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**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA:**

Political Parties are an integral and important part of a political system. They serve as the link between government and the people and hold important functions such as keeping government in check, helping to maintain government’s hold on to power. The invention of political parties came up as a response to the introduction of elections involving large number of voters. The initial aim of political parties was to enable politically like minded people get elected into public and electoral seats, however political parties proved to be more important than that and went on to become and ubiquitous feature in modern politics.

Modern electoral democracy started in the United States of America and it was here the first parties were developed by the 1820’s there were well organized political parties and one of the first Democratic Party which can trace the roots back to that time is the oldest political party in the world. In Britain as long as most of Europe whenever a reasonably large and varied electorate was established the political parties appeared. In Nigeria political parties developed as a result of nationalists consciousness and sentiments and nationalist’s movements in the 1920’s.

The concept of political parties has been assigned different definitions by political thinkers according to R.G. Gettel “political party is 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” according to Herman Finer political party “is an organized body with voluntary membership , its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power” A political party performs so many tasks that it is difficult to establish a single definition. Some **Characteristics** of political parties are

1. Major or central feature is to capture governmental power through constitutional means, capturing power through violence or unlawful means is not allowed.
2. Political parties have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as a party ideology
3. Every Political party must be national minded i.e it takes into consideration interest of the nation
4. Must be an Organized body, because it can only derive strength from an organizational structure.
5. Political parties have party manifestoes which guide conduct during and after winning elections
6. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials nd members within and outside government.

**Types of Political parties**

1. **Elitist/cadre parties** 2. **Mass parties** 3.**Ideological party** 4. **Broker party** 5. **Charismatic or personality party**

**Functions of political parties include**: Political mobilization and recruitment, Political education , Political representation, Interest aggregation, Political stability, Organization of government , Goal formation, provision of alternative government policies, Electoral competition and governance , Goal formation, Conflict management and political integration.

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political party in Nigeria developed as a result of the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements nationalist agitators formed groups and organization to organize against colonial misrule, thus for the reason political parties such as The National Congress Of British West Africa Territories (1920), West African Students Union(1925) and Lagos Youth Movement (1934), Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors . The fulcrum for emergence of political parties in Nigeria was constitutional development.

Early political parties in Nigeria include Nigerian National Development Party NNDP(First Nigerian political party headed by Herbert Macaulay) Nigerian youth movement (NYM led by Erest Ikoli and others) , National council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) etc. NCNC was the first organized to seek total independence for Nigeria with its president Herbert Macaulay and general secetary Nnamdi Azikwe between 1950 – 196 two major political parties were in power that is the Action Group AG and the Northern People’s Congress NPC. Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties include :

1. Lack of national outlook
2. Emphasis on personalities rather than issues
3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts
4. Defection

**The second republic** began when the ban on politics was lifted in September 1978 following that v53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 elections Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral commission these include : The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People’s Party(NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party(PRP) Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN), A sixth party Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to contest the 983 elections.

**In The third republic** General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties where registered in accordance with the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The two parties were the Social Democratic Party(SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC)

**The fourth Republic :** Political parties here were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and has led to the emergence of a lot of political parties we have currently