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CHAPTER 7

Political Parties In Nigeria

Political Parties are very important in the modern age for mass participation. It is an important link between government and the people. It is an invention that first developed in the 19th century where elections are held involving large number of voters. Political Parties have many other uses other than for elections. The first electoral democracy was in the United States, the democratic party is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments.

Conceptual Clarification of the idea of Political Party

There are many definitions of political parties according to R.G Gettel, political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who acts as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out general policies. A political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organisation, a Chief object of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power.

Some Characteristics of Political party are to capture Governmental power through constitutional means not by violent or unlawful means

1. They also have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation which is referred to as party ideology
2. It should also be an organized body because it can only derive strength from an effective organisational structure
3. Every political Party should be national minded i.e arms and function it must take into consideration the interest of the nation.
4. It has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after elections.

Types of Political Parties are;

Electorist / Cadre Parties: It draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in the country.



Mass Parties: It draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership

Ideological Party: It is formed with political ideology or benefits from the bases of the party.

Broker Party: It formed with its members draws from the upper and lower classes of the society.

Functions Are ;

- Political education
- political stability
- organisation of government
- political representation
- good formation

Political Parties in Nigeria

According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organise against colonial misrule thus for this purpose many parties were formed. The Clifford Constitution of 1922 provided 4 elective seats in its legislative council while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the 4 elective seats and established regional assemblies. We have the early political parties; 1920-1950, which consists of the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) and it was first regarded as one of the first political party which was introduced by the Clifford constitution of 1922 NNDP was led by the Herbert Macaulay. This party won three seats allocated to Lagos in the Legislative council. Another party was the Nigerian youth movement formed in 1934, next was the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960 political parties in Nigeria between 1950-1966 two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which are Action group and northern 's people congress.

Some Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties are;

1. They are without National Outlook.
2. The Political Parties placed most emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
3. Political parties defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties in the era.

Political Parties in The Second Republic

After the ban was lifted on Sept 1978, 53 associations sought to contest the 1979 general



elections. Five of them were the NPN, NPP,GNPP, PRP and the UPN. The NPN won the election and ruled the country for 4 years and 3 months. UPN was a strong opposition party to the NPN.

Political parties in the third republic

In 1989, for the first time Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention were established by the Government. The NRC was registered through the approval of the Armed forces ruling council.

Political parties in the fourth republic

Three political parties were registered in preparation for the fourth republic in 1998 by the INEC among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties.

The names of the registered parties are Alliance for democracy, All peoples party, Peoples democratic party. The PDP won the presidential elections in 1999 and maintained its presidency for 16 years. In conclusion most party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests, this needs to be stopped to encourage the development of Nigeria.

