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CHAPTER SEVEN: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA.

Political parties are important features of politics in modern age. They are important link between government and the people. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was there that the first parties developed. By 1820s, there were well-organized parties. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s.

There are many definitions of political parties as political thinkers. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. After viewing various definitions such as Shively 2008, Burke 1975 etc, It is inferred 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.

Political parties are identified by their characteristics which include: capturing governmental power through constitutional means in a peaceful and lawful order, having a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization called party ideology, national mindedness, being an organized body in order to derive strength from an effective organizational structure, having party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections and having party constitutions which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

There are different types of political parties which include: Elitist/Cadre parties[they draw their membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country example doctors, lawyers etc], Mass parties[they draw their membership from all sections of the society and wide membership and take names such as labour party , workers party etc], Ideological parties[they are formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party], Broker party[they are formed with the members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society, they reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all], Charismatic party[they are formed by individuals with charisma as it revolves around the personal qualities of the leader].

Function of political parties include: political education, representation, stability, mobilization and recruitment etc.

Early political parties 1920-1950: Nigerian National Development Party [NNDP] was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of

Nigerian nationalism. It was based in Lagos. Nigerian Youth Movement [NYM] was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J. C. Vaughan. They contested and won elections in 1938. National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon [NCNC] was formed in 1944, it was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts Cameroons broke away from Nigeria.

Political parties in Nigeria 1950-1966: Two major parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which were Action Group[AG] and Northern Peoples Congress[NPC].

Political parties before independence in Nigeria were not without some challenges, some are: They were without national outlook, They placed so much emphasis on personalities rather than issues, Intra-party and Inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby split them into factions, The parties defection led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

Political parties in the second republic in Nigeria: After the ban on politics was lifted in September 1978, 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission ,the sixth party was registered to contest the 1983 elections.

Political parties in the third republic in Nigeria: General Ibrahim Babangida led the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties[Social Democratic Party SDP and the National Republican Convention NRC] were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,1989. They were both registered and approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with chief Tony Anenih as it national chairman. They both had registered offices at the Federal Capital Territory, every state capital and local government headquarters. The difference between them was that the SDP favoured more public ownership and control of economy, while NRC favoured private initiatives and more state regulations.

Political parties in the fourth republic in Nigeria: Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1988by the Independent National Electoral Commission[INEC] among seven political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The registered parties were Alliance for Democracy[ADP], All Peoples Party[APP], which changed it name to All Nigeria People Party[ANPP] and All Progressive Party[APC].

Since the inception of the fourth republic, however, other political parties have been registered by the INEC. So Nigeria has APGA, APC,APDA, AGA, AD, PPP,WTPN etc.

Presently, political parties face some challenges: High level of corruption, The regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration, most party leaders see their party activity as a means to further their business interests.

This trend need to stop and political parties should focus on fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.

