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**PHYSIOLOGY**

**19/MHS02/096**

**GST 203**

**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are an important link between government and the people. These parties are an essential political agency. They also crop up in all aspects of politics. It’s an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. Politicians developed the idea of political party as a device to help themselves and friends get elected but the party proved to have many other uses and then became an ubiquitous feature of modern politics.

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. Basically what he was trying to say is that those citizens are willing to help and make sure that the government is under good hands. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. That’s why so many people defined it with different ideas. A political party also brings people together in a formally organized structure. Some characteristics of political parties are, capturing governmental power through constitutional means, they have broad principles of public policy, they constitutional means they have broad principles of public policy, they must be national-minded, they should be an organized body, e.t.c. Some types of political parties are cadre parties, mass parties, ideology party and so on.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. According to ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920. The fulcrum of the emergence of parties formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Nigerian National Development Party ( NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. According to ikelegbe, 2010 two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. They were, Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations because of prospects of the 1951 elections. There were certain problems that confronted pre-independence political parties in Nigeria some are; political parties were without national outlook, they were placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues, e.t.c. The times before our independence where some political parties were active, the issues which they faced could lead to disastrous things such as conflict, which could lead to the end of a party.

In the second republic in Nigeria, NPN (The national party of Nigeria) was officially launched, September, 1978 in Lagos. This party was held by a host of social clubs, tribal unions, associations, committees of friends, for NPC leaders and ex-public officials. The party’s main goal was national unity. Their major programmes were those of provisions of food, shelter and qualitative education. UPN was the second party registered party in the second republic and its aims were embodied in its four cardinal point programmes which were free education at all levels, free health services for all citizens, full and gainful employment e.t.c. The third registered party was the Nigerians people’s party (NPP) and its aim is to work towards full employment for all Nigerians.

In the third Republic two political parties were registered which are the Social democratic party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Established by the government. Three political parties were registered in the fourth republic. Their names are the Alliance For Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP) which was changed to All Nigerians People’s party (ANPP). With that been said there are many political parties in Nigeria now.