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**PHARMACY**

**19/MHS11/130**

**GST 203 ASSIGNMENT ON CHAPTER 7**

**POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Political parties are an essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties play an important link between government and the people. Political party crops up all aspect of politics. It is an invention that first developed in the 19th century in the response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters.

Politicians developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected. The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s.

**Clarification of the idea of political party**

According to R.G. Gettel “political party 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 finer gave his definition of political party as “an organization body with voluntary membership, its concerned energy being employed in the pursuit of political power. There are many other definitions of political parties.

“A political party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization the chief object of the organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power”

**Characteristics of political parties**

Below are some characteristics of political parties

1. The central feature of political party is to capture government power through constitutional means
2. Every political party must be national-minded. I.e in aims and functions, it must take into consideration the interest of the nation
3. Political party should be an organized body
4. Political parties has party manifestos which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.

There are also different **types of political parties**

1. Elitist/cadre parties: This political party draws membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country e.g members of intellectuals- doctors, lawyers.
2. Mass parties: These are political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. It is also can be referred to as people party, labour party.
3. Ideological party: This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party
4. Broker party: This political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. The basic aim is to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and poor.
5. Charismatic/personality party: This political party formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolve around the personal qualities of the leader

**Political parties perform the following functions** below;

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. Goal formation

**Political parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements(Ikelegbe, 2010). Herbert Macaulay, H.O Davies, Ernest ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe Obafemi Awolowo and other were in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter.

**Early political parties 1920-1950**

The Nigerian national development party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria (1923). it was led by Herbert macauley regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigeria Youth Movement(NYM) was formed in 1934 by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and D r. Jc. Vaughan. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon(NCNC) was formed in 1944. it was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian citizen In 1960

**Political parties in Nigeria 1950-1966**

According to Ikelegbe 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. these parties emerged from cultural association because of the prospects of the 1951 elections. The two political parties were the action group (AG) and the northern people congress(NPC). the main aim of the AG was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region.

**Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties**

1. The political parties were without national outlook
2. The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues
3. Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in cases polarized the political parties and splitting them into factions
4. Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era

In the ***second republic***(September in 1978) occurred between 1978-1983, five associations were registered by the federal Electoral commission until a sixth was added to contest in the 1983 elections.

The ***third republic*** (general ibrahim babangida in 1989) Nigeria had a constitutional two party system which were SDP and NRC set up by the military

The ***fourth republic***(1998 by INEC) three political parties were registered; AD,APP later changed to ANPP,and PDP. They contested in 1998-1999 general electio