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Political parties are an essential feature in modern day politics because it helps keep the government accountable to public opinions and political parties are an important link between government and the people. 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-organised parties, and the democratic party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties developed in Nigeria following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movement in 1920s.

Characteristics of political party:

- Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology.
- The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
- Every political party must be national-minded
- Political parties should be an organised body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organisational structure
- Political parties has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections
- political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Types of political parties:

There are about five major political parties; they are Elitist/leader parties, Mass parties, ideological parties, broker party and charismatic or personality party.

functions of political parties:

Political parties have a couple of functions which include; political mobilisation and recruitment; political education; political representation; interest aggregation; political stability; goal formation; electoral competition and governance; provision of alternative government and policies; organisation of government; conflict management and political integration.

The first political party in Nigeria was formed by nationalist agitators to organise against colonial misrule thus the National Congress of British West African territories was formed in 1920, the West African students Union in 1925, and Lagos youth movement in 1934. The NNPP was regarded as the first political party ^{formed} in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution in 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNPP in 1923 and NNPP was led by Herbert Macaulay and it was based in Lagos. There was also the Nigerian youth movement (NYM) (formed in 1934) and National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) (formed in 1944) which were formed between 1920-1950.

According to Ikelegbe 2010: two major political parties emerged between 1980 & 1981; Action Group (AG) and Northern People's Congress (NPC) and they both emerged as a result of cultural associations. After them a couple of other political parties emerged as well.

During the second republic (September 1978) the ban on politics was lifted and following that 53 ^{political} associations sought to contest for the 1979 general election, of which only five were registered by the federal electoral commission.

During the third republic, Nigeria for the very first time had a constitutional two party system in which their constitutions, objectives, policies and programme were set up by the military government. The two parties were, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and 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 others that struggled for registration as political parties. The names of these parties were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) which changed its name in 2002 to All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Since the inception of the fourth republic, however other political parties have been registered by INEC e.g All Progressives Congress (APC), Action Democratic Party (ADP), Labour Party (LP) etc. And as it stand the political parties in Nigeria have a lot of challenges ranging from corruption to ambiguous regulatory framework for establishment of parties.