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Do a two page review of Chapter 7, "Political Parties in Nigeria," In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics

Chapter 7

Political parties are an important link between the government and the people. The first and oldest political party is the democratic party which was developed in America. There are various definitions of political party as it performs so many tasks in the political process. The chief objective of a political party is to ensure that its officials attain power and maintain power for as long as democratically feasible. According to the definitions of political parties given it is inferred that a political party is 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. There are various characteristics of a political party and they are listed below;

- The main feature of political parties is to obtain governmental power through constitutional means.
- A political party must be national minded.
- A political party must be organized as it derives strength from an effective organizational structure.
- Political parties have broad principals of public policy adopted by its organization and its referred to as party ideology.
- Political parties must have party manifestos which must be used during and after the election.

The various types of political parties include;

the Elite party, the mass party, the ideological party, the brokers party which main aim is to reconcile the rich and the poor using policies of social justice for the interest of all and , last but not the least, Charismatic party.

The functions of a political party are:

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Interest aggregation
3. Goal formation
4. Political stability
5. Political education
6. Organization of government
7. Political representatives

The precursors of the formation of political parties in Nigeria are Herbert Macaulay, Ernest Okoli, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O Davies, Nnamdi Azikiwe and others. Constitutional development was one of the reasons for the formation of political parties in Nigeria.

The first political party in Nigeria was The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) and it was formed in 1923 and led by Herbert Macaulay also known as the father of Nigerian Nationalism. The National Council of Nigerian And Cameroun Party was the first party to seek full independence in Nigeria. Between 1950 and 1951 two major political parties were formed namely: action group ruing the western region and Northern People's Congress (NPC). The parties formed before independence experienced some challenges such as:

- i) The political parties were without national outlook.
- ii) They placed much emphasis on personalities rather than on issues

iii) Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized political parties causing them to split into factions.

When the ban on politics was lifted by the military in September 1978, 53 political parties sought to contest in the next election with only five being registered by the electoral commission. Three of them namely, NPN, UPN and NPP were an offshoot of the three major political parties before independence. In the third republic, for the first time Nigeria had a constitutional two-party system. The parties were Social Democratic Party and National Republican Party. In preparation for the fourth republic three major parties namely: People's Democratic party, All People's Party and Alliance for Democracy were registered by INEC.

In conclusion, Nigerian political parties have the biggest problem of corruption and seeing politics as a way to further their business interests through "sharing the national cake" which needs to be put to an end.