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CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

By definition, 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".

Political parties are essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In the liberal democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Political parties are an important link between the government and the people.

Political party was developed by politicians at that time has a device to help themselves and like-minded

friends get elected, but the party proved to have many other uses as well and went on to become a ubiquitous feature of modern politics. The first modern electoral democracy was at United States of America, and it was here that the first parties developed.

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 object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power. The following are some of the characteristics of political party:

- Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology. The party ideology serves as the basis for classifying parties as either leftist, liberal, communist, labour, conservatives, etc.
- Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
- Political parties are guided by party commission which directs

the conduct of party officials and the members within the outside government.

- The major feature or central of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. But capturing power by some violent or unlawful means cannot be allowed in the arena of the political parties. The means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful.

Types of political parties

- **Elitist/Cadre parties:** This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. The party boasts of members who are intellectuals like doctors, lawyers, lectures, or people who are business tycoons, traditional rulers.

- **Ideological party:** This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form bases of the party.

- **Mass parties:** This is political parties that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Mass parties takes such name as; peoples

party, labour party, workers party, etc. and their manifestoes are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses.

- **Broker party:** This is political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. The basic aim of this type of political party is to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.
- **Charismatic or personality party:** This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

Functions of political party

The following are some of the functions of political parties:

- Political education
- Political mobilization and recruitment
- Political stability
- Political representation
- Goal formation
- Electoral competition and governance.