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***CHAPTER 7***

***POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA***

Political parties are essential features of politics. They help to keep government accountable to public opinion, and also help the government maintain its hold on power. They are important link between the government and the people. It was first developed in the 19th century in 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. The Democratic party is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movement in the 1920s.

*Conceptual Clarification of the idea of Political Party*

Political parties have many definitions as the political thinkers. According to R.G Gettel, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who acts as a political unit and who by the use of political power aimed at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies”. A political party performs so many task in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition .a political party is a group of officials I would be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power . A party joins people together in a formally organized structure.

Below are some characteristics of political parties:

1. The measure of central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

2. Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology.

3. Every political party must be national minded, i.e., in aims and functions it must take into consideration the interests of the nation.

4. Political parties should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

5. Call star parties have party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

6. political parties are guided by party constitutions which directs the conduct of party officials and members within the outside government.

*Types of political parties*

* Elitists/Cadre parties
* Mass parties
* Ideological party
* Broker party
* Charismatic or personality party

Below are some functions performed by political parties:

* Political mobilization and recruitment
* Political education
* Political representation
* Interest aggregation
* Political stability
* Conflict management and political integration
* Organization of government

*Political parties in Nigeria*

*Early political parties: 1920-1950*

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 give rise to the formation of an NNDP in 1933. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism.

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 Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later renamed the Nigerian Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria.

*Political Parties in Nigeria: 1950-1966*

According to Ikelegbe, 2010; two political parties emerge between 1950 and 1951. This were the Action Group (AG) And Nothern’s People Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural Association because of prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The main aim of the AG was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The Main purpose of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was combating ignorance, idealness, injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North. These led to the emergence of many political parties aside from the 3 major parties.

*Political Parties in the Second Republic in Nigeria*

The ban on politics was lifted in September 1978. Following that about 53 political associations sought to contest in the 1979 general elections. Five of the associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. These were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria. A sixth party, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to contest in the 1983 elections.

*Political Parties in the Third Republic in Nigeria*

General Ibrahim Babanginda promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties where registered in accordance to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989. Nigeria had a two-constitutional system for the first time. The constitutions, objectives, policies and programmes of the two political parties were set up by the military government. The two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), were established by the government.

*Political Parties in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria*

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1998 by 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), All People’s Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) and the People Democratic Party (PDP). These political parties contested in the 1998 and 1999 general elections.

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, however, other political parties have been registered by INEC. Nigeria now has many political parties.