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Political parties are an important link between government and the people. It is an invention that that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected. According to R.G. Gettel, “political party 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.” There are many other definitions of political parties. Capturing governmental power through constitutional means is the major or central feature of political party and another is that political parties has party manifestoes guide their conduct during and after winning elections and so on. There are five types of political parties, which includes; Elitist/Cadre parties, Mass parties, Ideology party, Broker party and Charismatic or Personal party.

The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923.NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. Some other political parties that were formed between 1920-1950 includes; the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1934 and The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) in 1938.

Political parties in Nigeria between 1950-1966 includes; the Action Group (AG) which emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The Northern People’s Congress (NPC) which emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. These are the two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. Other smaller political parties includes; Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) in August 1950, The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in 1955.

Some challenges that pre-independence political parties faced includes; lack of national outlook, personalities emphasized rather than issues, intra-party and inter-party conflicts and political party defection weakened.

Political parties in the second republic in Nigeria consisted of about 53 political associations, they sought to contest in the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. These were The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). A sixth party, The Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to contest in the 1983 elections.

Political parties in the third republic in Nigeria for the first time had a constitutional two party system which includes; the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC).

Three political parties were registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP).

Political parties perform the functions listed below;

* Political mobilization and recruitment
* Political education
* Political representation
* Interest aggregation
* Political stability
* Conflict management and political Integration
* Organization of government and so on.