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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political party is a group of 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. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of national consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s, political party has many definitions by political thinkers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

There are various characteristics of political parties:

1. The major feature is to capture government power through constitutional means, capturing such power must be peaceful and lawful.
2. Political parties always have public policy adopted by its organization called party ideology, this helps in identifying a party
3. Political parties must be nation minded i.e. takes the interest of the people into consideration
4. Political party should be an organized body such an organization is more necessary to establish rapport with the masses.
5. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Cadre/Elitist Parties: This draws into the membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country, they boast of intellectual members or business tycoons
2. Mass Parties: The members are from all sections of the society and have wide membership, their manifestoes are aimed at abbreviating the suffering of the masses
3. Ideology Party: This is formed with political ideology or benefits which form the basis of the party
4. Broker Party: The members are from the upper and lower classes of the society, the aim is to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying policies of social justice for the interest of all
5. Charismatic/Personality Party: This party is led by people with charisma, it revolves around the personal qualities of a leader.

FUNCTIONS OF A POLITICAL PARTY

I Political mobilization and recruitment

Ii Political education

Iii Political representation

Iv Political stability

V Interest aggregation

Vi Conflict management and political integration

Vii Organization of government

Viii Provision of alternative government and policies

Ix Electoral competition and governance

X Goal formation

PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONTED PRE-INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTIES

1. They were without national outlook
2. They placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues
3. Intra-party and inter-party polarized political parties and thereby splitting into factions
4. Defection of political party led to the collapse of political party during this era

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

The fulcrum for the emergence of political parties in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richard’s constitution of 1946 retained the four elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional councils and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.

EARLY POLITICAL PARTIES

The Nigeria National Development Party(NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria, Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of nationalism. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by some group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsaya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigerian Cameroon(NCNC) was formed in 1944.

Political in the second republic in Nigeria: parties The ban was lifted in 1978, five of the associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission these include: The National Party of Nigeria, the Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), the Great Nigeria People Party(GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party(PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN)and the sixth party the Nigerian Advance Party(NAP) was registered to contest the 1983 elections.

Political parties in the third republic in Nigeria: The first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The constitution, objectives, policies and programs of the two political parties were set up by the military government, the Social Democratic Party(SDP) and the National Republican Convention(NRC).

Political Parties in the fourth republic of Nigeria: Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1988 by the Independent National Electoral Commission(INEC) among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The registered parties include Alliance Democracy(AD), All People Party(APP), People’s Democratic Party(PDP), these contested for 1988 and 1999 general elections.

Political parties have the registered by INEC, Nigeria has many political parties.