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ASSIGNMENT: DO A TWO PAGE REVIEW OF CHAPTER 7, "POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA" IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA'S POLITICS

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; even in autocratic system of government, they help government maintain its hold on power. In either case, the political parties are the link between the government and the people.

There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. According to R.G Gettel, " political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and by who the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies."

A political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a considerable group of citizens into an organization; a chief objective of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain, capture and maintain political power of a state or region within a state.

Another objective is that it unites people together in a formally organized structure. From the above 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.

The major or central theme of political parties is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. But capturing power by some violent or unlawful means cannot be allowed in the arena of the political parties. This means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful. Every political party must be nation-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.

There are five types of political parties namely:

- a. Elitist/Cadre parties: This political parties draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
- b. Mass parties: This political parties draw its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership and their manifestoes are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses.
- c. Ideological party: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the basis of the party.
- d. 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 political parties is to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.
- e. Charismatic party: This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the qualities of the leader.

The functions of the political parties include; political mobilization and recruitment, political education and representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management and political integration.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The National Congress of British West Africa territories were formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1952 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934.

The fulcrum for the emergence of the party's formation was constitutional development. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923, this was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of nationalism.

The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon was formed in 1944, it was later renamed the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960. Its president and general secretary were Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively. In 1950 and 1951, two major political parties emerged; Action Group (AG) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). The Northern People's Congress emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. The cultural association was formed in 1949 by Dr Dikko, M.Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam. The ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978. The Unity Party of Nigeria, on its part, was an offshoot of the Action Group (AG), and its main support base is the Yoruba land.

General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties 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 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 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC. So, Nigeria now operates a multiple party system.. Some of which are; Labour Party (LP), United Patriots (UP), Youth Party (YP), We the People Nigeria (WTPN), African Action Congress (AAC), Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC) etc.