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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

A necessary feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation is known as a **Political Party**. Politics in liberal-democratic systems help to keep governments accountable to public opinion while in the autocratic system they help the government maintain its hold on power. It simply serves as an important link between government and the people. Political party is also an invention that was first developed in the 19th century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters in a country. The first modern electoral democracy was **the United State of America** and the first parties were also developed here.

There are many definitions to political parties as the political thinkers. **R.G GETTEL** defines political parties 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. **HERMAN FINER** defines political parties as an organized body with voluntary membership its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. **JOSEPH LAPALOMBARA** defines political parties as a formal organization whose self-conscious primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office a person who will control alone or in coalition the machinery of government. According to **AGBAJE (1999)** general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible of government and its offices. **EDMUND BURKE (1975)** defines political parties as a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. **DOWSE and HUGHES (1972)** see political parties as associations formally organized with the explicit and declare purpose of acquiring and maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state.

A political party is defined as a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization whose chief object is to ensure that its officials attain power (**SHIVELY 2008**). These opinions regarding politics has inferred 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 party.

The various characteristics of a political party includes;

- 1.Capturing governmental power through constitutional means.
- 2.Political parties always 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 parties should be an organized body.
- 5.Political parties have manifestoes that guide their conduct during and after

elections. 6.They are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials.

Types of political parties

There are five(5) types of politics and they are;

1.**Elitist/cadre party**: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.

2.**Mass party**: this political party draws its membership from all sections of the society and have a wide membership.

3.**Ideological party**: this is a political party formed with political ideology of benefits which form the bases of the party.

4.**Broker party**: this is a party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

5. **Charismatic/ personality party**: this is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. **Functions of political parties**

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 alternate government and policies

9.Electoral competition and governance

10.Goal formation

The fulcrum for the formation of parties in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. This party was led by **HERBERT MACAULAY**. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934.

According to Ikelegbe, 2010, two major political parties were formed between 1950 and 1951; Action group (AG) and Northern People's Congress (NPC). There have been a general continuous increase in the emergence of other political parties from the first to the fourth republic where other political parties have been registered by the INEC.

As things stand now, Nigeria's political parties face some challenges: high level of corruption, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. Also, most party leaders see political party activity as a means to further their business ventures. There is need to arrest this trend and make political parties to be directed to fostering cohesion among Nigerians and engendering the development of the Nigeria.

In conclusion, in order to have a good government political leaders should carry out their duties effectively without any form of corruption.

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