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**REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion and in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. In either case, political parties are an important link between government and the people. In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. Political party is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the party proved to have many other uses as well and went on to become a common feature of modern politics.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well-organized parties, and the Democratic Party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. Also, all over Europe, whenever a reasonably large and varied electorate was established with the coming of democracy, the political parties appeared. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalists’ movements in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF POLITICAL PARTY

According to R.G. Gettel, “Political party is 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 policies.” A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as “a formal organisation whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government.” 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 or maintain power.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A POLITICAL PARTY

1. The major feature of a political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. The means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful because capturing power by some violent or unlawful means cannot be allowed in the arena of the political parties.
2. Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology and this also serves as the basis for classifying parties as either leftist, rightist, 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 the nation. A party which falls short of national character and represents only a sectarian outlook cannot be a political party.
4. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure. Such an organisation is more necessary to establish rapport with the masses.
5. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. ELITIST/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 members who are intellectuals like doctors, lawyers, lecturers, or people who are business tycoons, traditional rulers.
2. MASS PARTIES: This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Mass parties takes such name as: peoples party, labour party, workers party, etc. and their manifestoes are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses.
3. IDEOLOGICAL PARTY: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. BROKER PARTY: This is a political party 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.
5. CHARISMATIC OR PERSONALITY PARTY: This is political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Conflict management and political integration
5. Goal formation
6. Interest aggregation
7. Political stability
8. Organisation of government
9. Provision of alternative government and policies
10. Electoral competition and governance.