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GST 203

REVIEW OF CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER SEVEN: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. They help to keep governments accountable to public opinion. Political parties are an important link between the government and the people. The first modern electoral democracy was the United States of America, and it was here that the first parties developed. By the 1820s, there were well organized parties and the Democratic Party, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed in the 1920s.

There are many definitions of political parties. 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, on his part defined political party as “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power.” A political party performs sp many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. However, Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as “a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government. And there are many more definitions, from which we can 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.

Major characteristics of political parties include;

The major feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.

Political parties always have a broad principle of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology.

Every political party must be national-minded, meaning it must take into consideration the interests of the nation.

Political party should be an organized body, because it cans only device strength from an effective organizational structure.

Political parties has party manifestoes

Political parties are guided by party constitutions which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government

Types of political parties include

Elitist/Cadre parties: they draw their membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a county.

Mass party: they draw their membership from all sections of the society.

Ideological party: this is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits as the form of basis.

Broker party: a political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of society, their main aim to reconcile the conflicting interest of the rich and the poor by carrying out policies of social justice for the interest of all.

Charismatic or personality party: a party formed or led by individuals with charisma

The functions of a political party;

Political mobilization and recruitment

Political education

Political representation

Interest aggregation

Political stability

Conflict management and political integration

Organization of government

Provision of alternative government and policies

Electoral competition and governance

Goal formation

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) electoral seats in the legislative council while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the many largely Nigerian legislative houses.

The Nigerian national development party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria in the year of 1923; it was led by Herbert Macaulay who is regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism. The Nigerian convention of Nigerian citizens (NCNC) was formed and renamed in 1944 and 1960 respectively; it was the first political party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria.

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties;

The political parties were without national outlook, they had regional support and ethnic loyalty

The parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues

Intraparty and interparty conflict in most cases polarized the political parties.

Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties.