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Political parties are an essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. It helps to keep governments accountable to public opinion, even in autocratic system of government, they help the government maintain its hold on power. Therefore, this has made us to know that there is an important link between the government and the people. It is an invention that was first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of election involving large numbers of voters. The politicians developed the ideas of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the party proved to be very useful in other way round and it became a very useful features in the society we live in today. The first modern electoral democrcacy was the united state of America and it was there the first party developed. There are many definitions that was propounded by many political thinkers, which includes; According to Joseph Lapalombara, political party is a formal organization whose self- conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government. According to Dowse and Hughes, sees political parties as associations formally organized with 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 a group of official or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable groups of citizens into an organization;a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attains power or maintains powers, a party joins people together in a formally organized structure.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. The major features of political party is to capture governmental powers through constitutional means; the means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful.
2. Political powers always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organizations, which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded; it must put in mind the interest of the nation.
4. Political parties has its maanifestoes which guides their conduct during and after winning elections.
5. Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and memders within and outside it governments.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Elitist/cadre parties: They are the type of parties that draws their memberships from the highest region of social hierarchy in a country
2. Mass parties: This is a political party that 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 benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. Broker party: This is a type of political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. Charismatic or personality party: This is a type of political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It involves personal qualities of the leaders.

Functions of a political parties

1. Political education
2. Interest aggregation
3. Political stability
4. Organisation of government
5. Goal formation

BRIEF HISTORY ON POLITICAL PARTIES

The first few society that came into being but later turn into a political society includes, the National Congress of British West African Territories, formed in 1920,

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness, sentiments and movements. Nationalist agitators formed groups and association to organize against colonial misrule and because of this the National Congress of British West Africa territories was formed in 1920, West Africa student union in 1925 and the Lagos youth movement in 1934. Obafemi Awolowo and others were prosecutors of political parties in Nigeria and fore front of political activities and party formation in 1920 and after.

The Clifford Constitution provided four elective seat in its legislative council while Richard maintained it and added regional assemblies. Then the Macpherson’s Constitution established regional executive council and made way for indirect election. The Nigerian national development party was the first party that was formed in 1923 and it was led by Herbert Macaulay and he was the father of Nigerian nationalism this party was in Lagos it won all the three seat from 1923 to 1933 this party the campaign was aided by a newspaper called Lagos daily news. Another party that was formed was Nigerian new movement in 1934 by Enrnest Ikoli and others they promoted Nigerian unity and Nigerian consciousness they contested and won election to the Nigerian legislative council and Lagos town council in 1938 also the national council of Nigeria and Cameroon later renamed as the national convention of Nigerian citizen they were the first to be organized to seek total independence in Nigeria.

According to Ikelegbe two major political parties immerged during 1950 and 1951 which are the action group and the northern people’s congress they immerged from cultural association. The main aim of the action group was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region while the northern peoples progress was combatting ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control the government of the north. The Nigerian multi-party system of 1st republic gave rise to other political parties. Some parties arose because of disagreement within other parties. There were problems associated with pre-independence political parties which are they were without national outlook, they placed emphasis on personalities rather than issues, inter and intra party conflicts split them and political party defection weakened and led to collapses of the party.

In the second republic the political association were up to 53 and then 5 of them were registered by the Federal Electoral commission. The national party of Nigeria, the unity party, the Nigerians peoples party, the great Nigerian people, the people’s redemption and the Nigerians advance party, the unity party was an offshoot of the Action Union and their aim was free education, health, employment in full.

The political parties in the third republic general Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered. This two parties their constitutions, objectives, programs and policies were guided by the military. These two parties where Social Democratic party and the National Republican Convention.

The political parties in the fourth Republic was registered in preparation towards the fourth republic in 1998 by the independent National Electoral Commission among several political organizations that struggled for it. The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy, all people’s party but changed name in the year 2002 to all Nigerians people’s party and the people’s democratic party. This parties are administered at the ward local government area state local and national levels and have registered offices at all levels. Alliance for democracy sponsored and contested elections throughout Nigeria during 1998 and 1999 general election. It gained political power in six states of the south west. The all peoples party won nine elections in the middle belt and north west. It aligned with AD to present a joint candidate during the 1999 presidential election. After the inception of the fourth Republic, however other political parties have been registered by INEC. So, Nigeria now have over 60 political parties and here are some of them youth party(YP), All progressive congress (APC), Grassroots Development party of Nigeria (GDPN), Fresh Democratic party (FRESH), Labor Party (LP), Better Nigeria Progressive party (BNPP), People Democratic Party (PDP), Reform and Advancement Party (RAP), Kowa party (KP), Change Nigeria Party (CNP), Democratic People’s Congress (DPC), Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), Hope Democratic Party (HDP), Mass Action Joint Alliance (MAJA), National Interest party (NIP). ETC.