

NAME: ADENOPO DIVINE INIOLUWA  
MATRIC NO: 19/MHS08/001  
DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC HEALTH  
COURSE CODE: GST 203  
COURSE TITLE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

## 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; even in autocratic systems 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 (Dickerson and Flanagan, 2002). In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. The political party crops up in all aspects of politics. It is an invention that first developed in the response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters.

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-organised 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. According to R. Gettel, "political party is a group citizens more or less organised, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government carrying out its general politics." Herman Finer, on his part, defined political party as "an organised body with voluntary membership concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of Political Power" A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition.

A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shivry, 2008). There are characteristics of political parties some of them are:

1. The major or central feature of political party 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. The means of capturing Such powers must also be peaceful and lawful.
2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology. The party ideology 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.

There are different types of political parties some of which are:

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 political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Mass part 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 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.

Some functions performed by the political parties are:

- i. Political mobilisation and recruitment;
- ii. Political education;
- iii. Political representation;
- iv. Interest aggregation;
- v. Political stability;
- vi. Conflict management and political integration;
- vi. Organisation of government;

As things stand now, Nigeria's political parties face some challenges. First, there is an extremely high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Second, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Moreover, the aim or political project of most Nigerian parties has been the development of a national system for sharing out the "national cake" as a system of patronage. This is why the parties are established as coalitions of various factions of regional and economic rent-seekers. Most party leaders see their political party activity 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 Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.