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 **A REVIEW ON POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are organized group of people who have the same ideology. Political parties help to keep government accountable to public opinions; they also help the government maintain its hold on power. It was first developed in the nineteenth century, where politicians who share similar ideologies came together and helped themselves and like-minded friends get elected. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist movements in the 1920s.There are so many definitions of political parties as the political thinkers but a few will be mentioned subsequently.

 R.G Gettel defined political party as 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. Agbaje (1999) defined political party as a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of a government and its offices. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition.

Generally, we can infer that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organized, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means. Characteristics of Political parties include:

1. The major feature of a political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means which must be peaceful and lawful.
2. They have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded.
4. Political party should be an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure
5. They have party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
6. They are guided by party constitution which directs the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

**Types of political parties**

* **Mass Parties**: This type of political party draws its membership from all sections of the society and has a wide membership.
* **Elitist/Cadre Parties**: This is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
* **Ideological Party**: This is a type of political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
* **Broker Party**: This type of political party is formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
* **Charismatic or Personality Party**: This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

**Functions of Political Party include**:

1) Political mobilization and recruitment. 2) Political education. 3) Political representation. 4) Interest aggregation. 5) Political stability. 6) Conflict management and political integration. 7) Organization of government. 8) Provision of alternative government and policies. 9) Electoral competition and governance. 10) Goal formation.

**Political Parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria as earlier mentioned developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The first political party in Nigeria was referred to as Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) and was formed in 1923. It was led by Herbert Macaulay who was regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism; the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) formed in 1934 and also the National Council of Nigeria and Congo (NCNC) formed in 1944 were the earliest political parties formed in Nigeria. Two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951; these were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). These parties emerged from cultural associations.

 Some of the problems that confronted the Pre-Independence Political Parties are as follows:

1. The political parties were without national outlook;
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues;
3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties thereby splitting them into factions;
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era;

Nigeria now has over 85 political parties; some of which are: Action People’s Party (APP), Action Alliance (AA), Advanced Nigeria Democratic Party (ANDP), African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Blending Party(ABP), All Grand Alliance Party (AGAP), All Progressive Congress (APC), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Alliance Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Change Advocacy Party (CAP); Coalition 4 Change (C4C); Freedom and Justice Party (FJP); Green Party of Nigeria (GPN); Labour Party (LP); People’s Democratic Party (PDP); Youth’s Party (YP); and so many more.

In Nigeria, due to extremely high level of corruption, politics has been made a competitive business and this should not be so. The aim of most Nigerian parties has been the development of a national system for sharing out the “national cake” as a system of patronage. There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of Nigeria.