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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

***Introduction***

Political parties were first developed in the nineteenth century as a result of mass participation of voters during elections. It serves as a link between the government and his people.

A political party can be defined as an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power to control the government and carry out its general policies.

***Characteristics of political party***

Some of the characteristics of a political party include:

* Political parties have broad principles of public policy which is referred to as party ideology which serves as the basis for classifying political parties.
* Political parties must be national-minded, i.e., it must take into consideration the interest of the nation.
* Political parties have 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***

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

Among many other roles a political party perform, some include: political stability, political education, political mobilization, organization of government, goal formation etc.

***Political parties in Nigeria***

The major support for the formation and development of political parties in Nigeria was constitutional development. The first political party in Nigeria is the (NNDP) The Nigerian National Development Party, which was formed in 1923 and was led by Herbert Macaulay.

Some political parties emerged from cultural associations before independence between 1950 and 1951. The parties were; the Action Group (AG), with its leader Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), with their leaders; Dr. Dikko, M. Yahaya Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam. Political parties before independence had some challenges which include: **(i)** the political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues. **(ii)** political party defection weakened which led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

Presently, Nigeria has many political parties registered by INEC, some include: People’s Democratic party (PDP), People’s Progressive Party (PPP), Unity People’s Congress (UPC), Youth’s party (YP), Nigeria People’s Congress (NPC) etc.

***In conclusion;*** There are still problems that Nigeria’s political parties face which affect the country, which are; high level of corruption, the frame work for the establishment of parties are not controlled/managed well. Also most party leaders see these political activities as a means to further their business interests. These behaviors should be stopped and the resources should be directed in assisting Nigerian’s and the development of the country.