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REVIEW ON CHAPTER 7 OF THE BOOK "SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA'S POLITICS.

Political parties are a vital feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They are an important link between the government and the people. Political parties first began to come around in the 19th century in response to the appearance of elections involving large number of votes. They were formed based on the principle that it will serve as a device that helps politicians and their like-minded friends get elected and so far, it has proved to have many other purposes and it has grown to be a very important feature of modern politics.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United States of America and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s there were well organised parties and the Democratic Party in the world. In Britain 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes.

There are a plethora of definitions about politics. The main idea that stands in common to all of them is 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 PARTIES

- 1) Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by their organizations known as party theology.
- 2) Political parties are organized bodies.
- 3) Political parties are national minded
- 4) Political parties have manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

Types of political parties include: elitist/cadre parties, mass parties, ideological parties, broker parties and charismatic/personality parties. Political parties perform various functions some of which are: political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, goal formation amongst others.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY

- 1) Political Mobilization for recruitment
- 2) Political education
- 3) Political representation
- 4) Interest aggregation
- 5) Political stability
- 6) Conflict management and political integration
- 7) Organisation of government.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist agitators formed groups and associations to organise against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose the national congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920. The drive for the emergence of the early political parties from 1920 to 1950 was due to the constitutional development. The elective principle introduced in the Clifford 1922 constitution gave rise to the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP), the first ever political party in Nigeria; in 1923. The party was led by Herbert Macaulay, who was therefore regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian Youth movement (NYM) was later formed in 1934. This party was led by Ernest Okoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The next party to be formed was The Nigerian Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (later renamed the National Convention of Nigerian citizen) in 1944. It was the first ever political party to see for the total independence of Nigeria and it was headed by Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. During the period from 1950 and 1951, two major political parties emerged. They are the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Both parties are ethnic oriented with AG from the Yoruba and NPC from the northerners. Some other smaller parties emerged due to the multi-party system present in the first republic and for some, disagreement within major parties. The first republic parties lacked national outlook. These parties also put much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.

The ban on politics in was lifted by the military in 1978. After these some parties were launched and they include: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the National People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) etc. These parties, altogether 53, sought to contest in the 1979 elections.

For the first time in 1989, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. This was due to the transition to the civil rule decree promulgated by General Ibrahim Babangida. The two parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC). They were established by the government and their constitution, objectives, policies and programs were also set up by the military government.

Three more political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC). They include: the Alliance of Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) later changed to All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP). But since the inception of the fourth republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC bringing the total number of political parties in Nigeria to more than 50.

Nigeria political parties currently face some challenges. One of the is the high level of corruption which has now made politics a very competitive business. Another is that a lot of political parties have a system in which, a member's registration is based on his wealth. Also, the aim of most political parties is the development of a national system for sharing public wealth also known as the "national cake" among the party members. Nowadays most party leaders see their party activities as a means to further their private businesses. These are not only problems to the country but they are also grave factors engendering the progress and development of the nation Nigeria.

