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Political parties are essential in the modern age if mass production, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinions even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United States of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s there were well-organised parties, and the Democratic party, which can trace its roots back to the time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movement in the 1920s.

Conceptual clarification of the idea of political party; According to R.G Gettel "political party is a group of citizens more or less organised, 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 on his part, defined political party as "a organised body with voluntary membership, its concerned energy being employed in the pursuit of Political Power."

A politics is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organisation; a chief object of this organisation is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively, 2008)

Characteristics of political parties:

- 1.) The major feature of political party is to capture the government power through constitutional means. But capturing power by some violent or unlawful means cannot be allowed in the arena of political parties.
- 2.) Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology. The party ideology also serves as basis for classifying parties as either leftist, rightist, communist, labour, conservative, etc.
- 3.) Every political party must be national-minded, I.e. in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interests of the nation. A party which falls short of national character and represents only a sectarian outlook cannot be a political party
- 4.) Political parties should be an organisational structure because it can only derive strength from an effective organisation structure. Such an organisation is more necessary to establish rapport with the masses.
- 5.) Political parties has party manifestos which which guide their conduct during and after winning elections
- 6.) Political parties are guided by constitution which directl conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Types of political parties:

ELITIST/ CADRE PARTY: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon.

MASS PARTIES: this is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.

IDEOLOGICAL PARTY: this is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which formed the basis of the party.

BROKER PARTY:

This is a political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

CHARISMATIC PARTY:

This is a political party formed or lead by individuals with charisma.

Functions of political party

- i) political mobilization and recruitment
- ii) political education
- iii) political representation
- iv) interest aggregation
- v) political stability
- vi) conflict management and political integration

- vii) organisation of government
- viii) provision of alternative government and policies
- ix) electoral competition and governance
- x) goal formation

Political parties in Nigeria; political parties in Nigeria develop following the growth of the National consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010). According to Ikelegbe, nationalist agitators formed groups and associations to organise against colonial misrule thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920 the west African student union in 1925 and the Lagos youth movement in 1934.

Early political parties; 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 give rise to the formation of NNDP IN 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism.

The Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr.J.C. Vaughan. promotion of Nigerian unity and national consciousness and the achievements of complete autonomy within the British Empire were among the objectives of the NYM in its charter published in 1938. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroons (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later renamed The National Convention of Nigerian citizens in 1960 when some parts cameroons broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC the first political party to be organised to seek total independence for Nigeria. Its first president and general secretary where Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi azikiwe respectively.

Political parties in Nigeria: 1950-1966

According to Ikelegbe, 2010; two major political parties in marriage between 1950 and 1951. These were Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). Which parties emerged from cultural associations because of prospects of the 1951 elections following the macphersons constitution. The a

Action Group emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which was formed in 1945 as a pan yoruba cultural society. The Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. The cultural association was formed in 1949 by Dr Dikki, M Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Iman. The Jam'iyya constituted itself into a political party, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in October, 1951. The main purpose of the association flash party was combating ignorance idleness injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North.

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties

i) the political parties were without national Outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty

ii) the political parties place too much emphasis on personalities rather than issues

iii) intra-party and intra-party conflict in most cases polarizing political parties and their by splitting them into factions

iv) political parties defection weekend or lead to the collapse of political parties during this era.

Political parties in the second Republic in Nigeria; the ban on politics was lifted in 1978 following that about 53 political Association sought to contest the 1978 general elections. Five of these associations were regarded as the federal Electoral Commission. These were the Nigerian party of the Nigerian (NPN), The Nigerian people's party (NPP), The great Nigerian people's party (GNPP), The People's Redemption party (PRP) and The Union party of Nigeria (UNP). A sixth party the Nigerian advance party was registered to contest the 1983 election.

Political parties in the third Republic Nigeria; general Ibrahim babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in the accordance with the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria 1989. Thus, for the first time Nigeria had a constitutional two party system. The constitutions, objectives, policies and programs of the two political parties was 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. Party officials were elected afterwards local government and state congresses and national conventions were directed by government officials. The national Republican convention who was registered through the approval of the Armed Forces ruling council with chief Tom Ikimi as its national chairman. But you had registered offices at the federal Capital Territory every state capital and local government headquarters. The parties programs provide more private initiatives and more state regulations.

Political parties in the fourth Republic; three political parties were registered in the preparation towards the fourth Republic in 1998 by The Independent national Electoral Commission among several political associations that trouble for registration as political parties. The name of the registered parties are The Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples' Party (APP), which in 2002 changed it's to name All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party(PDP). These parties are organized and administered at the ward, local government are, state, zonal and national levels and have registered offices at all levels.