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There is no specific definition of political party as there are so many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers. According HERMAN FINER a political party can be seen “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”. 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 in coalition, the machinery of government”. Shively 2008 defined 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 it. From the above perspective and so many more we can infer 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”. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was there the first parties developed. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. In Nigeria, political parties developed from the growth of nationalist’s consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s. (The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934 etc.). The constitutional development in Nigeria gave room for the emergence of political parties. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richard constitution of 1946 retained the four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian

Legislative houses. The principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP (1923) led by HERBERT MACAULAY (father of nationalism), the party formed the newspaper Lagos Daily News launched in 1925. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed 1934, led by ERNEST IKOLI, SAMNUEL AKINSANYA AND DR. J.C VAUGHAN. NCNC formed in 1944 later renamed in 1960, the first party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. In 1950 and 1951; Two major parties developed which are ACTION GROUP AND THE NORTHERN PEOPLE'S CONGRESS.

PROBLEM THAT CONFRONTED PRE INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL PARTIES

1. The political party were without national outlook
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issue
3. Intra party and inter party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties

The ban on political party was lifted in September, 1978.

Following that about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations, were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. These were NPN(THE NATIONAL PARTY OF NIGERIA), NPP(THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY), GNPP(THE GREAT NIGERIA PEOPLES PARTY) PRP(THE PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION PARTY), AND THE UPN (UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA). A sixth party was registered to contest the 1983 election, the NIGERIAN ADVANCE PARTY (NDP). In the third republic, Nigeria had only two constitutional recognized political parties the two political parties was set up by military movement. The parties are SDP (SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY) AND NRC (NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CONVENTION). In the fourth republic three

political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1988 by INEC. these parties were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Nigerians People's Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Since the inception of fourth republic other parties in Nigeria were formed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. To capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Every political party must be national-minded i.e. in aims and objectives
3. Political party has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning
4. Political parties are guided by party constitution
5. Political parties always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization

Types of political party

1. Elitist\Cadre Parties: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
2. Mass Parties: This is political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and has wide membership.
3. Ideological Party: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. Broker Party: This is political party formed with its member's draws from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. Charismatic\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

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation
5. Political stability
6. Conflict management and political integration

7. Organization of government
8. Provision of alternative government and policies
9. Electoral competition and governance
10. Goal formation.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal –democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion.