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A REVIEW OF CHAPTER7, POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They 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 first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, the first parties were also developed here. By the 1820s, there were well organized parties and the democratic party which can trace its root back to that time is the oldest political party in the world. There are many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers.

According to RG Gettel, 'political party is 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'. Herman Finer, on his part defined political party as 'an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power'. Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as 'a formal organization whose self- conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone, the machinery of the government. According to Agbaje 'a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices.

Edmund Burke defines political party as a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. The major feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. Another characteristic is that political party should be an organized body because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure. They are guided by party constitution, political party must be national-minded. Political party always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology. There are different types of political parties which include; Elitist/cadre parties, mass parties, ideological party, broker party and charismatic or personality party. Functions of political party include; political education, political representation, political recruitment, political stability, interest aggregation, organization of government, etc.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movement. The Nigerian National Development Party was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. It was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The NCNC was formed in 1944. It was the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. Two major parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 which were the Action Group and Northern People's Congress. Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties are that political parties were without national outlook and they placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues.

The NPN was officially launched in September 1978 in Lagos after lifting the ban on party politics by the military government. The Unity Party of Nigeria on its own was an off shoot of the Action Group and its main support base is

the Yoruba land. The main support of the NPP that reincarnated from the NCNC was the Igbo. The main support of the GNPP that was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim was Kanuri. Political parties in the third republic of Nigeria includes SDP and NRC. Political parties in the fourth republic include AD, APP, ANPP, PDP, APC, ADP, DA, ASD, LP, NFD, PPN, UPC, YP, PPN, NNPP, etc. Nigeria's political parties face some challenges like high level of corruption that has made politics a competition. However, the aim of most political parties is the development of a national system for sharing out the 'national cake' as a system of patronage.