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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA(CHAPTER 7)**

Political parties are very important in any country no matter the form or system of government practiced. It is an important criteria for politics. It was developed in the nineteenth century during the U.S elections as a means of politicians to help their like minded friends win the elections. Since then, political parties has served several purposes asides the initial one. In fact, the democratic party of the U.S traces its origin to that period. Thus, making it the oldest political party in the world. The creation of political parties was accompanied by widespread and varied votes. Political parties in Nigeria was introduced around 1920 by activities of some nationalists.

There are so many definitions of politics ranging from R.G. Gettel to Herman Finer and so many others. However, the definition of political parties cannot be pinpointed because political parties serve several purposes in the society. Joseph lapalombra, in his definition stated in his own opinion the primary purpose of political party. “… is to place and maintain in public office a person who will control alone or in coalition the machinery of government…” Other political scholars like Agbaje, Edward Burke and so on gave their own definitions based on their opinions on the purpose of political parties. In summary, from the definitions of the scholars, political parties can be described as a group of people more or less organized with a collective agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means. There are several features and characteristics that distinguish political parties from other forms of associations. The core feature of political party is to attain power by constitutional means. Every political party has its party ideology. This is a broad principle of public policies adopted by the political party. It serves as basis of classifying the political party. The aims and objectives of a political party must be geared towards the direction of the growth of its nation. A political party must be national minded and must uphold national character. Political parties serve as a link between the people and the government. Therefore, they must always stand united and appear as one body. They must have a solid organizational structure. Political parties must have a manifesto that guides their conduct/attitude during and after winning an election. Political parties have party constitution that guide the conduct of all members including party officials.

There are several types of political parties. *Elitist/cadre parties* boast of strong intellectual minds and geniuses as members. They derive their members from the highest level in social hierarchy. Mass parties have members from all areas of the society. Examples include: labour party and so on. They fight for the interest of the masses. *Ideological party* from the name implies that the party is formed from ideology of what a political party is or should be. *Broker* party has members from both the upper and middle class in the society. It aims at resolving the conflicting interest among both strata. *Charismatic or personality* party is formed from people with charisma . political parties serve several function like political education, political stability, organization of government, political representation,goal forming and so on.

According to Ikelegbe, nationalist formed organizations like Lagos youth movement, west African students union and others as a rebel against colonial rule . They acted as a precursor for the formation of political parties. The support for political parties in Nigeria was the constitution. The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) was recognized as the first political party formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced in the Clifford constitution gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1992 which was led by Herbert Macaulay, the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian Youth movement was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians. It was led by Ernest Ikoli and two others. National Council of Nigerians and Cameroons was formed in 1944 and was later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960 after the Cameroons left the party. It was the first political party to seek independence for Nigeria. It fought against the Richards constitution between 1946 and 1948. it was the major political party in Nigeria until 1950. Its president was Herbert Maculay and the general secretary was Nnamdi Azikiwe until 1946 when Nnamdi Azikiwe took over after Herbert Macaulay’s death.Between 1950 and 1951, two major political parties emerged. They were developed from cultural associations. Action group emerged from egbe awon omo oduduwa formed in 1945. Action group was formed in 1950 and its leader was Obafemi Awolowo. Its aim was to provide leadership and capture political power in the western region. The Northern Peoples Congress emerged from Jam’iyya Mutanien Arewa formed in 1949. it aim was to combat ignorance, idleness and injustice in the north and to control governance in the north. The Nigerian multi-party system in the first republic gave rise to the emergence of several political parties. The ban on political parties was lifted in 1978 thus leading to 53 political parties to contest for election in second republic Nigeria. General Ibrahim Babangida fostered the transition to civil rule and a two party system was formed in the third republic. In preparation for the fourth republic,a third party was formed. However, since the inception of the fourth republic, several other political parties has been formed and registered by INEC.