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CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In both liberal-democratic and autocratic system of government, political parties are an important link between the government and the people. A Political party can be defined as a group of citizens, more or less organised, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power through constitutional means. Some characteristics that makes up politics include that its major feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional means as we said before but the means must be peaceful and lawful, they must have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, they must be national-minded i.e take into consideration the interest of the nation, it should be an organised body, it should have manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections and lastly they are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government. There are five types of political parties; political parties formed by members of the high class people in the society (elitist party), political parties formed by all sections of the society and have wide membership (mass party), parties formed with political ideology or benefits (ideological party), parties forms with its members drawn from upper and lower class of the society (brokers party) and parties formed by individuals with charisma (charismatic party). Political parties performs different functions which includes political mobilisation and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration, electoral competition and governance. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movement. On that note, the first political party formed in Nigeria was the Nigerian national development party (NNDP) in 1923, it was led by Herbert macaulay as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The party was exclusively based in lagos and it won all three seats allocated to lagos in the legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933. The Nigerian youth movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of Nigerians led by ernest ikoli, Samuel akinsanya and Dr. J.C Vaughan. The National council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later renamed national convention of Nigerian citizens when Cameroons broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first political party to be organised to seek total independence in Nigeria. Its first president and general secretary were Herbert macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively. The party was the major Nigerian party until 1950. Nnamdi Azikiwe became its president in 1946 after

Herbert Macaulay's death. Two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were the action group (AG) and northern people's congress (NPC). The action group was headed by Obafemi Awolowo, its main aim was to provide leadership and capture political power in the western region. The northern people's congress (NPC) emerged from the *jam'iyya mutanein Arewa*. The main purpose of the party was combating ignorance, injustice, idleness in the north. But some problems confronted these pre-independence parties, some of them include; they were without national outlook, they places more emphasis on personalities rather than issues, political parties defection led to the collapse of political parties during this era. The ban on politics was lifted in September 1978. Following that about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections, Five of these association were registered by the federal electoral commission. These were the national party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian people's party (NPP), the great Nigerians people's party (GNPP), the people's redemption party (PRP) and the unity party of Nigeria (UPN). A sixth party was also registered, the Nigerian advance party (NAP) to contest the 1983 elections. General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. For the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The two parties, the social democratic party (SDP) and the national republican convention (NRC) were established by the government. Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998; the alliance for democracy (AD), all peoples party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to all Nigeria people's party (ANPP) and the people's democratic party (PDP). PDP won the presidential election in 1999 and maintained its stronghold on the presidency for sixteen years. As things stand now, Nigeria's political parties faces some challenges that they are yet to overcome. First, there is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive game. Second, 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. The aim of most Nigerian parties have been the development of a national system of sharing the national cake as a system of patronage and there is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed at fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.