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### **CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA (GST 203)**

Political party is an invention that first developed in the 19th century in response to the appearance of elections involving large number of voters. Politicians came up with the idea to help themselves and like-minded friends to get Democratic Party which was formed in the United States of America is the oldest political party in the world. By the 1820s there were well organised parties.

R.G Gettel defines political party as "a group of citizens more or less organised, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general politics". Herman Finer defines political party as "an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that is difficult to pin point a particular definition of political party. The major feature of political parties are to capture government power through a peaceful, lawful and constitutional means. Political parties must be national minded, an organised body.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010). The National Congress of British West African Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. 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. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later renamed the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts Cameroons broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. According to Ikelegbe, 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were the Action Group and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson's constitution. The Action Group emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The Northern Peoples' congress emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. The Nigerian multi-party system of the first republic gave rise to the emergence of many political parties apart from the three major political parties.

Political parties before independence in Nigeria were not without some challenges were not without some challenges. The ban on politics was lifted in September, 1978, following that about 53 political associates sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the federal Electoral Commission. The National Party of Nigeria was officially launched in September, 1978 in Lagos after lifting of ban on party politics by the military government. The Unity Party of Nigeria, on its part, was an offshoot of the Action Group and its main support base is the Yorubaland. The UPN successfully acted as a strong opposition party that reduced the excesses of the ruling NPN. The third registered party in the second republic, The Nigerian Peoples' Party reincarnated from the NCNC, its main support base was the Igbo, and its members were largely old NCNC Politicians and admirers and supporters of its leader Nnamdi Azikiwe. The aim of NPP is to work towards full employment for all Nigerians and to promote economic, social and political equality of all sections of the country. The party won gubernatorial elections and controlled three states: Imo, Anambra and plateau. The Great Nigeria Peoples' Party was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. Its ethnic base was Kanuri, its major campaign programme and slogan was "politicians without bitterness". It controlled two states, Borno and Gongola, between 1979 and 1983.

General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989. 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), APP, ANPP, PDP. Alliance for Democracy sponsored and contested elections throughout Nigeria during 1989 and 1999 general elections. It gained political power in six states of the south-west of the federation between 1999 and 2003 by winning the governorship elections. Also won several States Assembly seats and local government elections. The All Peoples' Party (APP) won nine gubernatorial elections in the north-west and middle-belt zones during the 1999 elections. It won several State Assembly and National Assembly seats. It aligned with AD to present a joint candidate during the 1999 presidential elections. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, however, other political parties have been registered by INEC. Some of them are: All Grassroots Alliance (GA), Green Party of Nigeria (GPN), Democratic peoples' party (DPP), Change Advocacy Party, Congress of patriots (COP), Justice Must Prevail Party (JMPP), Young Democratic Party (YDP), Youth Party (YP).

Since the fourth republic, INEC has registered a good amount of political parties. The aim or political project of most Nigerians 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 Nigeria.