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**Review of Chapter 7 of Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics**

Political parties are an important feature of politics. They enable governments to acquire and exercise power. They also ensure accountability of government in democracies. Political parties connect the people and government. It was developed first in response to the appearance of elections involving large number of voters in the 19th century. The idea of politicians was the enablement of election into power of themselves and like-minded colleagues. It proved to be useful in other aspects and it became important organ of the political body in modern politics. Modern electoral democracy originated in the United States of America. Political parties originated in the United States as well. By 1820s, the parties were well organized. The Democratic Party, traceable to that time is the oldest political party in the world. The first year which occasioned a reasonably widespread extension of votes in Britain was 1867. Political parties appeared in Europe whenever a large and varied electorate was established with the coming of democracy. In Nigeria, political parties developed with the arousal of nationalism and nationalist movement in the 1920s.

The term “political party” has varied definitions. This is because various political thinkers have their definitions of the term. One of such definitions is that by Joseph LaPalombara who said political parties are a “formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office persons who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government”. Simply, political parties are an aggregate of individuals with similar interests that desire to capture power by constitutional means. There are certain characteristics which a political party should possess. They are: (i)power capture through constitutional means. (ii)party ideologies (iii)national-mindedness. (iv)organization. (v)party manifestoes. (vi)party constitution. Apart from characteristics, different types of political parties exist. Some examples of political parties are: (i)**elitist/cadre parties**-parties whose members are from the highest social strata. (ii)**mass parties-**members are from all walks of life in society, membership is vast. (iii)**ideological parties**-parties with political ideologies or benefits as the basis of the party’s establishment. (iv)**broker parties**-parties whose members are from the upper or lower class of society. (v)**charismatic/personality parties**-parties led by individuals with charisma. The leader’s qualities are essentially the reason for the party’s establishment. Political parties also have functions. They are: (i)political education (ii)political representation (iii)political mobilization and recruitment (iv)interest aggregation (v)political stability (vi)conflict management and political integration (vii)organization of government (viii)goal formation (ix)electoral competition and governance (x)provision of alternative and policies. In Nigeria, nationalists formed groups and associations to organize against misrule. The likes of Herbert Macaulay, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O Davies and others were the progenitors of political parties in Nigeria. They formed Lagos Youth Movement, West African Students Union, National Congress of British West Africa in 1934,1925,1920 respectively. The reason for emergence of political parties in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution provided 4 seats in the legislative council, Richards constitution retained 4 seats and established regional assemblies. Macphersons constitution established regional executive councils and a system for indirect election in the Nigerian Legislative Houses. The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) was the first political party to be formed in Nigeria headed by Herbert Macaulay, the father of nationalism. It was not a national party. A newspaper called Lagos Daily News established in 1925 aided it. The Nigerian Youth Movement, a national party, was formed in 1934 led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and J.C Vaughan. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon(NCNC) later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizens was formed in 1944. Herbert Macaulay was its president and Nnamdi Azikiwe its general secretary. Between 1950 and 1951, two major parties were formed namely The Action Group and The Northern People’s Congress(NPC). They emerged from cultural associations. Action Group emerged from a Yoruba association called Egbe Omo Ododuwa formed in 1945 led by Obafemi Awolowo. It aimed to capture power in the western region. Northern People’s Congress was birthed from Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa formed in 1949 led by Dr Dikko and some others. Their aim was to combat idleness, injustice, ignorance and capture power in the northern region. The multiplicity of parties in the first republic gave rise to the formation of many other political parties, some of which were offshoots from the old parties because of disagreements between members. United Middle Belt Congress is an example of such a political party. Certain problems were faced by pre-independence political parties. Some of which are: (i)lack of national outlook (ii)emphasis on personalities rather than issues. (iii)inter-party and intra-party conflicts (iv)party defection. In September 1978, during the second republic, the ban on politics was removed and 53 associations wanted to contest the elections. Only five -National Party of Nigeria, Nigerian People’s Party, Great Nigeria Peoples Party, Peoples Redemption Party, Unity Party of Nigeria were registered. A sixth party was registered to contest the 1983 elections. In the third republic, General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree. Two parties-Social Democratic Party, National Republican Convention were registered in accordance with the constitution making the it first time Nigeria would have a constitutional two party system. The military government set the objectives, policies, programmes of the parties. The Independent National Electoral Commission registered three parties-Alliance for Democracy, All Peoples Party and People’s Democratic Party in preparation for the fourth republic in 1998. These parties contested the 1998 and 1999 general elections. They have organized and administered at ward, local government, state, zonal and national levels and have registered offices at all levels. However, since the beginning of the fourth republic, many other political parties have been registered by The Independent Electoral Commission.

Presently, Nigeria’s politics is in quagmire. The corruption rate is way too high. Furthermore, many politicians see politics as a “personal business” and a means to further their interests. A solution to these challenges has to be put in place to enable the forgery of a better society for all.