**OLATOMIWA PRECIOUS OLANIKE**

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**A TWO PAGE REVIEW OF ON THE TOPIC “POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA”**

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. There are many definitions of political parties as given by political thinkers. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep government accountable to public opinion; even in autocratic systems of government, they help government maintain its hold on power. Political parties are an important link between the government and the people.

Therefore, a political party can be 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.

Political parties have various characteristics. Some of which include;

1. The major feature of a political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. They always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, 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
4. A political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

**Types of political parties**

* Mass parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and has wide membership. They take such names as; peoples party, labor party, workers party, etc
* Elitist/Cadre parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. They have members who are intellectuals like doctors, lawyers, lecturers, or people who are business tycoons, traditional rulers.
* Ideological party: this is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
* Broker party: a political party formed with all members—both upper and lower class—of the society
* Charismatic or personality party: this political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

**Functions of political party**

The functions of political parties include;

Political education; political stability; political aggregation; political representation; goal formation; electoral competition and governance; organization of government; political mobilization and recruitment.

**Political parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements**.** Nationalist agitators formed groups and associations, to organize against colonial rule. Thus for this purpose, 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. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was *constitutional development.*

The first political party that was formed in Nigeria is the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP). It was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. The political activities and campaigns were aided by a newspaper called Lagos Daily News launched in 1925. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 after which the National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon(NCNC) was formed in1944 and was later renamed the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria.

Two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 respectively. These were the Action Group (AG)—emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa—and the Northern people’s Congress (NPC)—emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa--. They emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections following the Macpherson’s constitution.

The ban on politics was lifted on September, 1978 and about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the federal electoral commission. These were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which was officially launched on September, 1978; the Nigerian People Party(NPP), which was reincarnated from the NCNC with its main support base being the Igbo; The Great Nigeria People’s Party(GNPP), which was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, with its ethnic base being Kanuri. Its major campaign program and slogan was “politicians without bitterness”; the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), which was an offshoot of the Action Group, having its main support base in the Yorubaland.

General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties where registered in accordance with the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Two parties were then established by the government: the Social Democratic Party (SDP), with Chief Tony Anenih as the national chairman; and the National Republican Convention (NRC) with Chief Tom Ikimi as the national chairman.

There were three political parties that were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1989 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) among other political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. These parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP), which was changed to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) in 2002, and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Since the inception of the fourth republic, Nigeria has about 96 political parties.

Nigeria’s political parties face a number of challenges. One being, the high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Secondly, the basis for the establishment of a political party is wealth. Most Nigerian party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interest. There is a need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.