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**Chapter 7: Political Parties in Nigeria**

Political parties are an integral part of politics. They are an essential feature in democracies in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties are an important link between the government and its people. It can be traced back to the 19th century as a response to elections having a large number of voters.

A political party performs so many functions that it's hard to establish a single definition. Nonetheless, some scholars have tried to. According to R.G. 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 defined political party as "an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power".

A political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief objective of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain or maintain political power

**Characteristics of political parties include:**

1. They seize power, but only by lawful means. Any act of violence involved would be against the constitution

2. They always have a broad principle of ideology which is adopted by its organization. It is referred to as party ideology

3. Every political party must put the interests of the nation as a whole first.

4. It must be an organized body with an effective organization body. This would help gain the support of the masses.

5. Political parties have party manifestos which guide the conduct of officials before, during and after elections.

6. Political parties are guided by a party constitution which guides the conduct of officials within and outside government.

**Types of political parties:**

Elitist/ Cadre: This type draws its membership from the "elite". Elites are members of the highest echelons of the social hierarchy in the country. It features intellectuals such as doctors, lawyers, lecturers etc...

Mass parties: This type draws its membership from all sections of the country. Their manifestos are aimed at the alleviating the suffering of the masses.

Ideological party: This type of party is formed on the basis of a political ideology or benefits.

Broker Party: Its members are drawn from the upper and lower classes of society. The aim is to reconcile the conflicting interests of the rich and poor and by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.

Charismatic or Personality party: This is formed based on the charismatic qualities of its leader. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

**Functions of political parties:**

1. Political mobilisation and recruitment

2. Political education

3. Political representation

4. Interest aggregation

5. Political stability

6. Conflict management and political integration

7. Organization of government

8. Provision of alternative government and policies

9. Electoral competition and governance

10. Goal formation

Herbert Macauley, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikola, Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties and political activities in the 1920s in Nigeria. These were formed due to the misrule by the British government. The fulcrum of these parties formation was the 1922 Clifford constitution. Examples of early Nigerian political parties are: The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920. West African Students Union in 1925, Lagos Youth Movement in 1934 and Nigerian National Development Party in 1923 led by Herbert Macauley, who is considered the father of Nigerian nationalism.

**Chapter 8: Citizens roles in a democracy**

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people of the country. The government, elections and governmental processes belong to the people. There is no democracy without the people. These precepts are in the universal declaration of human rights and also modern constitutions all around the world. For democracy to work well and succeed, citizens must be informed about issues and also on how to improve their lives.

Access to information is a requisite to have informed citizens. Transparency is a necessity in any democracy. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. For full citizenship to be achieved, we must remove these barriers whether based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age or another status. If not, universal and equal suffrage becomes undermined. Therefore, citizens must first understand ideas about government, political ideologies and citizenship.

Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities which include participation and determining what occurs in public welfare. Participation is an instrumental tool in political and socioeconomic change and a fundamental way to empower citizens. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to slaves who could not enjoy them. Modern societies confer citizenship on all its inhabitants (mostly those who were born within its borders). The essence of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens to live a good life. Citizenship of a state is mostly conferred by birth, marriage or naturalisation.

Citizenship is made up of or can be divided into civil, political and social. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty; political citizenship refers to participation in democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of the community (voter) or as an official who is elected into power (politician); social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in the society.

There are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship refers to active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as a feature of citizenship. The personal benefits which are sacrificed aid the public's common good and in turn help the person who sacrificed.

Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation which can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. Educative citizenship refers to processes that develop a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship. Active participation helps citizens see the connection between their private interests and the public’s interests.

Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as a system of government of the people, by the people and for the people. In order for it to work, it must aim to achieve the common good and the common will of the people.

Citizens have a duty in democracy of ensuring that their rights are maintained, respected and protected. They can do so by challenging any government which errs (which could be through protests or impeachment). They can also check and be critical on other political institutions.