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Chapter 7: Political Parties

Political parties are a very important part of politics most especially in the area of mass participation as they serve as link between the government and the people. Political parties were initially devised by politicians in order to enable themselves and other like-minded people get elected.

Political parties can be defined in many ways. It is a group of citizens who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out it's general policies.

Features of Political Parties

1. A political party most be nation-minded. That is to say that the party most has the nation's best interest at heart and that in carrying out their duties, the interest of the nation will ways be primary.

2. Their main is to capture political power through a constitutional means. Hence, in their bid to seek power, all their activities must be within the restraint of the constitution.

3. It should be an organised body with a definite aim and organisational structure.

4. It should have a party constitution that guides the conduct of the members.

5. It should have a party ideology that serves as a basis for classification.

6. It should have a manifesto that guides conduct during and after winning elections.

Types of Political Parties

1. Elitist/Cadre Parties: Members constitute of high-class individuals of the society, the bourgeoisie. Membership is dependent on one's social hierarchy.

2. Mass Parties: This a party with membership that spans across all the ranks and sectors of the society. They include labour and workers parties. They are aimed at alleviating the suffering of the masses

3. Charismatic/Personality Parties: This political party is formed as a result of the personal qualities of a leader.

4. Broker Parties: This parties draw members from all social classes, irrespective but their main aim is to promote social justice for the good of all.

5. Ideological Parties: These parties are formed from political ideologies and benefits which then form the bases of the party.

Functions of a Political Party

1. Political education: Parties should ensure that the candidates, electorate and their officials are given proper political education.

2. Political representation: This is one of the major aims of political parties. To ensure that the interest of the citizens are well represented in government.

3. Political stability

4. Organisation of government

5. Electoral competition and governance

Pre-independence Political Parties

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements.The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party to form in 1922, headed by Herbert Macaulay. Others formed around that time include:

Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM)

National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC)

Action Group (AG) and Northern People's Congress

A lot of issues confronted the pre-independence political Parties such as political parties placed more emphasis on personality rather than issues, improper handling of inter- and intra-party conflicts and the fact that a lot of parties were without national outlook.

2nd Republic Parties: Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Great Nigeria Peoples Party(GNPP), People's Redemption Party(PRP) and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN).

3rd Republic Political Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC)

4th Republic Political Parties: Alliance for Democracy(AD), All People's Party(APP), People's Democratic Party(PDP), All Nigeria People's Party(ANPP) and many others that were formed afterwards.