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**REVIEW ON THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties came into limelight in the 19th century as a means by politicians to get elected. However, since then, it has become am essential feature of politics on the modern age, and an important link between government and people. The term *political party* has been given many scholastic definitions by various scholars: R.G Gettel, Dowse and Hughes, Edmund Bruke, among others. But simply put, 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 political means. There have several features attributed to political parties, some of which include:

* Its major feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional means
* To have manifestos that guide their conduct during and after winning election; among several other characteristics.

Also, there are several types of political parties: Elitists, Mass parties, Ideological parties, broker party, charismatic party. All these parties with various principles or ideologies.

The functions of political parties include: political education, interest aggregation, political representation, organization of government among others.

Moving on to Nigeria, political parties were developed in the 1920s as a result of nationalists movement, growth of national consciousness, leading to formation of groups against colonial misrule and the groups and the groups include: The National Congress of British West Africa Territories, West African Students Union and the Lagos Youth Movement.

***Early Political Parties 1920-1950***

Precisely in 1923, the first political party of Nigeria was formed, which was known as The Nigerian National Development Party(NNDP), and was led by Herbert Macaulay, who is regarded as the father of nationalism. The party was based in Lagos, and had no national colouration. The National Youth Movement(NYM), was formed in 1934, with its aim as promotion of Nigerian unity and national consciousness and the achievement of complete autonomy within the British autonomy. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon(NCNC), was formed in 1944, but was later re-named as National Convention of Nigerian Citizens after some parts of Cameroon broke apart from Nigeria. It was the first party to seek total independence for Nigeria, with Herbert Macaulay as its first President, and Nnamdi Azikwe as its general secretary, who later became president in 1946 after Herbert Macaulay passed away.

***Political Parties in Nigeria: 1950-1966***

There were two political parties that came about in 1950 and 1951 from cultural associations. The first being the Action Group(AG), which was led by Obafemi Awolowo. It emerged from Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The AG was formally inaugurated in April, 1951, with its main aim to provide leadership to capture political power in the western region. The second being The Northern Peoples' Congress(NPC), which had as its aim to combat ignorance, idleness, injustice in the Northern region and control of the government in the North. It emerged from Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa, and the political party was formally inaugurated in October 1951. Due to the Nigerian multi-party of the first republic, several political parties emerged from the three major existing parties. These smaller parties include: Northern Element Progressive Union( NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress( UMBC) and The United National Independent Party(UNIP). Nevertheless, there were several challenges that confronted the political parties before independence. Some of which are:

* The political parties were without National outlook, only had regional support and ethnic loyalty.
* The political parties placed more emphasis on personalities rather than issues , among other challenges .

***Political Parties in the Second Republic in Nigeria***

After the ban on politics was lifted , 53 political parties sought to contest in the 1979 general election. However, five were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. The first was The National Party of Nigeria( NPN), whose main goal was national unity with the slogan “one nation, one destiny." The party won the presidential election and ruled for 4 years and 3 months. The second was the Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN) with its main aim embodied in its four cardinal programmes, which were free education at all levels, free health services for all citizens, full and gainful employment for all the able bodied and integrated rural development. The UPN acted as an opposition that reduced the excesses of the ruling NPN. The third registered party was The Nigerian Peoples' Party, which was carved from NCNC, and had as it aim to work towards full employment for all Nigerians and to promote economic, social and political equality of all sections of the country. It had it main support base as the Igbo people. The Great Nigeria People's Party(GNPP), was among the five political parties to be registered, with the kanuri forming its ethnic base. It had its major campaign programme and slogan as “politicians without bitterness” and it was led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. Lastly, among the five was the Peoples Redemption Party( PRP). A sixth party, Nigerian Advance Party(NAP), was registered to contest the 1983 elections.

***Political Parties in the Third Republic Nigeria***

For the first time, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system after General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida enacted the transition from military to civil decree, and two parties were registered. The first, the Social Democratic Party(SDP), with Chief Tony Anenih as its national chairman and the party programmes favoured more public ownership and control of the economy. The second, the National Republican Convention(NRC), with its national chairman as Chief Tom Ikimi. The party’s programmes favoured more private initiatives and more state regulations.

***Political Parties in the Fourth Republic***

The Independent Electoral Commission(INEC) registered three political parties towards the 4th republic in 1998. They were: Alliance for Democracy(AD), All Peoples Party(APP), which changed its name to All Nigeria People's Party(ANPP) and People's Democratic Party(PDP). They won several seats in the 1999 election, AD, particularly in the south-west, APP particularly in the Northwest and Middlebelt and PDP winning the presidential election and maintaining its stronghold on presidency for sixteen years. Since the inception of the fourth republic, over 63 political parties have been registered by INEC.

In Conclusion, the political system of Nigeria is faced with several challenges which include: extreme corruption, the basis of registration formed on wealthy coalitions, politicians making personal gain from 'national cake.' This trend needs to be arrested, and political parties need to take up its purpose to bring about development of the nation.