Party Citizen's Perception on Leaders Selection & Internal Party Democracy: The Case of National Democratic Congress in Ghana's Fourth Republic

Matthew Boadie Ampong[*]

Higher School of Economics Teaching Assistant, Master Candidate National Research University Moscow Russia
National Research University - Higher School of Economics Department of Public Policy, Myasnitskaya Street 20, Moscow, Russia

*Corresponding author
Matthew Boadie Ampong

Abstract: Democracy as a system of government has warmly been accepted by many scholars, leaders and inhabitants of today's contemporary world. Ghana's successes in its democracy are highly recommendable throughout Africa and the world. However, Ghana's democratic success cannot be emphasized without taking into consideration the contribution of the various political parties in the country. This research focused on the criteria for selecting party leaders as a challenge to internal party democracy within the National Democratic Congress in Ghana since the fourth republic. Using the stratified sampling technique, a nationwide survey with eligible voters of the party were surveyed using questionnaires. Despite party leadership outlined as a challenge, it can confidently be concluded that the level of leadership selection as an internal party democracy within the National Democratic Congress has grown since Ghana's fourth republic and can be compared with other political parties in Ghana per the findings of this study.

Keywords: Democracy; Internal Party Democracy; Leaders Selection; Political Parties, National Democratic Congress.

INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance has been embraced by many countries of the world today. It is posited by Churchill in 1963 that democracy is the worst system of governance in the absence of all other systems of government [1]. Democracy therefore refers to a type of government in which the electorate vote to select their leaders to represent and be accountable to them. Democracy has many forms; direct democracy, indirect democracy, representative democracy, participatory democracy, liberal democracy etc. But, in contemporary democracy, due to population increases, time factor and complicated nature of issues, representative democracy has been the dominant type as political parties are it main drivers.

Political parties are significant players in contemporary democracy. Political parties develop and promote policy alternatives and present to voters with electoral alternatives [2]. They are human agencies that articulate popular preferences, make political choices and control the policy making mechanisms of government [3]. For these functions to be achieved, there is the need for political parties to ensure that its members, leaders and activist. They should be given the chance to actively participate in the party processes such as decision making [4] especially in the selection of party leaders and candidates. This is possible when political parties are internally democratic.

Internal party democracy links ordinary party citizens to government, contributes to the stability and legitimacy for political parties compete for power [2]. It also encourages culture of democratic discussions on critical issue, promote collective decision making, creates legitimate conflict resolution mechanisms, and ensures party unity [5]. Given the facts above, concerns have been raised by many over the low level of internal democracy among political parties. At the institute of International Politics and Conflict Studies Conference, Anja Osei [6] emphasized that, "many political parties in Africa do not conform to the ideal of effective mass parties which perform democracy-promoting functions such as candidate nomination, electoral mobilization, and interest aggregation." In Ghana, political parties are not immune to the deficits of internal democracy raised.

The essence of internal party democracy in political parties cannot be over emphasized especially in new democracies. Joseph [7] highlighted the importance of internal democracy as, "it facilitates citizen-self rules, and permits the broadest deliberation in determining policy preferences and constitutionally guaranteeing all freedoms indispensable for open

political competition. By this party members are allowed to democratically decide on who should be entrusted with party leadership. Yet, party elites establish control over party organizations and structures at the detriment of members and activists [8]. According to Hopkin [9], contemporary political parties have ignored accepted practices of mass party. Instead, parties have transmuted into internal cartels manipulated by career professionals [10]. It is due to the above trepidations that this article sought to assess the party leader selection mechanism of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to verify of it conform to the general internal democratic principles as stated above. The research sought to test the following hypothesis: Poor selection of party leaders and candidates is a challenge to internal party democracy within the NDC. By this, the views of the party citizens (members of NDC), were solicited for the intention of the research.

THEORIZING INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY

There is a continuity of debate on the issues of internal democracy within political parties. Many scholars have express their contestations on why democracy within political parties are relevant or irrelevant. Robert Michel [11] used the ironic law of oligarchy to develop an argumentation on the preposition that political parties are intrinsically not democratic. They adopt oligarchic principles where party elite manipulate and monopolise the party system to the detriment of ordinary members of the party. This action and inaction do not make political parties internally democratic since it only end up promoting the interest of the elites of the party as that of the party members is left to shamble. Political parties that are oligarchic in character centralise and exclude its mass members from issues such decision making especially in selecting party leaders and candidates, hence, are said not to be democratic internally. However, there are proponent that refute the debate that political parties are not internally democratic. Scholars of this thought believe that political parties use oligarchic principles in order to achieve a democratic ends within their party activities and mechanisms [12]. These two divide propositions present a contestation that make use of the very normative understanding of internal democracy within a political party in the next sub section.

Internal-Party Democracy: Analysing the Intellectual Contestation

Studies that are empirically conducted on political parties in state such as Australia [13], Switzerland [14] and the United Kingdom [15] provide evidence that are deficits to internal democracy within political parties regardless of its minimal evidences that appears to be positive. It has been proven that internal democracy with political parties weakens party interrelations and generates party dissention. These occurrences distort the effectiveness of the political

party since it calls for the utilisation of time and energy to resolving domestic struggle and skirmishes at the detriment of the main priorities of electoral and governmental success. By this, oligarchy becomes an alluring alternative that leads to the achievement party unity [16].

In Africa, political parties adopt oligarchic mechanisms in their practices than the space given to the adoption of democratic principles in their everyday activities. Many of Africa's political parties do not have a recorded membership and even they do, there is no accuracy. This is because African electorate often times do not give their membership to one political party, hence, there are fluctuations o the level of trust and loyalty of party members. Electorate preferably like to pledge their fidelity to specific leaders in the political parties that they support than to the whole party as an institution. From observations, the infidelity of party members promotes political tourism since supporters do not owe any institutional loyalty to their respective political parties.

However, there are other proponent that intellectually contest for the essence and need for internal democracy within political parties. To them they view internal party democracy as an essential institutional mechanism since it gives room for citizen inclusiveness in decision making and leadership selection. They place high premium on citizen engagement in political processes. They argue that internal democracy within political parties tie up the relation between citizens and government which in the long run makes citizens active participants.

Another democratic theory (deliberative) has become prominent with the position that democracy produces a cogitation which is rational, free and not unequal to all [17]. They believe that the practice of democracy is methodological not end result. In its methodology, there is an inculcation of participation and representation which helps to attain an ends. All the aforementioned theories give a presentation of some existing normative grounds for us to better our understanding of the concept of internal democracy in party politics. They can absolutely be challenged and contested to approve and disprove their existing claims in today's political manifestations.

Empirically, internal democracy research on political parties emphasized on utilitarianism to provide a causal understanding that is connected to its mechanisms and measurable indicators. Preceding empirical findings were not clear on the need for political parties to be democratic within it structures as they strive to ensure democracy in the broader space. Scholars like Scarrow [2], observed that leaders with capabilities appealing to party members are likely to be chosen by political parties who practice democracy

internally. This create an equal platform to ensure transparency and contender selection [15].

In the African perspective, political parties are mostly seen as public drivers with the aim of controlling and assuming government positions. Parties in Ghana are not exception to this in its present day democratic consolidation. For political parties in African and Ghana to be precise, be successful in their practice of internal democracy, there is the need for a normative orientation that will change their conceptual understanding. With this, much attention should be paid to the inculcation of democratic cultures such as the full involvement of party members in the activities of their respective political parties. This and other relevant civic education will strengthen the internal democracy of political parties.

Leadership Selection and Internal Party Democracy
Literatures specify that poor leadership selection mechanisms by political parties affect them in terms of coordination, representation and internal democracy in general [18]. Rahat and Hazan [19] developed a mechanism for assessing and questioning the issue of choosing poor leaders and candidates to assume leadership positions. They also looked at the latent and prospective effect of this mechanism on internal party democracy. Rahat and Hazan observed that there are four ways to the selection of poor leaders for a political party. They include;

- The candidature – that is who qualify to contest?
- The "selectorate"- that is responsible for nominating a candidate?
- The vote pattern – that is do people vote? If that is yes, then what are the rules that governing voting behaviour?
- Decentralization – are the decisions concerning the selection mechanisms made locally or from the centre?

Also, Scholars like Lundell [20], in analysing leadership and candidate selection determinants, argued that the size of a political party and its regional space are the protuberant factors which may lead to poor leadership and candidate selection. Lundell, in this case did not consider other issues acknowledged in the writing bank such as the philosophy of political party, the kind of ballot mechanism used and the effective number of parties. Despite the great contribution made by the writing of Lundell, his work also faced some deficits. The most of it is the inability to analyse the problem as a result of a limited available information. Also Indriðason and Kristinsson [21], came out with various leadership and candidate selection methods including closed, partially and open primaries. A closed primary include and exclude the documented members and ordinary party supporters from electing party leaders respectively. A partial primary only allows people who have official given their support to take part

in voting. And the open primary allows any person who meet the voting criteria to take part in elections. To them, closed and partial affect internal party democracy and argued for open primaries.

With regards to internal party democracy, the literature revealed that poor leadership and candidate selection through means such as closed primaries, intimidation, handpicking, small electorate (delegate) and exclusion of party's lower members all hinder internal party democracy.

METHODOLOGY
The research used two categories of data namely, the primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from the issuing of questionnaire to respondent in a survey conducted in Ghana. Whiles the secondary data was also retrieved from areas such as journals, electronic media, party reports and books. The targeted population of for the research were the party members of the NDC who are by all constitutional standard eligible to vote and participate in party activities. Owing to the financial difficulties and limitation of time, a sample size of one thousand (1000) respondents were chosen.

The study employed stratified sampling technique. With this method, data was collected from NDC eligible voters in all ten (10) regions of Ghana namely; Ashanti Region (AR), Brong - Ahafo Region (BR), Central Region (CR), Eastern Region (ER), Greater - Accra Region (GR), Northern Region (NR), Upper East Regions (UE), Upper West Region (UW), Volter Region (VR), and Western Region (WR). In each region, hundred (100) party members were interviewed randomly including both men and women as we moved along. The randomization was done at the various constituencies in each region which is electorally considered as the voter bank of the NDC. This was repeated in all the regions until the sample size was attained. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data received from the field survey.

As posited by Punch [22], research is about gathering data from persons. It becomes the responsibility of the researcher to anticipate the ethical issues with respect to the study [23]. This was inculcated into this research. A letter was written to the Office of the Electoral Commission, Ghana to request for all constituencies and electoral areas in the country. This made it easier to locate the strong holds of the NDC in all ten (10) regions of the country. In each regions, respondent were informed about the need and essence of the research. They were also made aware that all their responses will only be used for academic purposes and also act as a way of shaping the NDC that they give their support in checking internal democratic principles. To avoid issues related to anonymity, the respondent were made to understand that their

responses to the questions asked will be treated with confidentially. In situations where the respondent feels uncomfortable to answer a question, they have every right not to give any feedback.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS
Demographic findings of the study

The study revealed that majority of the respondents were females with 53% as against 47% for males. The findings cannot be attributed to researchers' biases but rather may be due to the timing during which many men were supposed to be away as compared to women. Also, the educational status of respondents revealed that most of them representing a percentage of 40 had attained tertiary education as 34% were Junior High School / Senior High School levers with another sect of 5% and 9% being Primary, and Form Four and O' Level levers respectively. It was also noted that a proportion of respondents forming 12% had no formal education. This did not have any negative impacts on the findings since questions and interviews were conducted in languages the respondents were familiar with. The higher level of literacy in the various regions was very refreshing because it facilitated the data collection processes. Many people understood questions asked and as such answered accordingly.

Research findings

The selection of party leaders can be streamlined resulting in good selection processes or haphazard which can be described as poor. The study therefore examined the various mechanism, bodies that is use to select and nominate party leaders within the National Democratic Congress respectively. It also analysed the factors that influence the rationale or decision for people to vote or give their support to a particular party candidate. The research findings or results are discussed as follows:

Mechanisms for the Selection of Party Leaders

The mechanism through which leaders are selected is a determining factor for one to say a process is poor or otherwise. In the knowledge community, a bank of literatures indicate that poor leadership and candidate selection mechanism used affect political party in terms of party organization, representation and internal democracy in general [18]. It was recognized that there were three main mechanisms for the selection of leaders or executives in the NDC which comprised of; periodic elections, appointment and self-imposition. A greater majority of respondents forming 81% stated that periodic elections are the ultimate criteria for selecting party office holders. Rahat and Hazan [19], have identified that voting systems tend to be common among inclusive electorates. Appointment and self-imposition of party leaders were a minority factors used in selecting their leaders per respondents contacted with 13.7% and 4.9% respectively. Also, 0.4% of the respondent had no knowledge or decide not respond to the question asked for personal reasons. This can be that those people had less knowledge concerning democracy and as such could not fully ascertain the way it is practiced.
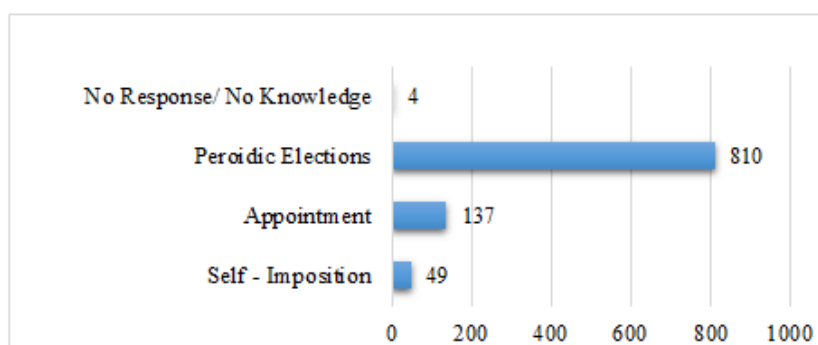

Fig-1: Mechanisms for selecting of Party Leaders at the National Level
Source: Field survey; January, 2018.

Bodies that Nominate a Presidential Candidate in the NDC

The NDC party was seen to be well- structured at the national level, through to the regional levels down to the local levels. It was established that respondents know more about people who nominate or better still elect a presidential candidate for general elections. Majority of respondents constituting 83.6% indicated that it is the National Executives who select the Presidential candidate to represent the party during national elections. Although others had contrary views to this, they were on the minority with a combined percentage of 8.9% and 6.8% of regional executives and ordinary party members respectively. Also, 0.7% of the respondents were unable to provide any response to the question asked. This was due inadequate knowledge on the issue under discussion or personal reasons. It must be emphasized that one needs to be part of the party before he or she can get involved in the internal affairs of the NDC especially in the leadership selection process.
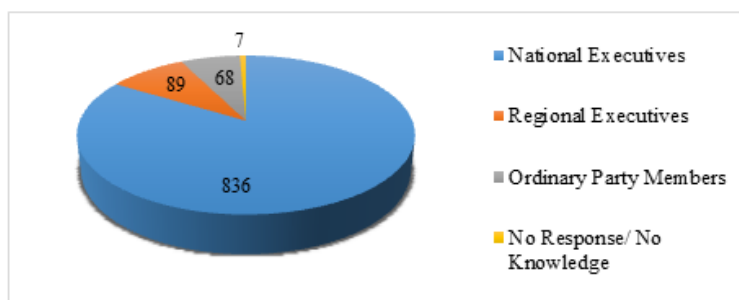
Fig-2: Bodies that Nominate a Presidential Candidate in NDC
Source: Field survey; January, 2018.

Factors that Influence Respondents' Decision to Vote for a Candidate

Other respondents were, however, quick to add that they considered certain factors such as educational background, popularity and potentials prior to voting for a candidate who vies for any portfolio or position in the NDC. The findings indicated that some respondents consider candidates' educational status before voting for them with 28.7% whilst popularity and people potential as people selection criteria also, comprised 39.2% and 32.1% respectively (Figure-3). This means that in the NDC, voters elect candidates based on their popularity than their potentials as competent enough to lead the party. In analysing leadership and candidate selection determinants per these factors explain a selection processes that may lead to poor leadership as a result of bad candidate selection [20].
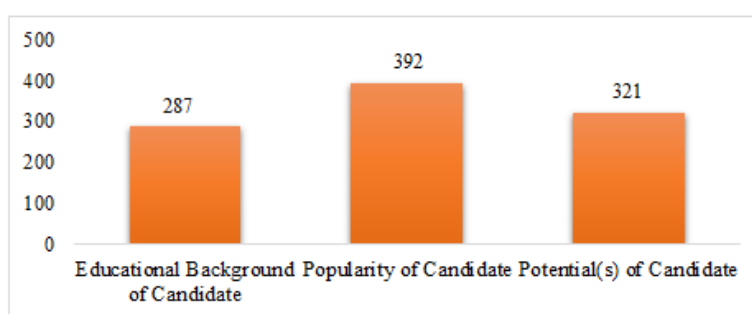

Fig-3: Factors that Influence Respondent's Decision to Vote for a Candidate
Source: Field survey; January, 2018

Table- 1: Regional Response Received from the Survey

Regions / Indicators	AR	BR	CR	ES	GR	NR	UE	UW	VR	WR	Total
Mechanism for selecting party leaders within the NDC											
Self-Imposition	4	5	4	6	3	5	4	8	5	5	**49**
Appointment	18	13	10	20	11	13	9	25	8	10	**137**
Periodic Election	78	82	86	73	86	80	86	67	87	85	**810**
Bodies that nominate a presidential candidate											
National Executives	86	77	93	78	95	92	76	70	82	87	**836**
Regional Executives	9	3	6	15	5	5	23	16	3	4	**89**
Ordinary Party Members	5	15	1	7	0	3	1	14	13	9	**68**
Factors that influence respondents' decision to vote for a party candidate											
Educational Background	17	13	50	17	39	31	35	22	35	28	**287**
Popularity of Candidate	62	33	32	39	49	20	35	41	46	35	**392**
Potential(s) of Candidate	21	54	18	44	12	49	30	37	19	37	**321**

Source: Field survey; January, 2018. Note: the total number of responses in the table do not tally the one thousand respondent interview. This is as a result of decision of some respondents not to give any feedback or no knowledge on some questions asked.

Summary of all Regional Response Received from the Survey

The table below shows the various responses or feedbacks received from respondents during the conduction of the nation-wide survey on how the Selection of leaders and candidate in the NDC is a challenge to the party's internal democracy. The survey was conducted in all the ten (10) regional capitals of Ghana. The summary comprises of all the views of respondent regardless of their gender, religion occupation or educational status. The result is as shown in table 1.

CONCLUSIONS

The study explored party leadership selection as a challenge to internal party democracy in the National Democratic Congress. The summary of the findings herein presented is based on the results from the data collected, analysed and interpreted. According to the study, it was recognized that there were three main mechanisms for selection of leaders in the NDC which comprised self-imposition, appointment, and periodic elections. The most important among them was voting periodically for candidates who vie for several party portfolios. This per the survey was a very good mechanism for determining leaders since people have choices and are not forced to vote for candidates they dislike. As genuinely noted the party is becoming more democratic by allowing more people to have a say in how decisions are taken and leaders are selected, as it can be compared to other political competitors in Ghana and other political parties in Africa. The National Democratic Congress was seen as an open party where any member can rise from the grass root to the top since it is increasingly becoming more democratic. Drawing on the results from the survey, it can be concluded that internal party democracy within the National Democratic Congress has grown and has embrace the democratic footprint in selecting its leaders since Ghana's fourth republic.

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