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COURSE: GST 203 (GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS).

QUESTION: Do a two page review of chapter 7, “political parties in Nigeria”, in salient issues in government and Nigeria’s politics.

ANSWER.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties are an important link between the government and the people. In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. It is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth 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 to get elected, but the party proved to have many other users as well and went on to become a ubiquitous feature of modern politics.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America, and it was here that the first parties developed.

Characteristics of political party.

- To capture governmental power through constitutional means. The means of capturing such power must also be peaceful and lawful.
- Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology. Party ideology serves as the basics for classifying parties as either leftist, rightist, liberal, communist, labour, conservative, etc.
- It must be national minded. It must take into consideration the interest of the nation.
- It is an organized body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organisational structure.
- They are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government.

Types of political parties.

- ❖ Elitist/cadre parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. Members of this party include doctors, lawyers, lecturers or business tycoons.
- ❖ Mass parties: it draws its members from all sections of the society and has wide membership. This takes such names as; peoples party, labour party, workers party etc.
- ❖ Ideological parties: this is formed by political ideology or beliefs which forms the bases of the party.
- ❖ Broken party.
- ❖ Charismatic or personal party.

Functions of political party.

- Political education
- Political mobilization and recruitment
- Political stability
- Political representation
- Goal formation
- Electoral competition and governance

Political parties in Nigeria.

This developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements. The National Congress of British West African Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O.Davies etc were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, 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. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The party was based in Lagos and had no national colouration. It won all the three seats allocated in Lagos legislative council in the elections of 1923, 1928, 1933. The party was formed mainly by its leaders and political activities and campaigns were aided by a newspaper called Lagos Daily News launched in 1925.