatorial elections in the north west and middle belt zones. PDP won the 1999 presidential election and has been in power for 16 years.

Since the inception of the 4th republic, more than 50 parties have been registered by INEC, some of them include:

All progressive congress, All progressive grand alliance, Action alliance, African democratic congress, Democratic people’s congress, Justice must prevail party, Fresh democratic party, Better Nigeria movement, Freedom and justice party, Coalition for change, Kowa party, Socialist party of Nigeria, Youth party, United patriots, Nigeria for democracy, New generation party of Nigeria, Mega party of Nigeria, Unity party of Nigeria, Sustainable national party, Zenith labour party. ETC.