**GST 203 ASSIGNMENT**

**BY**

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**19/SMS09/059**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY**

**TASK: Do a two page review of Chapter 7, "*Political Parties in Nigeria*" In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics**

According Herman Finer, a political party can be seen “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”. La Palombara 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 in coalition, the machinery of government”. From the above definitions, it can be inferred 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”.

The first modern electoral democracy was the United State of America and it was there that the first parties developed. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there was a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. In Nigeria, political parties developed from the growth of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalists movements in the 1920s. (The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934). Also, the constitutional development in Nigeria gave room for the emergence of political parties. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four (4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richard constitution of 1946 retained the four (4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses. The principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP (1923) led by Herbert Macaulay, also known as the father of nationalism. The NNDP also founded the newspaper Lagos Daily News in 1925. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed 1934, led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr. J C Vaughn. NCNC, the first party to be organized to seek total independence for Nigeria, was formed in 1944 and later renamed in 1960. In 1950 and 1951, the Action Group and the Northern People’s Congress were created.

The political parties were faced with various issues such as the lack of a national outlook, emphasis on personalities rather than system, intra party and inter party conflicts which served to polarize them, as well as party defection which weakened several parties.

Following the lifting of the ban on political parties in September 1978, about 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations; the NPN, NPP, GNPP, PRP and UPN were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. In the third republic, Nigeria had only two constitutionally recognized political parties (SDP and NRC) which were set up by the military. In the fourth republic, three political parties were registered in preparation for the fourth republic in 1988 and since the inception of fourth republic, numerous parties have emerged on Nigeria’s political scene.

By way of characteristics, political parties usually have the aim of capturing governmental power through constitutional means. In addition, they are expected to be nation-minded in aims and objectives. Political parties usually have manifestos and constitutions which guide their conduct. Finally, they always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization.

There are numerous types of political parties. The elitist\cadre parties draw membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country. Mass parties, on the other hand, draw membership from all sections of the society and therefore has large membership. In an Ideological party, political ideology or benefits form the bases of the party. The Broker party draws members from both the upper and lower classes of the society, and the charismatic\personality party is formed or led by individuals with charisma. It revolves around the personal qualities of the leader.

Political parties have the functions of political mobilization and recruitment, political education, political representation, interest aggregation, political stability, conflict management, organization of government, provision of alternative government and policies and electoral competition.

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal–democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinion.