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***Chapter7: Political Party In Nigeria***

The political party crops up in all aspects of politics. It is an invention that first developed in the 19th century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. It is an essential and ubiquitous feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They help to keep governments accountable to public opinion and help maintain its hold on power through constitutional means that must be peaceful and lawful which enhances an important link between the government and the people. The political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition so different political thinkers like R.G Gettel, Herman Finer, Joseph LaPalomabara, Agbaje and so many more have designated their own opinions on the subject but from all their opinions we infer 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*

* The political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
* They are national minded in aims and fictions, it must take into consideration the interest of their nation.
* They are guided by party construction which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.
* They should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.
* They always have a broad of principles of public policy adopted by its organizations( Party ideology)

There are different types of political parties like the ***Elitist/Cadre parties*** which draws its membership from highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country like the doctors, lawyers and lecturers, the ***mass parties*** which draws its membership from all sections of the society which take such names as the people’s party, workers party etc, the ***ideological parties*** which is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party, the ***broker parties*** which is formed with members drawn from the upper and lower classes of the society and aims to reconcile the conflicting interests of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all. ***Charismatic/ personality parties***  are formed or led by individuals with charisma and revolves around qualities of the leader. These political parties have varieties of functions like political mobilization/ recruitment, political education, political stability, organization of government, interest aggregation, goal formation and many more.

*Political party in Nigeria*

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements in the 1920s. According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations to organize against colonial misrule. This for this purpose, The National Congress of British West African Territories was in 1920, the West Africa Students Union in 1925, Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, were forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter( Ikelegbe, 2010).

The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) was the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by the Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923 and was led by Herbert Macaulay, who was regarded as the father of Nigeria nationalism. It won all the three seats allocated to Lagos in the legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933.Through the years many other political parties were formed like the Action Group(AG), Northern People’s Congress(NPC), United Middle Belt Congress( UMBC), Northern Element Progressive Union( NEPU), People’s Democratic Party(PDP), All People’s Party( APP) and so many more arising from The First Republic to the fourth Republic of Nigeria.

As things stand now, Nigeria political parties face some challenges because there is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business which influences party leaders to see their political parties as a means to further their business interests. There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigeria’s and endangering the development of Nigeria.