

## DEMOCRACY AND REVITALIZATION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria like many developing nations has experienced many democratic hitches. Since attaining independence, Nigeria has experienced a greater period of military rule than democratic governance; as a result every facet of the Nigerian Society has over the years reflected this reality of doing things the military way. The industrial relations system in Nigeria is not immune to the effects of the nation's bitter democratization process. As such the industrial relations system in Nigeria since the colonial era has evolved alongside, Nigeria's painstakingly difficult democratization process. This paper examines the synergy between democratization and industrial relations in Nigeria, raising pertinent issues, particularly at a time when the nation is being credited locally and internationally with having conducted its most credible electoral process.

The paper throws weight behind the principle that democratic rule provides a more healthy environment for a blossoming industrial relations system in Nigeria, particularly since government till date remains the single largest employer of labour. The paper advocates the internalization of core democratic values, structures and processes as one sure way of ensuring a vibrant industrial relations system in Nigeria.

Key-Words: Democracy, Military, Revitalization, Industrial Relations, Labour Reforms

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## INTRODUCTION

Democracy as a concept has been defined in various ways based on different perspectives and schools of thought. The word “democracy” originated from the Greek and literally means rule of the people. Democratic government is therefore believed to have originated from the Greek city states, where democratic ideals started and transferred to other societies (Birch, 1993). Some scholars have argued that while the Greek might have provided the idea that make up democracy, they did not provide a model. This could be attributed to the assumption and practices of the Greek which are different from those of modern states. In the Greek democracy, only a small minority of people are granted right of political participation which was achieved through direct vote on issues. These ideals were quite different from the modern democratic system which is based on majority rule and representative government (Yusufu, 2009) .

Ideally, democracy in its different hues and stripes, denotes the fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness and minority rights. The word democracy emerged out of the two words’ ‘demos’” (the people or the community) and ‘kratos’”(rule by power or authority) (Ward, 2010).

Democracy as a moral imperative is a permanent aspiration of human beings for freedom, for a better social and political order, one that is more humane and more egalitarian. It is a social and continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental human rights and civil liberties for all. Democracy as a political practice is a mode of governance based on the principles of popular sovereignty, the rule of law, accountability and participation (Sartori, 1962).

Oke(2010) postulates, democracy generally involves the opportunity for citizens to participate in decision making in the political process and it repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism, while extolling the consent of the governed and protecting human personality and values(Ake 1991). Democracy whether liberal, African or modern includes fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially periodic elections (Oke, 2005). Thus, the concept of democracy provides an adult citizen the opportunity to participate in decision making and in the political process in the state.

Democracy has been argued as the only form of government that is not essentially a rule by a rule of laws (EOD, 2010). In a democracy, the rule of law protects the rights of citizens, maintains order and limits the power of government. All citizens are equal under the law. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of their race, religion, ethnic group or gender. No one may be arrested, imprisoned or exiled arbitrarily. No one is above the law, not even a king or an elected president. The law is fairly, impartially and consistently enforced, by courts that are independent of the other branches of government.

Even though democracy does not connote good governance as (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010; Cheema and Maguire, 2004; Prah, 2007) contend, the elements of democratic governance like the rule of law, constitutionalism, human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of the press, transparent and periodic electoral process, majority rule and minority rights, equality among citizens, individual and collective freedom, separation of powers, civil liberties generally and universal adult suffrage among others, make democracy more attractive and legitimate than many moribund and existing systems of government which lack these vital ingredients. However, Nigeria's brand of democracy so far has not been able to deliver expected and sloganised dividends to the citizens of the country (Ogwu, 2002; Ojo, 2002; Omotola, 2007; Ozov, 2002). Thus, ideal Western democratic principles and practice are pitted against Nigeria's democratic system where the latter has emerged with large-scale distortions, disequilibrium, corruption, "godfatherism", election rigging, ballot-box snatching, ethnic unrest and agitation, religious intolerance and bigotry, poverty and underdevelopment and the subjugation and suppression of the will, consent and voice of the people by those entrusted with political leadership and power.

The advent of democratic government in Nigeria has revitalization impacts on Nigerian industrial relations through the amendment of aspects of labour laws. The Nigerian labour law contain different acts as the Labour/Employment Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Factories Acts, Trade Disputes Act and the Trade Union Act. A typical model of labour reform is the 2005 Trade Union Act, the Nigerian government ordered that in collective bargaining all registered trade unions must constitute an electoral college to elect members who will represent them in negotiations. The Nigerian government has therefore amended the most important step in the collective bargaining procedures, that is, the statutory recognition of trade unions as bargaining agents for the employees within the bargaining units in relation to terms and conditions of

employment (Akinwale, 2011). The Labour Movement in Nigeria has had a chequered history, surviving two instances of dissolution of its natural organs under military juntas and a third from a invasion and disruption of union meetings, seminars and other activities of congress and its components by security forces and a vicious anti-labour campaign by the state generally marked the military era of Nigerian polity(Oyelere, 2011).

The year 1999 was widely acclaimed as a year of economic recovery, social justice, freedom, and restoration of national pride in Nigeria, as the country moved towards democratization after about two decades of continuous military rule that left the nation's pariah state (Ukiwo, 2003). During 1999, a fundamental change in the system of governance was completed, after several failed attempts. However, despite the high hopes and expectations generated by democratic governance elsewhere, the dividend in Nigeria, twelve years on, had been rather slow and negligible on the fortunes of the labour movement.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A major element in most democratic process especially in Nigeria is the application of the spirit of capitalism through the infusion of the language of profit into social, economic or political plans of the government. Such is it that we hear of dividends of democracy or the dividends of female participation in politics, etc (Nkom, 2008). The introduction of capitalist predisposition reorganizes the class tendencies for political leaders(whether civilian or military) to exercise control and wield power in an unbalanced power relationship among other correlates in the state including labour.

This article evaluates these issues of government contentions with labour bodies from a conflict perspective. Its application bothers on government representing the capitalist and ruling class in politics, while labour which represents the mass of workers who sell their labour are relatively powerless except for their numerical strength in terms of industrial action. Government's power is vested by constitution to distribute authority, property and social status (Farnham&Pimlott, 1990). In Nigeria, the power to distribute labour authority resides in government to legislate labour statutes such as the Trade Union Act, Labour Act, Employee Compensation Act, etc. Since the workers' representatives are not normally brought into these legislative formulations, a considerable amount of conflicting values and competing interests not

taken into consideration become the sole source of conflict. The obvious power differentials highlight the ideologies of both parties- the ruling class (the government) and the proletariat (the labour unions) even in a democratic prescription.

As the ensuing and inevitable conflict created the need for the institutionalization of conflict for a harmonious industrial relations system; pluralism was hardly. Pluralism is also necessary to accommodate different and divergent pressure groups to enable social and political changes to take place constitutionally through concessions and compromises. However, Oyeonoru (2001) reasoned that pluralism was to reduce the antagonism inherent in Unitarianism which is a more tenable ideology of the ruling class. The contradiction is further enunciated when he argues that the control that comes with the institutionalization of conflict through pluralism may fail when the 'liberty' so fought for is extended to the working class even in a pluralist society. This paints the picture of the Nigerian industrial relations context adequately.

We note that the struggle to ease out the military from political power between 1983 and 1999 could not have been won without a sustained run of events by labour institutions such as ASUU, NUPENG, PENGASSAN, NLC etc. The scare of involving trade unions in politics may arise from its potential for a revolution which gingers more conflict even under democracy where labour finds it difficult to get its interests considered except through militancy (Onyeonoru, 2004).

### **THE GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM IN NIGERIA**

The end of the First World war according to Yusuf (2005) created the initial conditions that gave the impetus for developing a labour policy he points out that two events- the establishment of International Labour Organization (ILO) and the labour condition after the war, provided reasons for the adoption of a definite labour policy. This policy was meant to ensure efficient utilization of labour against the backdrop of international scrutiny of labour standards. Between the first and second world wars the colonial administration introduced actions towards concrete labour policy in their colonial administration introduced actions towards concrete labour policy in their colonies, this led to the granting of legal rights to unions in the colonies including Nigeria. According to Fajana(2006) the introduction of wage employment in the colonial public services, which became predominant during the laying of the railway track from Lagos to the hinterland

heralded the growth of industrial relations in Nigeria. He identified the following factors as responsible for the evolution of industrial relations in Nigeria:

- i. The growth of large organizations.
- ii. The activities of the state.
- iii. The role of the employers and their strategies in managing people at work.
- iv. The reactions of the workers and their organizations to the strategies and actions deployed by the state and employers.
- v. The counter- strategies of employers and workers.

### **DEMOCRACY AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

Scholars in the field of industrial relations have pertinently acknowledged the state as the third force in the industrial relations system. As a distinct industrial class emerged in society, the state's role shifted to legal regulation of hours and conditions of work. Subsequently as government assumed overall responsibility for the economy, the role of the state had expanded to include co-ordination of the activities of employers, employees, political parties, etc (Fajana, 2006). It goes without saying that there is a connection between political environment and industrial relations. According to Yusuf (2005) the content of democracy has a way of shaping the industrial relations system of a society. Economically democracy has been conceptualized as a system in which all aspects of economic activities; production, organization and distribution are democratized (economic democracy).

Flauders (1972), Kerr (1973), Damachi (1983) cited in Yusuf, 2005 have also demonstrated that an industrial relations system is healthier in a favourable political climate. For instance, in Britain industrialization came at a time when the philosophy of *laissez-faire* was the underlying principle guiding all economic activities. As a result this history of industrialization in Britain as well as other developed countries of the world, a large proportion of the citizenry constitutes the wage labour force. This factor becomes very relevant in the consideration of industrial relations practice especially in developing countries such as Nigeria when it is realized that in contrast to the situation described above the political culture is devoid of a definite philosophy while only a very minimal proportion of the total population constitutes the labour force.

Another important issue in the consideration of the interconnection between democracy and industrial relations practice is the involvement of the citizenry in the democratic process, in agreement with Jega and Wakili (2005) who conceptualize democracy as allowing for, a broad

participation of the people in choosing their leaders- who now, on their behalf, direct the affairs of the people. In other words the involvement of the greater majority of the people in the political process at the national level makes agitation and eventual realization of industrial democracy possible. According to Yusuf (2005) in the Nigerian case because the country has largely experienced military rule (28 years out of 51 years of its existence as a nation) there is a weak development of democratic culture in the country, this in line with the classical functionalist-sociology perspective on the inter-civilian (un-democratic) rule has had its consequences on the Nigerian industrial relations system (Fayoshin, 2007).

### **NIGERIAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE YEARS OF MILITARY RULE**

The Nigerian political landscape has been characterized by a series of military interventions since 1966. Nigeria gained independence from her colonial leaders on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960 and became a republic in 1963. However by January 15, 1966 the country witnessed her first military coup, and the Nigerian populace had their first taste of the totalitarian nature of the military regime. From that point thereof the nation's political environment would be characterized by suppression, repression and suspension of constitutional rule, arbitrariness and unilateralism. According to Yusuf (2005) over the years the first casualty of military coup is the trade union. As a prominent pressure group in the society the trade union has always been at the receiving end of harsh military policies. As the largest employer of labour government involvement in industrial relations in Nigeria is ubiquitous. Yusuf (2005) outline the following manifestations of such military involvement.

- (i) **Denial of Right of Unionism:** This development is most obvious during military rule. Men and Women in several government parastatals like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the paramilitary organizations like customs and immigration services are prevented from forming or belonging to a trade union.
- (ii) **Erosion of the Rule of Law:** Industrial relations thrive better in a democratic environment where the rule of law and other ingredients of democratic values are supreme. Not only is constitutional rule suspended but also more fundamental is flagrant disobedience of court judgements and obvious transgression of justice (Howard, 1991; Scheider, 1992 cited in Yusuf 2005).
- (iii) **Restrictions and Outright Ban of Trade Union Activities:** More than any other time, trade unions suffer from harsh and repressive government policies during military rule. Along with

other pressure groups in the society trade unions are prevented from holding rallies, embarking on strike, picketing members during strike and other legitimate activities of trade unionism. For instance in the recent experience during the military regimes of General Ibrahim Babaginda and Late General Sani Abacha; the government clamped down heavily on prominent trade unions in the country particularly those who embarked on strike to press for the actualization of the annulled June 12 presidential election. These include PENGASSAN, NUPENG, ASUU, and NBA (Banwo; Olorode, 1997; Cited in Yusuf, 2005).

- (iv) **Promulgation of Draconian Labour Legislations:** The military era in Nigeria witnessed the enactments of some draconian laws have negative impacts on the Nigerian Industrial relations system. For instance as a way of discouraging workers to embark on strike the ‘‘No work, no pay’’ clause was introduced into the Trade Dispute Act. This law stipulates that employees stand to forfeit their pay for the period they are on strike. In 1984 the Buhari- Idiagbon regime promulgated Decrees 16 and 17 which prevented workers seeking legal redress against retrenchment. Aside from setting up military tribunals to try cases that were essentially civilian in nature. Democratic organizations like NANS, NBA, NMA were also banned. In 1987 during the Babaginda regime ASUU was banned as were other prominent trade unions (Oluboye cited in Yusuf 2005).

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UNDER CIVIL RULE

A close preview of conditions before 1999 for Nigeria’s labour movement showed that a number of unions particularly railway men and teachers emerged and advanced the interests of wage labourers. The product was the formation of three major unions between 1912 and 1931. These are Nigerian Union of Teachers, Nigeria Civil Service Union and the Railway Workers Union. With other indigenous groups, they represent the struggle for political independence (Tar, 2009). The hard stance of unions reproduced some social relations which led to military intervention during the period between December and May 29, 1999 when the Fourth Republic took off.

The social relations between labour and industrial capitalism on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other can be seen in clearer relief by understanding the elements that bind them together especially as the nation entered a new era of civil politics. The evolution of labour movement in Nigeria was predicated largely on its colonial heritage. In as much as the evolution



of labour movements differ according to society, the nature of its evolution dictates the role it plays in the economy and such society. The militant stance or position has become more of a standard practice. It had remained combative at every point of interaction with management or government when job conditions are at stake. Tar (2009) reckons that in the context of Nigeria and indeed other developing societies, the petty-bourgeois-dominated state-often the dominant employer of labour emerges as a protagonist of capital, local and international, little concerned with the conditions of labour. Hence, in addition to workplace struggles, trade unions are known for participating actively in wider socio-economic and political struggles, in particular, in contesting unpopular state policies and making demands for democratic change.

Considering the need for an effective power relations in industrial relations since 1999, the role of labour seemed somewhat slow in terms of leveraging on the size (strength) it could muster for effective industrial action without the support or public sympathies or affiliations of other non members and civil society groups for mass action. Labour's relevance at the time of handover to civilian government by Gen Abdul-salam Abubakar was low as some of its representative bodies were only been de-proscribed. A revival was required to put them into shape. The sustained repression during the military era did not assuage as the civilian government felt the need to suppress unions tactically through legislation. It is interesting to observe a civilian administration in contention with a major civil organisation when both could work together for social development within a paradox of government objectives being to create employment and engage in production of consumer goods for the population while the unions are perpetually interested in keeping the jobs so created. By 2004, the combative stance of the NLC had become unbearable for President Obasanjo, a soldier by training and former military ruler.

In 2004, President Obasanjo accused the NLC of lawlessness on issues relating to industrial harmony in the country. The provisions of the TUAAs primarily emphasized the following:

- i. Voluntary membership of Trade Unions instead of obligatory status granted by previous Trade Union legislations.
- ii. No victimization of workers for refusing membership of such fraternity.
- iii. Minimize strikes as the incessant industrial actions in Nigeria have led to colossal loss of revenue to the Federal, State and Local Governments.

- iv. Removal of powers conferred on the Nigeria Labour Congress as the only federated trade union, by instituting another labour centre, the TUCN for senior staff.
- v. Restoration of some measure of industrial peace in the industrial environment of the country.

Industrial relations during the immediate post-military era can be said to have been characterized by series of crises, which in the main have inundated the body polity dramatically revealing the fragility of the state and the contradiction inherent in the political democratization that left foreign economic domination yet unaltered (Oyelere and Owoyemi, 2011). However the labour movement in Nigeria today could certainly be said to be more organized than what obtained in the 1960s and 1970s (Adewunmi, 2007).

According to Yusuf (2005) because the country had a longer period of military dictatorship than civil rule, the impact of the military is more pronounced. He also stressed that the country tends to be dominated by "military culture" even during civilian regime and he went ahead to outline several implications to this trend.

First democratic governments like the military are known to engage harassment, intimidation and arrest of labour leaders when they are on strike. Physical molestation and arrest of labour leaders and their followers during NLC- led nationwide strikes in recent years is a case in point. Secondly successive civilian governments in Nigeria have emerged in interference with trade union organizations in the country, by embarking on a decentralization policy meant to weaken the existing central labour union. The Labour Bill which was passed by the National Assembly in 2005 is a recent example.

Thirdly, in the current political dispensation the dominance of retired military officers (for instance the incumbent president) is obvious and profound. The effect on the industrial relations system is the intolerance of governments towards other principal actors, especially workers and their unions (Yusuf, 2005). However whatever be the shortcomings of the nations nascent democracy as evidenced in the industrial relation system and other spheres of national life, it must be stressed that democratic rule (civilian rule) provides a healthier environment for the process.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION AND REVITALIZATION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

The recent signing into law of the New Minimum Wage Bill 2011, and the passage of the bill recognizing the National Industrial Court as a Superior Court of the land among other

positive developments are pointers of the fact that the industrial relations system in Nigeria is slowly but properly taking its proper form in the scheme of things locally and internationally. Again the concluded 2011 general elections which was widely adjudged to be free and fair has indeed added more impetus to the ‘‘democratization drive’’, as Ali (2011) put it since Nigeria’s Independence; only two of its numerous elections have been described as being credible, free and fair by Nigerians and the international communities. The first was the 1992 general election which Chief M.K.O Abiola won and the second was concluded in April 2011 by the Independent National Electoral Commission under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega in which the incumbent President Jonathan Goodluck was declared’’ the winner’’.

According to Yusuf (2005) no matter what similarities may be observed in the attitudes of both military and civilian governments towards industrial relations. It must be emphasized that not only does the rule of law thrive in democracy, but also that democratic rule serves to limit arbitrary actions on the part of management, employer or government.

The advent of democratic rule in Nigeria has left some impacts on the industrial relations system in the country. However, due to the fact that the country had a longer period of military dictatorship than civil rule, the impact of the military is more pronounced. More importantly, the country tends to be dominated by military culture even during civilian regime. The implication of this trend to be the nation’s industrial relations system is that democratic regimes in Nigeria exhibit similar pattern of attitude to industrial relations (Yusufu, 2009).

Industrial relations during the immediate post-military era can be said to have been characterized by series of crises which in the main, have inundated the body polity, dramatically revealing the fragility of the state and the contradictions inherent in the political democratization that left foreign economic domination yet unaltered(Oyelere, 2011). Today, the labour movement in Nigeria could certainly be said to be more organized than what obtained in the 1960’s and 1970’s (Adewunmi, 2007).

The Nigeria Labour Congress has made significant impact on the nature, structure and implementation of government programmes. Although the political role of unions continues to increase in sphere, their impact diminished under Obasanjo administration. Events evolving since 2004 in industrial relations reveal that the state in democratic dispensation is still coercive. In June 2004, the government announced its plan to decentrate the labour union and remove the oil subsidy. Consequently, a bill to amend the Trade Union Act was sent to the National

Assembly. The bill sought to proscribe the Nigeria Labour Congress and fragment the trade union; make strike action impossible, make recognition difficult, and, freeze union's sources of finance (Oyelere, 2011). Consequent to the immediate action taken by the Nigeria Labour Congress with support from the ILO, the National Assembly rewarded the bill, and passed a law, which was slightly different from what the executive has proposed. However, the executives action, despite earlier setting up a setting up a stakeholders Committee, including the ILO, to review the industrial and labour relations laws in the country, revealed the government's repressive and draconian stand in industrial and labour relations. Arguably this may not affect the struggle by labour due mainly to the prevailing problem in the economy. The fact however, is that while these problems lead to increasing demand for labour's political role, their clout will continue to diminish (Oyelere, 2011; Akinwale, 2011).

The enactment of the Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 is just one out of the events that have occurred in the history of labour management relation in Nigeria. Prior to the enactment of this Act, that necessitated the promulgation of the New Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 (Abu, 2007).

The federal government through empowerment and job creation has committed itself to creating several million jobs. This is central to the objective of reducing poverty. In addition, the matter is also being approached through economic empowerment schemes, which enable people to take advantage of opportunities offered through a system of incentives that encourages hard work and loathes corruption. Also, by providing assistance to vulnerable groups, government hopes to generate self-employment and create wealth. The activities of National Poverty Eradication Programme and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency are important examples. The operational challenges of these schemes including that of reaching a vast and somewhat infinite population, have clearly limited the effectiveness of efforts in this area.

The pension reform through social security is a major issue under this heading, the contributory pension scheme, in a sense, raises the commitment of workers in the financing of pensions. It also reduces the risk of the government-employer. It again imposes high individual responsibility on the worker. The National Health Insurance Scheme is also another social security element of the government and the reform agenda.

Service delivery has to do with the policy on changing the way government business is done to emphasize more efficient delivery of essential services. This policy aims at target setting for tasks and their accomplishment and productivity. Productivity issues are appreciated as central to labour. It is pertinent to add that as much as productivity is considered desirable, it should be borne in mind that increase in productivity requires a complex of factors; motivation of workers being one of them.

### **THE NEED FOR FURTHER REVITALIZATION OF LABOUR REFORMS IN NIGERIA**

It has always been argued that each of the components of the Nigerian Labour Law requires major and detailed review, and therefore signing out the Trade Union Act for patchy amendments is inadequate. The year 2005 witnessed significant changes to Nigeria labour law and system of industrial relations. In that year, the government introduced legislative reforms aimed at reducing state interference in the regulation of industrial relations by democratizing labour and complying with the ILO requirements. The changes would appear to have given more impetus to collective bargaining as a crucial mechanism in the determination of wages and other terms and conditions of employment of workers. However, there are other areas where the law seems to have rolled back worker's rights( Okene, 2011).

Section 2 of the 2005 Trade Union Act provides that trade union membership is voluntary and no employee shall be forced to grow any trade union or be victimized for refusing to join. Contrary to the automatically compulsory membership clause in the earlier Acts, the 2005 Act provides for voluntary trade union membership though not putting restriction on trade union membership contravenes convention 87 of the ILO, but this can be attributed to government's desire to regulate activities in the Nigerian industries (Akinwale, 2011).

The Amendment Act placed restrictions on strikes and lock-outs and empowered the minister of law and productivity to register or de-register any labour organization. The minister being a political appointee of the president is duty bound to listen to the dictates from the president and will not be in a position to deal with the labour issues dispassionately and devoid of any emotions (Abu, 2007). Since the labour unions are no longer affiliated to one central labour organization, there is the tendency to envisage the problem of leadership and factionalism.

The Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 will definitely lead to multiple unionism and the future mushroom unions.

The Trade Union (Amendment) Act of 2005 has now widened the negotiation table and scope of collective bargaining since it has allowed the newly registered Federation of Trade Unions as well as other central labour organization to co-exist with the Nigerian Labour Congress. Since it is no longer compulsory to join trade unions, once this happens their check-off dues are automatically stopped. There are possibilities of regular inter-unions crises and inter-federation of union feuds in the industrial relations practice in Nigeria. Moreover, the modalities for constituting an electoral college were not specified. This gap may generate more industrial conflicts and open up opportunities for the state or employers to manipulate criteria for the selection of representatives for negotiations. Labour reform has been criticized in this regard (Akinwale, 2011).

In the light of numerous inadequacies found in the Trade Union (Amendment) Act 2005, it has become imperative to engage in more genuine labour reforms in Nigeria. The new reforms should be able to visit all the components of the Nigerian labour law and make them to fall in line with ILO standards. From all indications, the last labour reform was an attempt to deregister the NLC, reduce its powers and control on labour. It was also aimed at checking the rising profile of labour as a stiff opposition to the Federal Government, especially, when it takes any unpopular labour policies. A more genuine reform of the Nigerian workers, trade unions, and the Nigerian industrial relations practice.

## CONCLUSION

It has been observed that several factors influenced industrial relations practice, most importantly the political factor. While observing that the military provides an unhealthy environment for the thriving of industrial relations, it must be stressed that democratic rule provides a healthier environment for the thriving of industrial relations; democratic rule provides a healthier environment for the process. For instance, while the rule is completely abolished under the military, the same tenet thrives in democracy. Many industrial relations issues have been resolved by the court in the current political dispensation. Examples of this include the court resolution of the nation-wide strike organized by the NLC in December, 2004 and several other court injunctions restraining government from tampering with the employment of workers. Democratic rule serves to limit arbitrary actions on the part of management, employer or government. No doubt, the democratic setting provides a more conducive environment for the effective operation of the industrial relations system. It is hoped that the current democratic dispensation in the country will embark on further reform of the labour laws in line with ILO standards to the benefit of all the actors in the industrial relations system.

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