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REVIEW ON CHAPTER 7

Political parties are very important in government affairs. They help relate the public opinion to the government as well as acting as a check against corrupt practices in government. It was first developed in the nineteenth century in response to elections involving a large number of voters. The first political parties were formed in the United States of America. The Democratic Party was formed around the 1820s and is known as the oldest political party in the world. 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.

A political party consists of various characteristics which include: the most important priority of a political party is to gain access to governmental power through constitutional means. That is to obtain political power without the use of violence and unlawful behaviours as that stands against their cause. Each political party has its own party ideology. That is, each political party has its own set of policies which each and every member of the party follows. These ideologies therefore stand as a means of differentiating between political parties. Also, every political party must take into consideration the interest of the nation as a whole. Political parties are always organised and they have party manifestoes and constitutions which direct the conducts of party officials and members.

Political parties exist in various types which include: Cadre parties (parties consisting of individuals with very high status), mass parties (have members from all sections of the society), ideological parties (parties formed with political ideology which is the basis of the party), broker party (consisting of members from the upper and lower classes of the society with the aim of solving conflicting interest between the rich and the poor through policies of social justice for the interest of all) and charismatic party (formed or led by people who emphasis on personal qualities).

As mentioned earlier, political parties have various functions. Political parties help in the organization of government and its activities. They serve as a means of maintaining political stability all through the nation. They help in the reduction of conflict as they serve for the interest of the entire public. They help educate the public on the various governmental processes and policies for example how election is to be held etc.

Political parties in Nigeria began to form as a result of the growth in nationalist consciousness. Nationalist agitators formed groups in order to form a sort of opposition against the colonial misrule. Various organisations were formed like the National Congress of British West Africa Territories (which was formed in 1920). Others were formed eventually like the West African Students Union (in 1925) and the Lagos Youth Movement (in 1934).

The first political party to be formed in Nigeria was the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP formed in 1923) which was caused by the elective principle introduced by the Clifford constitution of 1922. It was led by Herbert Macaulay (father of Nigerian nationalism). It was based in

Lagos which was the federal capital at that time. Other parties emerged like the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1934 and so on. These formed political parties however faced various challenges like: they had no national outlook and support; they placed more emphasis on personalities rather than issues; conflicts arose which caused the parties to split to smaller factions and most of the parties ended up collapsing.

As time went on various others were formed and were more organised even though corruption and greed crept into the political system. There is a need for a more reformed political system and the political party officials need to focus on the main reason why political parties were formed in the first place which is to further the development of the citizens and the nation as a whole