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CHAPTER 7.

 ***Political parties in Nigeria.***

Mass participation has made political parties important to democracy in the area of politics wherein political parties and their activities are seen by the public eye. Hence, politcal parties are influenced by public opinion. The political party emerged in 19th century as a means by people to help their friends get elected. The first parties developed in America.

 There are many definition of political parties as the political thinkers. Scholars such as R.G Gettel defined political parties as 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 purposes.

Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government. There are other definitions of political parties from scholars such as Shively, 2008, Dowse and Hughes 1972, Burke 1975, Agbaje 1999 etc.

A political party is better defined as a group of citizens, more or less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

  ***Characteristics of Political Party.***

1. The central feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional, peaceful and lawful means.

2. Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization which is referred to as political ideology e.g liberal, communist, Conservative.

3. Every political party must be national minded i.e its aims and functions must take into consideration the interest of the nation.

4. Political parties must be well organized bodies because it can only derive strength from effectiveness of the organizational structure.

5. Political parties must have manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning election.

6. Political parties are guided by a constitution that direct their conduct within and outside the government.

*Types of Political Parties*

1. Elitist/Cadre Parties: They draw membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country such as doctors, lawyers, lecturers, traditional rulers, business tycoons.

2. Mass Parties: They draw their membership from all section of the society, having a wide range of membership and take names such as people’s party, action congress etc and aim to ease the people’s suffering.

3. Ideological Party: This is one in which their political ideologies form the basis of the party.

4. Broker Party: This is one in which members are drawn from upper and lower classes of the society so as to recognize reconcile the rich and poor by carrying out social justice for both.

5. Charismatic or Personality Party: These are political parties which are formed and led based on the personal qualities or charisma of their leaders.

*Functions of Political Parties.*

1. Political mobilisation and recruitment.

2. Political education.

3. Political representation.

4. Interest aggregation.

5. Political stability.

6. Provision of alternative governments and policies, amongst others.

***Political Parties in Nigeria.***

Political parties in Nigeria was developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness, sentiments and nationalist movements. In Nigeria, political parties were first formed to organize againts colonial misrule: The National Congress of British West Africa in 1920, the West African Student Union in 1925 and Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. People in the fore front of political activities then include Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ernest Ikoli, Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davies amongst others.

EARLY POLITICAL PARTIES 1920 - 1950.

The first political party in Nigeria was the Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP) introduced by Clifford constitution. It was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The party was based in lagos with no national colouration.

Other political parties then included Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) 1934, Nigerian Council of Nigeria and Cameroon(NCNC)1944 later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria.

POLITICAL PARTIES 1950 - 1966

The major political parties were Action Group(AG),1945 led by Obafemi Awolowo whose main aim was to capture political power and provide leadership to the western region and The Northern People Congress(NPC),1951 whose main aim was to battle vices in the North.

Smaller, splinter parties were formed due to disagreement among people in the major parties: (NEPU) National Element Progressive Union,1950 by Aminu Kano, United Middle Belt Congress(UMBC) by J.S Tsarka in 1955, (UNIP) United National Independent Part led by Eyo Ita, a splinter from NCNC.

Problems that confronted pre independence political parties.

1. Political parties were without national outlook.

2. Intra party and inter party conflicts that split the parties.

3. Empahsis on personalities instead of national issues.

4. Their defections which weakened or led to the collapse of political parties.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The 5 main political parties were National Party of Nigeria (NPN)1978, Nigerians People’s Party (NPP) an offshoot from NCNC, The Great Nigerian party (GNPP) led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, People's Redemption Party (PRP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) an offshoot from AG which reduced the excesses of the ruling NPN.

 POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC.

In 1989, through General Ibrahim Babaginda's transition to civil rule, Nigeria had quite two party constitutional system. The two parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman and the National Republican Convention (NRC) approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tom Ikimi as the national chairman.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC.

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by Independent National Electoral Commission which include Alliance For Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which changed its name to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) 2002 and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) which contested the 1998 to 1999 general election. Other political parties have since been registered by INEC e.g All Progressives Congress, Labour Party, All Grassroots Alliance etc

In Conclusion Nigerian political parties face a lot of challenges such extremely high level of corruption and formation of political parties for the purpose of stealing the nations wealth asap form of patronage, etc. There is a need to arrest this trends and make political parties be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.