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**Chapter7.**

*Political parties in Nigeria*

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties are an important link between government and the people. 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. Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected.

*Characteristics of political party*

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national minded .
4. Political party should be an organised body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organisation structure.
5. Political parties has party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

*Types of political parties*

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, 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 parties takes such name as; people party, labour party, workers party, etc.
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.
5. Charismatic or personality party: this is political party formed or led by individual with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

*Functions of political party*

1. Political mobilisation and recruitment.
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation.
5. Political stability.
6. Conflict management and political integration.
7. Organisation of government.
8. Provision of alternate government and policies.
9. Electoral competition and government.
10. Goal formation.

*Problems that confronted pre-independent political parties.*

Political parties before independence in Nigeria were not without some challenges. Some of them are:

1. the political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty.
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.
3. Intra- party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarised the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions.
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.