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**FIRST SUMMARY**

Political parties are an important link between government and the people and that is why it is an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well-organized parties and the Democratic Party, which can trace its roots back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political party according to R.G Gettel 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. Herman Fisher defined political party as an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power and so many others. A political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power.

There are some characteristics that political parties entail which are they capture government power through constitutional means. Political parties should be an organized body because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure. Political parties have party manifestoes which guides their conduct during and after winning elections. Political parties are guided by part constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government. Elitist/cadre, mass, ideological, broker, charismatic or personality parties are all types of political parties. Political parties mobilize and recruit, give political education, stability, representation and so many others. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movement. Various nationalist formed political parties in different years. The Nigerian National Development Party {NNDP} which was led by Herbert Macaulay was regarded as the first political party in Nigeria formed in 1923. The National Youth Movement {NYM} as formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli and so many others. The two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 were the Action Group {AG} and the Northern People’s congress {NPC}. This parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The AG emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa while the NPC emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Arewa. The Nigerian multiparty system of the first republic gave rise to many political parties apart from the three major political parties. Various political parties were formed between the second to the fourth republic. Since the inception of the fourth republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC. The aim of political parties in Nigeria have been the development of national system for sharing out the national cake as a system of patronage.

Political elites are very important in any political system in the sense that they exert considerable weight in building and influencing state structures more directly than ordinary citizens. The role of and relevance of elites to the discourse on party formation pattern and national integration is therefore very pivotal. Studies on elite behaviour basically focus on the acquisition, use, misuse and consolidation of power by this group.

Proponents such as Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Micheal, and Wright Mills, takes for granted the fact that in every society, there will be homogenous elite who rule because of their members’ superior organisational and personal abilities

The second generation consisted of those parties that emerged between 1945 and the end of the first republic. This group, according to this classification was the National Council of Nigeria Citizen, (NCNC) the Northern People Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). These parties’ major preoccupation was to wrest power from the colonialist, a feat they eventually accomplished. One major flaw that characterised these political parties was their formation pattern and subsequent degeneration into ethnic-based parties and the personalisation of their operations by founders. The cultural influence in the formation of these parties undoubtedly played a significant role in this regard. For instance the Action Group party (AG) which emerged as a response to the growing popularity of the (NCNC) in the western region is traced to the pan Yoruba socio-cultural organisation, the ‘Egbe Omo Oduduwa’ (the gathering of the descendants of Oduduwa). After series of meetings and preparation, the cultural organization on March 1951 metamorphosed into a political party and held its inaugural conference in Owo, a town in the present day Ondo state Nigeria

The third generations of political parties going by Ujo’s classification were the parties of the second republic (1979-1983). The constitutional and political reforms of 1975-1979, moved the definition of political party away from a functional notion to a legal-constitutional one. Political parties were defined more in terms of structure than of functions, with emphasis on structural requirements for political party registration such as national outlook and spread, internal organisation or democracy, recognition and registration by an electoral management body.The parties of that era included the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria People’s Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria People’s Party (GNPP), the People’s Redemption Party (PRP) and later National Advance Party (NAP). What characterised political parties of this dispensation was their degeneration into regional parties. Most of them turned out to be reincarnates of the first republic parties. The NPN, UPN, NPP and the PRP were adjudged to be similar both in leadership and orientation to the Northern People’s Congress, Action Group, the National Council of Nigeria Citizen and the Northern Element Progressive Union of the first republic respectively. Intra and inter party rivalries, corruption and the electoral heist perpetrated by the National party of Nigeria (NPN) led to the collapse of the second public

The fourth generation political parties following Ujo’s classification included parties of both the Babangida and Abacha government sponsored and financed parties. The Social Democratic party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Unlike the earlier parties, because of the stringent requirement for party registration and government funding of the parties, ethnic and regional rivalries were not pronounced.