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Write a review on the political parties in Nigeria, chapter 7.

**ANSWER**

Political parties are an important link between government and the people. According to R.G Gettel, political party is 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 part defined political party as an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that is difficult to establish a single definition. From the different opinions given by different scholars we deduce 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.

**Characteristics of Political party**

1. They capture governmental power through constitutional means and not by violent or unlawful means.
2. They have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which I referred to as party ideology. The party ideology also serves as the basis for classifying parties as either leftish, rightish, liberal, communist, labour, conservative, etc.
3. Every political party must be national minded, i.e., in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of a nation, a party which falls short of national character and represents only a sectarian outlook cannot be a political party.
4. They should be an organized body because it can only derive strength from an organisational structure.
5. They have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. They are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

**Types of Political Party**

**Elitist or Cadre Parties**: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. The party boasts of intellectuals who are doctors, lawyers, lecturers, or people who are business tycoons, traditional rulers.

**Mass Parties**: This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Mass parties take such names as; peoples party, labour party, workers party etc and their manifestoes are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses.

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

**Broker party**: This is a political formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. The basic aim of this type of political party is to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.

**Charismatic or Personality Party**: This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of a leader.

**Functions of a Political Party**

The functions of a political party include: political mobilization and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration, organization of government, provision of alternative government and policies, electoral competition and governance, and goal formation.

**Political parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided four elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained four elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson constitution established regional executive councils and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.

**Early Political Parties 1920 – 1950**

The Nigerian National Developmental Party [NNDP] was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced buy Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. It was led by Herbert Macaulay who was regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. Other parties like the Nigerian Youth Movement [NYC] and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun [NCNC] were formed later onwards. NCNC was the first political party organized to seek total independence for Nigeria and its first president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Nnamdi Azikiwe became its president in 1946 after Herbert Macaulay’s death.

**Political Parties in Nigeria 1950 – 1966**

The two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 and these were the Action Group [AG] and the Northern Peoples Congress [NPC]. AG emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa and was led by Obafemi Awolowo. The NPC emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. Other parties include the Northern Element Progressive Union [NEPU], United Middle Belt Congress [UMBC] and the United National Independent Party [UNIP].

**Problems that confronted the Pre-Independence Political Parties.**

* The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty.
* The political parties placed more emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
* Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarised the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions
* Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

**Political Parties in the Second Republic of Nigeria**

The ban on politics was lifted in September 1978. After that about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commissions and allowed to contest the 1983 elections. These parties include, National Party of Nigeria [NPN], Nigerian Peoples Party [NPP], Great Nigeria Peoples Party [GNPP], Peoples Redemption Party [PRP] and the Unity Party of Nigeria [UPN].

**Political Parties in the Third Republic of Nigeria**

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, 1989. Thus, for the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two-party system. The constitutions, objectives, policies and programmes of the two political parties, were set up by the military government. The two political parties, the Social Democratic Party [SDP] and the National Republican Convention [NRC], were established by the government.

**Political Parties in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria**

Since the inception of the fourth republic of Nigeria, political parties have been registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]. So now Nigeria has several political parties.

**In conclusion;** There are still problems that Nigeria’s political parties face which affect the country, which are; high level of corruption, the frame work for the establishment of parties are not controlled/managed well. Also, most party leaders see these political activities as a means to further their business interests. These behaviors should be stopped and the resources should be directed in assisting Nigerian’s and the development of the country.