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**CHAPTER SEVEN: Political Parties In Nigeria**

Political parties are essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They help to keep governments accountable to public opinion. They also help the government maintain its hold on power. Political parties are also an important link between government and the people.

There are many definitions of political parties. According to R.G.Gettel,” political party is a group of citizens more or less organized who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government. Also according to Agbaje (1999) a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause which essentially is the pursuit and capture of government and its offices.

There are some of the characteristics of political parties:

1. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after elections.
2. Political parties are guided by party constitutions which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.
3. Political parties should be organized because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

There are different types of political parties

* Elitist/cadre parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
* Ideological party: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
* Mass parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and has wide membership. E.g. peoples party, labour party .

Political parties perform different functions such as:

* Political mobilization and recruitment
* Political education
* Political stability
* Goal formation

Political party in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist awareness and movements (IKelegbe, 2010).

According to IKelegbe, nationalist’s investigators shaped gatherings and relationship, to sort out against provincial mismanagement. Along these lines for this reason, the national congress of British west Africa territories was formed in 1920, the west African students union in 1925 and the Lagos youth movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were antecedents of political party in Nigeria, where in the cutting edge of political exercises and gathering development during the 1920s and from that point.

The support for the rise of gatherings arrangement in Nigeria was scared turn of events. The Clifford constitution of 1922 gave four elective seats in its administrative gathering, while the Richards constitution of 1946 held four elective seats and set up territorial congregations. The MacPherson’s constitution set up local chief committees, and accommodated an arrangement of roundabout decisions to the many generally Nigerian legislative houses.