

Nigeria Labour Congress and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: Deconstructing the ideology of the Labour Party in Nigeria

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Abstract

Political parties are built on certain ideologies that drive their manifestos and guide their activities. Lack of precise ideology is a major challenge affecting political parties in Nigeria. In an attempt to have an ideologically driven political party that reflects the ethos of the labour union, the Nigeria Labour Congress created the Labour Party. This study examines the ideology of Labour Party in Nigeria; in connection to the issue of giving a voice to the working class; as well as promoting and defending social democratic principles. The study adopted the qualitative approach; data were sourced from secondary sources while the Elite Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study reveals that Nigeria's Labour Party is embroiled in ideological inconsistencies such as hijacks of the party activities by some money bags and a lack of internal democracy, which have effectively turned the party into a platform for losers of primary elections who promote the ideologies of their previous political parties, and created a crisis between the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Labour Party leadership. The study recommends, the prioritization of social justice, demonetizing of decision-making process in the party, making workers' welfare a major priority, focusing on free education

and health care and ensuring strict adherence to the party ideology by all members through the punishment of erring members.

Keywords: Party Ideology, Political Party, Labour Party, Democracy, Nigeria Labour Congress

Introduction

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) is not only renowned for its primary functions of agitating for and defending workers' welfare but is also involved in deliberate agitations for the attainment of democracy and its consolidation in Nigeria. This is reflected in its confrontations with past military governments; and its demands for the enthronement of democratic government in Nigeria. Since the attainment of democracy in 1999, the preoccupation of the union, also include deepening democratic values such as free and fair elections, ensuring equal and proper representations, and good governance, implementation of welfare policies; and defending human rights, and also serves as a platform for contesting elections through the formation of the Labour Party (Ahmed, Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2022).

Political parties are formed based on a set of ideologies that serve as the springboard for their visions, directions

and manifestos. It was on this premise that Nigeria's Labour Party was formed to drive the ideology of the NLC which relates to social democracy; and the promotion and defending of social democratic principles and ideals to achieve social justice, progress, people's democracy; and unity in Nigeria (Labour Party Manifesto, 2002). As noted in this research, extant literature has shown that Nigeria's Labour Party has become a credible opposition to the ruling party, confronting the exploitative nature of the government and expanding the electoral base (Nwoko, 2009; Tar 2009 & Manuwa 2023). This is notwithstanding the ideological contradictions and inconsistencies within the Labour Party. The current research aims to explore the ideology of the Labour Party in Nigeria by investigating the extent to which the party's activities have sustained its ideology. This is with the aim of repositioning the party as an agent of democratic consolidation.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, the qualitative design was adopted for the data analysis. Qualitative data are used for describing features that cannot be expressed in numerical terms (Cookey, 2009). The qualitative technique involves the collection of major narrative data (non-numerical data) on many variables over an extended period based on descriptive analysis (Beireenu-Nnabugwu, 2006). In line with this, the study, therefore, relied on secondary sources such as textbooks, newspapers, articles, magazines and the internet for source of data collection. The data collected were analyzed contextually to enhance the discussions, findings and recommendations of the study.

Literature review

Conceptual issues

Political party and party ideology

A Political Party is one of the cardinal institutions of democracy, it serves as an organization for the convergence of politicians of like minds as a group of representatives who agree to cooperate upon a certain principle (Burke, 1975). It is on this principle that strategies for vote canvassing, contesting and acquisition of political power and policies are built.

This principle can aptly be described as constituting the ideologies of political parties; which differ from one party to another. The concept of "ideology" originated during the late eighteenth century as a protest against religious superstition and monarchical authority. The initiator of the word "ideology" was the French scholar, Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), who perceived it as a study of the process of forming ideas or a science of ideas (Oni, 2023).

Ideologies of political parties are broadly conceived as set of beliefs, attitudes and values held by political parties (Kerlinger, 1984). It is what Martins (2015) calls the verbal image of the good society and its chief means of construction. According to the author, ideological differences are fundamentally about differences in valuations, both abstract and concrete. Oni (2023) submits that in the realm of political theory, the term "Ideology" is applied in two contexts: it is either described as a set of ideas that are accepted to be true by a particular group, party, or nation without any further examination or seen as a science of ideas which examines how different ideas are formed.

From the above conceptualizations, this study views political ideology as a set of

coordinated ideas that directs the affairs and visions of a political party. Political ideologies exist in various forms such as; social democracy, which is based on modern state welfare and redistribution function of the state, conservative ideology, which takes a stance against the government's involvement in the economy and the viewpoint that social degradation is as a result of social welfare policies reducing the responsibility that individuals should have over their own lives and liberal ideology which is based on the freedom of individual rights and government's existence to promote these rights (National Democratic Institute of International Affairs, 2008). Nigerian political parties largely suffer from wrong ideological inclinations which has led to what Omotola (2009) refers to as the shallowness of democratic root resulting from the replacement of political ideology with ethnic and religious sentiment. Apart from ethnic and religious sentiments replacing ideologies as noted by Omotola most Nigerian political parties are also devoid of sound ideologies due to the inordinate ambition and desperation of political elites who seek political power; by jumping from one political party to another without adherence to a unique political ideology.

Democratic consolidation

The concept of democratic consolidation is elusive; hence, it can be exploited to describe an illusionary democratic process that does not exist in some so-called democracies. This illusion has consequently brought about what Schedler (1998) described as "a state of conceptual disorder that more and more acts as a barrier to sub-disciplinary communication, theory-building, and accumulation of knowledge" (p. 3). On this note, the conceptual clarification of the term, democratic consolidation is necessary and viable.

Democratic consolidation has its roots in the concept of democracy. Democracy is a rule by the people; it connotes a people-oriented government in which representatives are elected by the majority of the people; based on legitimacy and applies to social relations of an egalitarian society (Beckam, 2021). It has also been noted that democracy can only thrive where there is transparency, accountability and strong institutions (Chukwudi, 2015). The 20th century has been the century of democratisation; which experienced four waves. The fourth wave which occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s included countries in Africa and Asia (Goethe,

2005). Most of the countries that adopted democracy during this period have experienced transitions of democratic governments, but the attainment of democratic consolidation is still debatable.

Democratic consolidation has been variously described by different scholars; Schedler (1997) describes it as the solidity, robustness, firmness and stabilization of the quality of democracy; while Chukwudi (2015); avers that it is a defence of people-oriented decisions, or defence of the powers of the people against authoritarianism.; Linz and Stepan (1996) refers to democratic consolidation as meeting the needs of the state in areas such as: civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus and economic society.

From the above, this study submits that democratic consolidation entails the deepening of democratic principles that transcend a political leader or regime change into having institutions that are amenable to democratic culture.

The formation of Labour Party ideology: How it began in Nigeria

The Nigerian Labour Party is an imitation of the British Labour Party, which was formed in order to represent the working

class; of one of the most industrialized countries of the world. The enormous increase of British industries in the nineteenth century impacted positively on the size of the working class, thereafter engendering socio-political consciousness, and creating labour organization. Incidentally, the Third Reform Act of 1884 extended and opened up political participation; which improved the electorate from 2.62 million to 4.38 million men. In 1900, the British Labour Party was formed (Vickers, 2004).

The British Labour Party emerged from a collection of political groups such as the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the Fabian main Marxist grouping; – a liberal influenced; and predominantly middle-class debating society; and the ethical Socialist; who worked closely with the trade union movement and whose main organization was the Independent Labour Party (ILP). These various groups incidentally; brought about confusion due to their different purposes of representations and ideological inclinations; but were united by their insistence on defending the workers. Twenty-nine members of the Labour Party were elected to the British parliament in 1906. Although they were not the majority, their independent and socialist

affiliations distinguished them from other parliamentarians. Reid (1995), submits that the Labour Party in its origins, instead of adopting a single unifying principle, adopted necessary and instantaneous ideas; members of the party did not seek to change the party system as to the Marxist ideologies which most labour union organizations adopt, rather they did specific reforms in the existing system. These include: a new guarantee of trade unionism, the nature and passage of the Trade Disputes Act in 1906, provision of a scheme for old age pensions, and a satisfactory plan of workmen's compensation, among others. Ideas on bills and motions to be initiated by the members of the labour party in the parliament are arrived at through interaction and resolutions reached at annual conferences and Trade Union Congress.

The British Labour Party has undergone reforms which have positioned it as a more radical and appealing alternative platform for electorates. It has produced several Prime Ministers. Tony Blair led the party to three consecutive victories in 1977, 2001 and 2005, which makes him, the first Prime Minister to have done that. Currently, the party forms the majority in the British Parliament and has

produced the current Prime Minister of Britain, Mr. Kier Starmer. The British Labour Party has it enshrined in its constitution that it is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we would achieve alone; thereby creating for every one of us the means to realize our true potentials, and a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of many not the few. A community where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe and where we live together freely, in the spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect. The party hopes to achieve its aims through trade unions and cooperative societies and also with voluntary organizations, consumer groups and other representative bodies. Each affiliated trade union shall pay an affiliation fee per member of £3.00, while each affiliated socialist society or other organizations shall pay an affiliation fee per member of £1.25 (Labour Party Rule Book, 2019).

The Nigerian Labour Party was created in 2002 and was formerly known as Party of Social Democracy. The party was registered by the Nigeria Labour Congress and its affiliates. It was built on the ideology of social democracy; with the

aim of promoting and defending social democratic principles and ideals. The party has following goals in its objectives: creation of wealth, creation of mass employment opportunities and continually expanding the same, developing and protecting the domestic industrial bases, encouraging healthy competition between foreign investments, ensuring improvement in the quality of life of every citizen, and eradicating poverty and ensuring prosperity and security for all. To achieve the above goals the party submits that it would ensure the activist developmental role of the state in the economy by being a major player in the strategic sectors of the economy, namely petroleum, energy, communications, rail and ports: water, health-care, education and research (Labour Party Manifesto, 2022). This distinguishes the Labour Party from other political parties who runs the economy on privatization policies, hinged on neo-liberal philosophy. The Labour Party emerged as one of the strongest political parties in Nigeria during the 2023 General elections, producing six Senators, thirty-four House of Representative members and one Governor.

Deconstructing the ideology of the Nigerian Labour Party

The Nigeria Labour Congress's renowned image as a vanguard for the attainment of democracy has been documented by various scholars (e.g; Sunmonu, 2006; Tar, 2009). However, the activities of the union especially with regard to the deepening of democracy through the formation of the Nigerian Labour Party has received little scholarly attention. This is so because since the fourth republic, Nigeria has experienced democratic governments, but democratization of various institutions has remained elusive. One of the institutions responsible for the deepening of democracy is the political party. Democracy depends on political parties not only to survive but also as fora for selection, participation and ideological development (Musa, Ibietan & Adedeji, 2020). However, the Nigerian Labour Party is embroiled in a contradiction of ideology and other intricate issues which have threatened its performance and existence. The analysis of these issues is carried out in the themes below:

Labour Party and the promotion of social democracy

Labour Party was built on the ideology of social democracy which has its roots in

the philosophy of socialism introduced by Karl Marx in the late 1800s. Marx's economic assessment of capitalism brought to light the exploitation of labour by industry owners to gain profits. Marx predicted that the class antagonism would reach an apogee and would result in a revolution by the working class and usher in socialism where the socio-economic system would be owned by the people. However, the reformed socialist crusaders brought reform within the capitalist system, which entails the implementation of socialist principles within the capitalist and democratic system (Frank, 1987). Therefore, instead of seeking to destroy the existing capitalist system the social democrats seek to reform it. It was on this premise that the Nigerian Labour Party submitted that the party shall ensure the activist developmental role of the state in the economy by being a major player in the strategic sectors of the economy, such as petroleum, energy, communications, rail and ports: water, healthcare, education and research. The party promised to engage in the phenomenon of globalization and liberalization by adopting a cautious and step-by step approach based on the country's national interest (Labour Party Manifesto, 2022).

The first state Governor who won an election under the Labour Party in Nigeria was Olusegun Mimiko of Ondo state in 2007. He served for two tenures (2009–2017) and ran his administration based on neo-liberal policies which contradict the ideology of social democracy as propagated by the Labour Party. His Administration left an internal debt of N53,159,719,891.01; and external Debt of N17,485,393,971.50;–Unpaid Salaries and Allowances; from August– to December 2016: N17,279,115,588.10, from January to February 2017: N6,911,663,629.24; Ondo State Pension Liabilities: N4,800,965,850.00; Ondo State Gratuity: N 15,043,537,042.47;– Unpaid Local Government salaries and allowances from August to December 2016: N9,320,568,782.41;– Unpaid Local government salaries and allowances from January to February 2017: N5,192,437,503.30; Local Government Pension Liabilities: N25,237,348,457.26, and Local Gratuities Liability: 2,965,598,590.61 (Olanipekun, 2017; Johnson, 2017). The Governor, whose party thrives on the principle of people's democracy that has workers' welfare as its main thrust, owed workers' salaries for six months, which is a contradiction.

Also, Mr. Peter Obi, the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party is a strong advocate of neo-liberal policies, which he propagated during the 2023 election campaigns where he openly supported the removal of fuel subsidies and total deregulation of the oil sector (Olufemi, 2023). Obi's ideological inclination opposes and contradicts the Labour Party's ideology of socialist democracy. The Labour Party presidential candidate also supported the devaluation of the naira without considering its dire consequences on the civil servants and the Citizenry. It may be difficult for him to comprehend the plight of the civil servants as he has never worked as a civil servant. His stances above appear to promote capitalism in line with the World Bank's recommendations. The Labour Party presidential candidate also used the Chatham House as a platform for political campaign (Yusuf, 2023) as similarly adopted by the People's Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress presidential candidates. Campaigning and negotiating a social contract with Nigerians on a foreign platform may imply that the incoming government's policies will not be derived from Nigeria's peculiar socio-economic challenges but externally packaged, because Chatham House is another institution of neo-colonialism.

Hence, the Chatham House campaign is an aberration for a party that claims to propagate social democracy.

The Labour Party presidential candidate also picked the expression of interest form of the party for a whopping sum of 30 million naira. The nomination form for the 2024 Edo off-season governorship election was also sold for the same amount. This amount is on the high side and can only be afforded by the money bags which is antithetical to the tenets of the social democracy which the Labour Party propagates. It is elitist to sell a nomination form of a social party for that amount. To show clearly that the Labour Party contradicts its social stands; during the 2024 Edo governorship election, there were calls by prospective contestants for a reduction in the cost of interest declaration form, but the party's National Publicity Secretary, urged the candidates to source for the money, saying that it will require hundreds of millions of naira to execute the governorship election (Adedipe & Zakariyau, 2024). At whose expense will these monies be sourced and spent? This is definitely another investment by the political elite to be reaped through the Labour Party.

One of the proponents of social democracy in Nigeria was Obafemi

Awolowo who was the Premier of the old Western region under the Action Group Party. He advocated that government is meant to ensure the well-being of the various groups in society and the goals of the state are the realization of the common good and the well-being of all. All socio-economic services must be distributed according to the principle of justice and equality (Awolowo, 1968). It was on this basis that Awolowo introduced free education in the western region when he was the Premier of the region. The Labour Party can borrow a leaf from Awolowo's social democracy, especially against the backdrop of ravaging poverty in Nigeria and the need for the state to promote social welfare.

Tussle over the control and ownership of the Party

Internal democracy is critical to the smooth running of a political party's activities. Political Parties are supposedly the bedrock of democratic growth, therefore, before they promote and sustain democracy generally, they are supposed to be a microcosm of what they promote. Internal democracy ensures that party executives; and representatives are chosen and decisions are made based on popular participation of its members in order to harmonize the interests of

individuals in the party (Okhaide, 2012). The significance includes to ensure that democratic practices are rooted in the political parties; to deter imposition of candidates by individuals and prevent the hijack of opposition by the few powerful members. Inappropriately, since the inception of the fourth republic, the lack of internal democracy remains the bane of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The problem was highlighted in studies such as Ejotubu (2018) which focused on the imposition of candidates, and Odigwe (2019) which studied internal democracy of Nigerian political parties.

The Labour Party in Nigeria was formed by the Nigeria Labour Congress and its affiliates such as Civil Society Organizations, Trade Union Congress and so on. The main objective is to get workers involved in politics and to create a working-class consciousness in the Nigerian politics. The goal of workers' involvement in politics was to advance and deepen the crux and exercise of democracy in order to sustain and advance a democratic culture that promotes prosperity for all, equity and higher welfare levels for Nigerians. Working-class consciousness is essentially political, involving class political interests. The individual worker

who has considerable trade union consciousness may yet not connect this consciousness with class struggles and state power (Nigeria Labour Congress Policy Document, 2007). One of the major sources of finance for the Labour Party particularly at its point of registration is the pool account derived from 10% of the salary of each worker in the Federal Civil Service, which makes the workers the major contributor to the party's funds.

The Labour Party in Nigeria despite its claims to be the workers' party is embroiled in the web of imposition of candidates and hijacks of party leadership. This is reflected in the tussle between the Julius Abure National Working Committee and the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC). Abure was accused of running the party alone by appointing executives at the ward, local government, state and national levels, and organizing party conventions in defiance to the Board of Trustees and without notifying INEC in adherence to INEC guidelines, (Okocha & Ezigbo, 2024). During this period Lamidi Apapa announced himself as the acting national chairman of the party and announced Saleh Lawan as the acting national secretary. This brought about a clash between the Lamidi led

faction and some state chairmen of the party. All the 36 state chairmen of the party disowned him and recognized Abure as the chairman of the party (Ejekwonyilo, 2023). Furthermore, in some political permutations, a vote of no confidence was passed on Abure and he was sacked and replaced by a transition committee under the NLC, (Jimoh, 2024).

The above scenario has been the back-and-forth movement over the leadership of the party. A party that is rooted in the working class and derives its funding from it should not be owned by individuals but by the people. It is the claim of ownership by the Nigerian political class over political parties over political parties that makes the parties to have 'fathers' and 'mothers' such as Baba this, and Mama that, who are parents of the party; consequently, this impedes internal democracy. Therefore, the executives of NLC and the Labour Party who should be working hand in hand to present better alternatives for Nigerians are instead involved in a clash of interests which is drifting the party from its original objectives. These tussle over ownership of the party has engendered multiple court cases which have led to the administration of the party through caretakers against the constitution of the

party. Labour party was formed to deepen democracy but in its internal affairs, democracy is lacking; which is a complex contradiction.

The party has also become a means of prebendalism and another institution for the diversion of money as typical with Nigerian political elites. During the 2023 general elections, the Labour Party was perceived as an alternative to the Elitist Party of All Progressive Congress and Peoples Democratic Party; hence, it was able to generate money from the diaspora community. The Labour Party national treasurer, Mrs Oluchi Oparah, accused Abure of misappropriating over 3 billion naira out of the 3.5 billion naira raised for 2023 campaigns. She also stated that, apart from the proceeds from the sale of forms in his home state of Edo, which were diverted to his private accounts, Mr. Abure only declared N55 million to her as treasurer, out of the over N3.5 billion raised, pocketing the rest for himself (Isuwaya, 2024). This show of indiscipline and financial misappropriation and the idea of seeing political parties as a business venture by the Nigerian political elites are continually being perpetuated (Adenuga, Adenuga & Oyerinde, 2021).

The Labour Party and the fluidity of Nigerian political elite

Since its formation, the Labour Party has been perceived as a platform for the acquisition of political power by some political elites who had hitherto contested and lost out in the primaries of their parties and were denied tickets in such parties. They are not perturbed if the political culture they have acquired do not align with the Labour Party ideology. The movement of political elites to the Labour Party to secure party tickets to contest elections, is best described by Pareto as- the circulation of elites; he submitted that the elite cycle is an infinite one in which one elite replaces another in their quest for political power. The desperate quest for political power by the Nigerian political elite creates scenarios in which they move from one party to the other without adherence to particular ideological inclination. This study describes these scenarios as the "fluidity of the Nigerian political elite". This fluidity is mostly triggered by selfish ambitions and the Nigerian Labour Party is not exempted from it.

The first Governor who won election under the Labour Party, Mr. Olusegun Mimiko, contested for Governorship primaries under the People's Democratic

Party but lost in the primaries; he left the party and joined the Labour Party and won the election on the platform of Labour Party. He governed Ondo state under the Labour Party for eight years, and formed Zenith Labour Party, a semblance of the Labour Party to contest for Ondo Central Senatorial District in the 2019 general elections but lost. He has now returned to his former party; the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Also, Peter Obi who was the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party decamped after losing the presidential ticket of the People's Democratic Party. Incidentally, after the 2023 elections, the Labour Party was hit by waves of decamping politicians who used the party to secure tickets to contest in elections and return to their original parties after winning an election under the Labour Party. For example, six Labour Party members of the Enugu State House of Assembly decamped to the PDP and a Senator decamped from the Labour Party (Adonu, 2024). The party's inconsistencies are also evident in its support to President Jonathan in 2015 via the endorsement of his bid for a second term in office as president. Also, in 2019, it endorsed President Buhari's second term bid. These scenarios lead to ideological contradictions in the Labour Party.

Further, the Labour Party got a new twist when Peter Obi and Alex Otti, Governor of Abia state wrote INEC recognizing that the party is in crisis; that the Julius Abure-led National Working Committee has been derecognized, as well as calling for the recognition of a 29-man caretaker committee to organize the party's National Congresses and Convention within 180 days. The committee is headed by Nenadi Usman (Olatunji, 2024). The appointment of Nenadi Esther Usman as the chairman of the committee has raised serious concerns among the members of the Labour Party who accused her of being a card-carrying member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Nenadi was a former minister of finance under the Obasanjo's administration and a former staunch PDP member. She claimed to have decamped from the PDP, this is however the fluidity of the Nigerian political elite; moving from one party to the other. Most of those who decamped to the Labour Party perceive it as a platform for the mere acquisition of political power; ideological inclination is not considered. Also, accepting a decamped member to direct the affairs of the party consequently hands over the party to a set of elites whose ideologies

are alien to the party. This is not only an ideological contradiction but also an avenue for planting moles by other opposition who exploit and manipulate these moles to destabilize the Labour Party.

**Theoretical framework and discussion:
Using the Elite Theory by Vilfredo Pareto
and Roberto Michel**

Classical elite theorists such as Vilfredo Pareto, Geatno Mosca, Roberto Michel, portray elites in various descriptions. However, since this study is focused on ideology and political party, the perceptions of Vilfredo Pareto and Roberto Michel are most suitable to analyze the contradictions in the Labour Party.

Pareto argues that society is always governed by a set of elites (Pareto 1968, p.36). He avers that elites are those people who possess in marked degree qualities of intelligence, character, capacity, of whatever kind. The apparent expression of Pareto is that regardless of any sentiments attached to any set of associations or gathering of people, there exists a class of people who belongs to the top of the hierarchy. We find at each grade level certain number of individuals, that consists of a class. In this class hierarchy, people who are in the class on

the top of the other classes are called, "elite" (Pareto, 1935).

Pareto concludes that elites and nonelites are not stable, they are subject to change. He asserted this after studying the structure and change of elites from historical perspective. Elites and nonelites are not stable, they are subject to change. New elites rise and take the old elite's place. This change is called the law of circulation of elites by Pareto. According to him, elites do not last, they live or take a position at a certain time (Pareto, 1935).

On the other hand, Michel argues that organizations imply the tendency to oligarchy. He did make this assertion by carefully studying the history of European working-class, socialist parties and organizations. According to him, in every group of people (that is; in each organization) there is an elite group which is the organized minority. For instance, in societies, there are political parties, in these organizations, rulers are always a small organized minority but the ruled is always a great unorganized majority. As a result, Michel proposed his famous law which is the 'iron law' of oligarchy. He thinks that the dominant class is a necessary phenomenon in every form of political regimes and oligarchy is

inevitable in societies. Michel calls the ruling class a 'dominant class. In line with Mosca, he has an organizational approach to the theory of the elite, and he argues that different qualities, superiorities and functions, such as military or economic qualities, characterize the members of the dominant class in different societies.

Michel (1962) noted the issues of bureaucratic rationalization within mass parties, in which a small and unrepresentative elite, gains control over the resources and means of communication of the majority. Michels thought that in any large organization, power-concentration in the hands of an oligarchy is inevitable. It is an organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electorates, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy (Michel, 1962:365).

The applicability of Pareto and Michel's theory is suitable for analyzing and deconstructing the ideological stance of the Labour Party; as the party which claimed to be socially democratic and owned by workers is being used as a means of achieving selfish political power by the political class whose ideological

inclination differs from the party. The Nigerian political elites by the nature of their enamour for political power perceive the Labour Party as a ground to perpetuate their selfish political ambitions with grave consequences for the party. Most of the contestants decamped to the Labour Party from other parties, hijacked the party structure with their money bags and used it to win elections; after the winning, some would decamp back to their original party, while others will begin to implement policies that are contradictory to the ideologies of the party. The elites circulate and replaces other elites that have decamped from the Labour Party; this is referred to as the inevitability of elitism. Furthermore, the founders of the Labour Party; have also been joined the class of the elites in the manner in which they run the party. This is evidenced in the high amount of interest forms and other money used in campaigns. These monies can only be afforded by money bags who perceive the party as a means of achieving their selfish interest.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the ideological stance of the Nigerian Labour Party as a party that seeks to promote social democracy, promote and defend social

democratic principles and ideals for state development; as encapsulated in the Labour Party manifesto. The party was created by the Nigeria Labour Congress and its affiliates with a different ideology from other existing parties for the deepening of democracy in Nigeria.

The current study found that the Labour Party is claimed to be owned by the Nigerian workers, while in reality, it has been captured by the Nigerian political elites. This is evident in the propagation of neo-liberal policies especially by cross carpeting elites whose original internal party ideologies contradicts the ideology of the Labour Party. Also, the party by implication supports unpopular and precarious policies of government. The cross-carpeting politicians see the Labour Party as a means of attaining political power; after which they decamp back to their erstwhile political party. The study found that the tickets of the Labour Party require several millions of naira, which can only be afforded by money bags who hijack the party and use it to achieve their selfish ambitions. The party has also been captured by political elites who claim the ownership of the party as against the Nigerian workers. This has led to ownership tussle between the Nigeria Labour Congress executives and Labour

Party executives. Also, issues of financial misappropriation have made the party a business venture like any typical Nigerian political party. The party is, therefore, embroiled in ideological contradictions which has impeded it from being a formidable opposition and a vanguard of the welfare of the Nigerian workers and Nigerians in general. With the current defective position of the party, it is difficult for it to institutionalize and deepen democracy in Nigeria.

The study recommends that the Labour Party members occupying political offices should be at the forefront of the party's social democracy ideology, and serve as an alternative to neo-liberal policies which have triggered the poverty rate in Nigeria. The party members should borrow a leaf from the UK Labour Party which started with 29 members and as the minority; were independent and socialist affiliation distinguished it from other parties. This means that the Labour Party in Nigeria, no matter how few its members are, should be distinguished ideologically from other parties in the country. The party must also be filled with members in the ranks of workers such as the Nigeria Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress. Worker's welfare should be part of the core values of the

party, and wherever members of the party are in office, they should guarantee free education and health care services to cushion the effects of precarious government policies. This will attract more workers to the party and by extension the masses which will make

the party a credible alternative to other parties. The Labour Party should have committees that monitors the activities of its erring members who fail to implement their ideologies and make them face disciplinary actions.

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