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A Review On Political Parties in Nigeria

Political parties are an important aspect of politics and democracy. They are the link between the government and the people. It was developed in the 19th century. According to R.G. Gettel, political party is defined as a group of citizens more or less organised, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political powers aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies. There are so many characteristics of political parties, some of which are: 1. Their main aim is to gain control of government power (legitimately.)

2. They should be considerate of the nation and its well-being (common good)
3. They are an organized group of people and as such they have an organized structure.
4. They have plans (manifestoes) which guide their actions and conducts.
5. They possess a party constitution which directs the conducts of the party officials and members.

The different types of political parties include: Elitist (Cadre) parties, Mass parties, Ideological parties, Broker parties, Charismatic (personal parties). Elitist parties are political parties that draw their membership from the highest status in a country. Mass parties are those that draw their membership from all sections of the society. Ideological parties are formed with political beliefs, this forms the basis of the party.

Broker parties are one which form membership from the upper and lower classes of the society. It tries to reconcile the interests of the rich and the poor by carrying out social justice for all. Charismatic parties are one formed or led by individuals with charisma. There are so many functions of a political party, these include: they mobilize and recruit members into the party, they educate the populace about politics, they provide an alternative government and policies, they aid in conflict management and political integration. They aid in political stability.

Political parties in Nigeria were developed when there was a growth in the national consciousness and sentiments. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davis, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo were pioneers in party formation and political activities. The first political party that was formed in Nigeria was the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) in 1923. This was as a result of the principle introduced by Clifford's constitution of 1922. This party was led by Herbert Macaulay, who is regarded as the Father of Nigerian nationalism. It was based in Lagos and won all the three seats during the elections in 1923, 1928, 1933. In 1934, The Nigerian Youth Movement was formed by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. Their main aim was the promotion of Nigerian unity and national consciousness as well as the achievement of complete autonomy within the British Empire. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944, it was later changed in 1960, when some Cameroon broke away from the party. Its new name became National Convention of Nigeria, with its president and general secretary being Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively.

In 1950- 1951, two major parties emerged, they were Action Group and the Northern People's Congress. These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections. The Action Group was formed from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. Obafemi Awolowo was the leader of this group. Their aim was to provide the leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The Northern People's Congress emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. Their main aim was to combat ignorance, idleness, injustice in northern region and control of the government in the North. Other parties emerged as a result of disagreement, some of them include: Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), United National Independent Party (UNIP).

The pre- independence political parties had some problems which include: they were without national outlook, they placed more emphasis on personalities rather than issues, party defection weakened or led to the collapse of a political party. In 1979, 53 political parties sought to contest in the election of that same year. Five of these associations were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission, these include National Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian People's Party (NPP), The Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP). The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). A sixth party was registered in 1983, under the name Nigerian Advance Party (NAP). Three parties, Alliance for Democracy, All People's Party (changed to All Nigerian People's Party in 2002) and People's Democratic Party, were registered in the inception of the fourth Republic in 1998. Since the inception of the fourth republic, many other parties have been registered, some of them include: All Progressive Party (APC), All Grand Alliance Party (AGAP), Change Advocacy Party (CAP), Democratic Alternative (DA) etc. There are some challenges which political parties face, this includes a high level of corruption, poor framework and structure of the party, wrong mindset of party leaders to the political party. These have to be corrected for better political activities as well as increased development of Nigeria.