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**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

This chapter is concerned with the importance of political parties in the modern world, its features, functions and most importantly the development of political parties in Nigeria from pre-independence till date.

There are as many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. Among these thinkers is R.G. Gettel, he sees it as 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 and carrying out its general policies.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion, even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. In either case, political parties are an important link between government and the people. Some **features of political parties** include;

1. To capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, known as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded.
4. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.
5. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

**Types of political parties**.

1. Elitist/Cadre parties; this type draws its membership from highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
2. Mass parties; this type draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.
3. Ideological party; this type is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. Broker party; this type formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. Charismatic or personality party; this type is formed and led by individuals with charisma.

**Functions of political party**

1. Political education.
2. Political stability.
3. Interest aggregation.
4. Goal formation.
5. Political representation, etc.

**Political parties in Nigeria**.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements that were directed against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West Africa 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 precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

From the year **1920-1950**, political parties that were recognized are The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) and the Nigerian Youth Movement(NYM). The former was created in 1923 and was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigerian Nationalism. It was exclusively based in Lagos and had no national colouration. The latter on the other hand, was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanyi and DR. J.C. Vaughan. Going further, the year **1950-1966**, there were political parties that emerged between 1950 and 1951 which are the Action Group(AG) and the Northern People’s Congress(NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations, for instance the AG emerged from a yoruba group called Egbe Omo Oduduwa while the NPC emerged from a northern group, Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa.

In the **second republic in Nigeria**, the ban of politics was lifted in September, 1978. Following that, about 53 political associations sought to contest in the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations, were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. They were the National Party of Nigeria(NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party(GNPP), The People’s Redemption Party(PRP) and The Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN). In the **third** **republic**, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The two parties, the Social Democratic Party(SDP) and the National Republican Covention(NRC), were established by the government. Party officials were elected afterward, local government and state congresses and national conventions were directed by government officials. Lastly, in **the fourth republic**, 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), All Peoples Party(APP) and The Peoples Democratic Party(PDP). Since the inception of the fourth republic, however, other political parties have been registered by INEC.

As things stand now, Nigeria’s political parties face some challenges such as corruption and many other things. 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.