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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

**INTRODUCTION/ HISTORY OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

Political parties were first developed in the nineteenth (19th) century in Nigeria in response to elections having large number of participants. They are a very important link between the government and the people such that in any political system during a political process the party must be present as an essential political agency.

In Nigeria political parties developed in the 1920s.

**DEFINITION OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. However, I would give a couple of definitions as given by political thinkers:

Herman Finer defined political party as ‘an organized body with voluntary membership, with its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.’

Agbaje (1999) ‘a political party is group to persons bonded in policy and opinion in support f a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices.

From the above definitions it can be coined that a political party is a group of people more or less organized who have some agreement in broad principle of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

**Characteristics of Political Party:** It captures government power through constitutional means, they have a party ideology, must be nation-minded, presence of party manifesto.

**Types of Political Parties**: In the five types listed the Cadre draws membership from highly placed people in the society; Mass draws from all sections of the society and have wide membership; Ideological parties are formed with political ideologies that form the bases of the party; Broker draws membership from both upper and lower classes of the society to reconcile their conflicting interests and Charismatic are formed or led by people with charisma.

**Functions of Political**: Political education, Political mobilisation, goal formation, political stability, political representation, organization of government, etc.

**Political Parties in Nigeria**

Political parties first developed pre-independence with men such as Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davis, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo who where its precursors being at the frontlines of political activities and party formation since the 1920s and thereafter.

The earliest political parties were formed under the Clifford Constiturion of 1922 between 1920-1950 with the first being the Nigerian National Development Party which was headed by Herbert Macualay. Another formed then was Nigerian Youth Movement in 1934 led by Enerst Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya, Dr. J.C. Vaughan

1950-1966: The groups formed were Action Group (AG) and Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These were formed under the Macpherson’s constitution and they emerged from cultural associations.

In 1978, the ban on politics was lifted leading to the formation of more parties. Nigeria had a constitutional two party for the first time in the third republic under the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The two parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). INEC registered three parties towards the fourth republic, Alliance for Democracy, All Peoples Party and All Nigeria People’s Party. They have registered offices at all levels and contested in the 1998 and 1999 general elections. Since the fourth republic began, many more political parties have risen.

**REVIEWS**

This writer holds the personal opinion that as much as there are benefits of having a good number of political parties the number of political parties formed without ideologies have made it so that although we operate a multi-party system only two parties seem to be ruling the nations. Therefore, political parties shouldn’t be allowed to form without well laid out solid ideologies.