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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are an important link between government and the people and that is why it is an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well-organized parties and the Democratic Party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world.

Political party according to R.G Gettel is 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 policies. Herman Fisher defined political party as an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power and so many others. 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 power.

There are some characteristics that political parties entail which are; 1. They capture government power through constitutional means.

2. Political parties should be an organized body because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

3. Political parties have party manifestoes which guides their conduct during and after winning elections.

4. Political parties are guided by part constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Elitist/cadre, mass, ideological, broker, charismatic or personality parties are all types of political parties. Political parties mobilize and recruit, give political education, stability, representation and so many others. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movement. Various nationalist formed political parties in different years. The Nigerian National Development Party {NNDP} which was led by Herbert Macaulay was regarded as the first political party in Nigeria formed in 1923. The National Youth Movement {NYM} as formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli and so many others.

The two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 were the Action Group {AG} and the Northern People’s congress {NPC}. This parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The AG emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa while the NPC emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. The Nigerian multiparty system of the first republic gave rise to many political parties apart from the three major political parties.

Various political parties were formed between the second to the fourth republic. Since the inception of the fourth republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC. The aim of political parties in Nigeria have been the development of national system for sharing out the national cake as a system of patronage.