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Course Code:Gst 203 Political parties are essential features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. Political parties are an important link between government and the people. In the political process of a given political system, the party is an essential political agency. The political party crops up in all aspects of politics. It is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. Politicians were the ones that developed the idea of political party at that time as a device to help themselves and like-minded friends get elected, but the party proved to have many other uses 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. By the 1820s, there were well organized parties, and the Democratic Party, which can trace its root back to that time, is the oldest political party in the world. Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of nationalist cons and sentiments and nationalists movement in the 1920s.

There are many definitions of political parties as political thinkers. 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. A political party performs so many tasks in the political process that it is difficult to establish a single definition. A party joins people together in a formally organized structure. A political party can be defined as a group of citizen, more or less organized, having some agreement in board principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

Some Characteristics of political parties are; political parties has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections and Political parties are guided by party constitution which direct the conduct of party officials and members within and outside government. We also have types of political parties which are;

Elitist/cadre parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from the highest echelons of social hierarchy in a country.

Mass parties: this is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.

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

Broker party: this is political party formed with its membership drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.

Charismatic or personality party: this is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Functions of political party are: 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.

Political parties in Nigeria.

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movement. The fulcrum for the emergence of parties’ formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigeria legislative houses.

Early political parties 1920-1950: The Nigerian national development party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The party was exclusively based in Lagos and had no national colouration. It won lol the three seats allocated to Lagos in the legislative council in the election of 1923,1928,1933. 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. The party was the major Nigerian party until 1950.

Political parties in Nigeria 1950-1966: According to ikelegbe, 2010; two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were the Actions Group(AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). The main aim of the AG was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region while the main purpose of the NPC party was combining ignorance, idleness, injustice in the northern region and control of the government in the North.

Problems that confronted pre-independence political parties are; The political parties were without national outlook. They had regional support and ethnic loyalty,The political parties placed much emphasis on personalities rather than issues, Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized the political parties and thereby splitting them into factions, Political party defection weakened or led to the collapse of political parties during this era.

Political parties in the second Republic in Nigeria.

The ban on politics was lifted in September,1978. About 53 political associations sought to contest the 1979 general elections. Five of these associations were registered by the federal Electoral commission which were The National party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian people’s party ( NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples Party(GNPP), the People Redemptions party(PRP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) A sixth party was registered to contest the 1983 election (NAP) Nigeria Advance party. Each party had different purpose.

Political parties in the Third Republic Nigeria.

Nigeria had a constitutional two party system for the first time because General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties where registered in accordance with the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria,1989. The two parties, the social Democratic Party(SDP) and the National Republican convention(NRC), where established by the government. The registration of SPD was approved by the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tony Anenih as it’s national chairman. The NRC on the other hand, was registered through the approval of the Armed Forces Ruling Council with Chief Tom Ikimi as it’s national chairman

Political parties in the fourth Republics.

Three 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. The names of the registered parties are the Alliance for Democracy(AD), All peoples party(APP) which in 2002 changed its name to All Nigeria people’s party(ANPP) and the People’s Democratic Party(PDP). These parties are organized and administered at the ward, local government area, state, Zonal and national levels and have registered offices at all levels. These political parties contested the 1998 and 1999 general elections.

The All Peoples party won nine gubernatorial elections in the north-west and middle-belt zone during the 1999 elections. It won several state Assembly and National Assembly seats. It aligned with AD to present a joint candidate during the 1999 presidential elections. The Peoples’ Democratic Party has its major aim maintaining and preserving the integrity, unity and sovereignty of Nigeria as one indivisible

Political entity. PDP won the presidential elections in 1999 and maintained its stronghold on the presidency for sixteen years. Since the inception of the fourth Republic, other political parties have been registered by INEC.