***Francis Nmesomachi Esther 19/MHS01/175 MBBS -200 LEVEL B GST 203***

***A TWO PAGED REVIEW ON CHAPTER 7: THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA***

Political parties are a very essential part of the political system. From ensuring that the government is held accountable to the public opinion and to help government maintain political power to ensuring mass participation in political activities, political parties play a variety of important roles. There are several definitions of the term “political party”. ***R.G. Gettel*** states that a political party is a group of citizens more or less organised, 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. To ***Herman Finer***, a political party is an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy in the pursuit of political power. ***Agbaje*** (***1999***) says a political party is a group of persons bonded policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically possible of government and its offices. There are many other definitions by many scholars, as political parties perform so many functions, and from all these we can agree that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organised having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means. In light of the various definitions that exist so as to explain the concept, there some characteristics which are common to all political parties. These characteristics include the following: the capture of power through constitutional means, party ideology (the broad principles of public policy the party adopts), is an organised body, is national minded, has party manifestoes and is guided by a party constitution.

According to ***Shively (2008),*** political parties were first developed in the 19th century as a response to elections which attracted a massive number of voters. Politicians came up with these parties in order to get themselves and colleagues of like-minded interests elected into power. Specifically speaking, the first political parties were introduced in The United States of America, the oldest being the Democratic Party which was developed in the 1820s.

There are five different types of political parties, and this is based on the type of individuals that make up the parties. They are the Elitist/Cadre Parties, the Mass Parties, the Ideological Parties, the Broker Parties and the Charismatic/ Personality Parties. All political parties have the some common functions, such as: political education, political aggregation, goal formation, political stability, political representation, organisation of government, political mobilisation and recruitment etc.

Nigeria experienced her own development of political parties in 1920s due to the growth of nationalist consciousness, sentiments and nationalists’ movements (Ikelegbe, 2010) and constitutional development (i.e. the 1922 Clifford constitution that provided for 4 elective seats on the legislative council and the 1946 Richard Constitution). According to Ikelegbe, nationalist agitators formed groups and associations such as the West African Student Union (1925) and Lagos Youth Movement (1934) to organise against colonial misrule.

The Clifford Constitution of 1922 led to the formation of the first ever political party – NNDP (Nigerian National Development Party) in 1923. It was led by Sir Herbert Macaulay and based in Lagos with no national colouration. It won the seats allocated to Lagos and the elections 1923, 1928, 1933 on the legislative council. Its political activities and campaigns were aided by the Lagos Daily News (est. 1925). The second party, Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in the year 1934, by a group of youths led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr J.C. Vaughan. The NYM released their charter in 1938 which included their objectives such as promotion of national unity and national consciousness etc. They won the Nigerian Legislative Council and Lagos Town Council elections in 1938. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later renamed as the National Council of Nigerian Citizen in 1960. It was the first party to be organised to seek total independence for Nigeria. Its first secretary general Nnamdi Azikiwe and the first president Herbert Macaulay. The NCNC was strongly against the Richard Constitution. It remained a major party till 1950.

Ikelegbe states that between 1950 and 1951 there emerged two political parties from cultural associations – Action Group ((AG) from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa) and Northern People’s Congress ((NPC) from Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa). The leader of was Obafemi Awolowo, who was also the secretary general of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. Their aim was to gain the political power in Western Nigeria. Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa was formed in 1949 Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam and integrated into NPC in 1951.Their main goal was to ignorance, idleness and injustice in Northern Nigeria as well as to control the political power in the Nigeria. From these groups other political parties were formed under the multi-party system birthed in the first republic. These groups due to disagreement in interests e.g. UNIC – United National Independent Party from NPC who agreed with the ideas of AG, NEPU (Northern Element Progressive Unit), UMBC (United Middle Belt Congress) etc.

In the second republic, after the removal, of the ban on politics in September, 1978, there were 53 political associations vying to contest in the 1979 general elections, but only five of these were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission – National Party of Nigeria (NPN; main aim was to provide food and shelter and qualitative education), Nigerian People’s Party ((NPP) from NCNC whose support base was Igbo and main aim was to pursue economic, social and political equality), Great Nigeria Peoples Party ((GNPP) whose ethnic base was Kanuri), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Unity Party of Nigeria ((UPN) an offshoot of AG. Their aim was free education and health services at all levels as well as gainful employment for able bodied youth). The Nigerian Advance Party was registered later to contest in the 1983 general elections.

In 1989, after General Ibrahim Babangida passed the decree to transition into civil rule, two political parties were birthed, The Social Democratic Party (SDP; was concerned with the welfare of the constituency) headed by Chief Tony Anenih and the National Republican Convention (NRC – prioritised private initiatives over the people’s welfare) headed by Chief Tom Ikimi. Both were approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council. This was the first time that Nigeria adopted the two party system.

The fourth republic has registered numerous political parties. In the beginning of this republic, three political parties were registered under INEC. Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP), now known as All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP). They contested the 1998 and 1999 general elections. PDP won the presidential elections in 1999 and since then, controlled presidency political power for sixteen years (the next four tenures).

 Since the establishment of the fourth republic, there exists up to – political parties in Nigeria. However, these parties are coloured by corrupt motives and selfish interests as opposed to working for the development and growth of the country.