**CHAPTER SEVEN—POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are essential feature of politics in modern age of mass participation. It is an intervention that was 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 at that time to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, the party proved to have many other uses as well and went on to become a ubiquitous feature of modern politics.

There are many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. According to R.G Gettel, 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. Herman Finer on his own part defined political party as an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. From above opinions we infer 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.

**Characteristics of political parties**

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national minded i.e., in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation.

**TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

* **Elitist/cadre parties:**

This is a political party that draws membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.

* **Mass Parties:**

This political party draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.

* **Ideological party:**

This party is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which forms the bases of the party.

* **Broker party:**

This is political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

* **Charismatic or personality party:**

This political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

The Early Political Parties in the first republic were developed between 1920 and 1950. The Nigerian National Democratic Party was formed in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay, it had no national colouration and its political activities and campaigns were aided the Lagos Daily News newspaper. It won elections in the legislative council in Lagos is 1923, 1928 and 1933. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr J.C. Vaughan. It contested and won two elections in 1938. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944 and later renamed the National Convention of Nigeria and Cameroon in 1960 after some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay were the first president and General Secretary of the party respectively.

 The Action Group started as a wing of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1950 and was formally inaugurated in 1951 with Chief Obafemi Awolowo as its leader. Its main aim was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The Northern People’s Congress was formed in October 1951 from the Jam’iyya Mutanen Arewa. As a result of the issues among members of the major parties, minor parties were set up, they include: the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), formed in 1950 by Late Mallam Aminu Kano, the United Middle Belt Congress formed in 1955 by Late J.S Tarka and the United National Independent Party (UNIP) formed by Eyo Ita. Unfortunately, political parties in the first republic faced a number of problems that hindered their development.

 In 1978, the ban on political parties was lifted and 5 parties were registered for the 1979 general election. The parties were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which was officially launched in September 1978 in Lagos, their slogan was “One nation, one destiny”, and the party ruled the country for four years, three months. The United Party of Nigeria(UPN) was the second registered party, it was an offshoot of the Action Group, it acted as a strong opposition party and reduced the excesses of the ruling NPN. The third registered party was the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP) reincarnated from the NCNC; the party won gubernatorial elections and controlled three states, Imo, Anambra and Plateau. The Great Nigeria People’s Party was the fourth party, it was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, its ethnic base was Kanuri, and its slogan was “Politics without bitterness”. It controlled two states, Borno and Gongola between 1979 and 1983. The fifth party was the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).

 In the third republic, there were two parties set up by the government under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida and were both approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council, they were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which had Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman and the National Republican Convention (NRC) which had Chief Tom Ikimi as its National Chairman. The SDP was purported to have won the 12th June 1993 presidential election with MKO Abiola as its candidate.

 Three political parties were registered in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission in preparation for the fourth republic. The names of the Political Parties were Alliance for Democracy which won various elections, gained political power in 6 states and also won seats in the house of assembly. The All People’s Party which won 9 gubernatorial elections during the 1999 elections as well as seats in the national and state house if assembly, it changed its named to All Nigerian People’s Party in 2002. The People’s Democratic Party won the presidential election in 1999 and maintained its stronghold on the presidency for sixteen years. Since the inception of the fourth republic, over 89 political parties have been registered by INEC.