NAME; ONYEDIMAZU ADAEZE WINIFRED

MATRIC NUMBER; 19/MHS01/355

COURSE CODE; GST 203

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

The essence of political parties in this modern age of political participation cannot be over emphasized. Political parties are an essential political agency as they help to bridge the gap between the people and the government. The intervention of political party was birthed when elections were first held in the nineteenth century, this was to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected but later on it proved various functions. The first political parties were developed during the first modern electoral democracy of the United States of America and “the Democratic Party” which originated around that time is the oldest political party in the world.

A political party performs a lot of functions in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition for it. The term political party has many definitions as there are many political thinkers. R.G. Gettel defined a political party “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.” 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 [Shively, 2008]. Other definitions are provided by Herman Finer, Joseph LaPalombara, Agbaje [1999], Burke [1975], Dowse and Hughes [1972]. From the opinions provided by the above political scholars we infer 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. There are various characteristics of political parties and the major feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means which must also be peaceful and lawful. Also, political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is also known as party ideology and this ideology serves as the basis for classifying parties as either liberal, communist, labour, conservative etc. Another feature is that every political party must be national minded that means it must take into consideration the interest of the nation. In addition, political parties has party manifestoes which guides their conduct during and after winning elections.

There are five major types of political parties and they include; Elitist/Cadre parties, Mass parties, Ideological party, Broker party and Charismatic or Personality party. The Elitist parties is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country, this includes intellectuals who are doctors, lecturers, business tycoons etc. Mass parties is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Ideological party is a party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party. Broker party is a political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. Charismatic party is a political party formed by individuals with charisma. As said earlier, there are various functions of the political parties and some of them include; Political mobilization and recruitment, Political education, Political representation, Interest aggregation, Political stability, Conflict management and political integration, Organization of government, Electoral competition and governance and goal formation.

Political parties evolved in Nigeria due to the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The Early Political Parties were formed 1920-1950. The first political party that was formed in Nigeria is “The Nigerian National Development Party [NNDP]. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise the formation of NNDP in 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The party was formed mainly by its leaders and its political activities and campaigns were aided by a newspaper called Lagos Daily News launched in 1925. Another early political party is the Nigerian Youth Movement [NYM] which was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon [NCNC] was formed in 1944 and was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian Citizen in 1960 when some part of Cameroons broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first political to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikiwe became its president in 1946 after Herbert Macaulay’s death and the party was the major Nigerian party until 1950. According to Ikelegbe, 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951 and these were the Action Group [AG] and the Northern People’s Congress [NPC]. These parties emerged from cultural associations because of the prospects of the 1951 elections, following the Macpherson’s constitution. The Action Group emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa formed in 1945 and its leader was Obafemi Awolowo. The main aim of this political party is to capture power in the western region. The NPC emerged from the Jam’iyya Mutanein Gusau, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Imam and the main aim of this political party was combating ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control of government in the north. Some of the problems pre-independence political parties faced include; the political parties were without national outlook, they placed so much emphasis on personalities rather than issues, intra-party and inter-party conflicts and political party defection.

In the second republic five political parties were registered to contest the 1979 general elections; The National Party of Nigeria[NPN], The Nigerian People’s Party[NPP], The Great Nigeria Peoples Party[GNPP], the Peoples Redemption Party[PRP], and the Unity Party of Nigeria[UPN]. In the third republic, Nigeria had a constitutional two party system for the first time. The two parties are the Social Democratic Party [SDP] and the National Republican Convention [NRC] which were established by the government. The SDP later won the annulled presidential elections of 12 June, 1993. Three Political Parties were registered in preparation towards the Fourth Republic in 1998 by the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] among several political associations that struggled for registration as political parties. These political parties include; Alliance for Democracy [AD], All People’s Party [APP] and the People’s Democratic Party [PDP]. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic till date 93 political parties have been registered by INEC. Some of them include; Accord, All Progressives Congress[APC], All Progressive Grand Alliance[APGA], Coalition for Change[C4C], Democratic People’s Party[DPP], Fresh Democratic Party[FRESH], People’s Coalition Party[PCP], Young Progressive Party[YPP] and a host of others.

There a lot of challenges facing political parties in Nigeria today. First of all politics is now seen as a competitive business and a venture for making money. Secondly, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties makes it difficult for new parties to be formed as they have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration. This notion of political parties as an institute to partake in the national cake should be changed and this will help to foster national development in the country.