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## POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are essential features of politics in this modern age of mass participation. They help to keep the government accountable to public opinion in liberal democratic systems; they also help government maintain its hold on power in an autocratic system. Political parties are an important link between government and the people.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness, sentiments and movements in the 1920s.

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 objective of the organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008).

Some of the characters of political parties include; the major or central feature of capturing government of power through constitutional means (The capturing of power must be peaceful and lawful.)

Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by it; its organization, referred to as party ideology. Every political party must be national minded, i.e. take the interest of the nation into consideration. Also, political parties are guided by constitution which directs the conduct of party officials and members would be and outside the government. There are five types of political parties explained as follows:

- ★ **Elitist/ Cadre parties:** This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in the country. This type of party boasts of members that are intellectuals.
- ★ **Mass parties:** Refer to political parties that draw their membership from all sections of this society and have a wide membership.
- ★ **Ideological party:** A political party formed on political ideology or benefits which form the basis of the party.
- ★ **Broker party:** A political party formed with its membership drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. With the basic aim of reconciling the conflicting interests of the rich and poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.

- ★ Charismatic/ personality party: A political party formed or led with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of a leader. Political parties perform various functions, some of which are; political education, conflict management and political integration, interest aggregation, organization of government, electoral competition and good formation.

Political parties in Nigeria as earlier stated, developed as a result of national consciousness, sentiment, and movement. Nationalist organized groups and association to organize against colonial misrule. Personalities such as about Herbert Macaulay, Ernest Okoli, HQ Nnamdi Azikiwe and others, were prosecutors of political parties in Nigeria.

The first political party in Nigeria, Nigeria National Development party (NNDP), formed in 1923 and led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigeria nationalism. What about buses wait developed between 1950 to 1966 which emerged from cultural association following the MacPherson's constitution. These were Action Group (AG) and Northern people's congress (NPC).

These parties formed in the pre- independence era faced some challenges such as placing emphasis on personalities rather than issues and being without national outlook.

During the second republic, 53 parties sought to contest in the general election and out of them, five of the associations were registered. These were the National party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigeria's people party (NPP), the current Nigerian people party (GNPP), the people's Redemption party (PRP) and the unity party of Nigeria.

In the third republic, General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil degree which two political parties were registered in accordance with the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria 1989. The constitutions, objectives, policies and programmes of the two political parties were set up by the military government. The two parties, the Social Democratic party (SDP) and the National Republican convention (NRC) were established by the government.

In preparation towards the fourth Republic in 1998 by The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), registered three political parties among several parties that struggled for registration.

The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All the peoples party (APP) which changed name in 2002 to all Nigeria peoples party (ANPP) and the people's democratic party (PDP). Since the inception of the fourth Republic, other political parties have been registered by (INEC).

Nigeria's political parties face some challenges. First, there's high level of corruption which has made politics a competitive business. Secondly the framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for registration.