

Intra-Party Democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic: the case of the New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress

Emmanuel Debrah¹

Abstract

It is argued that political parties must be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within society. This article examines the extent to which the two leading Ghanaian political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) that have alternated power, nurtured and promoted democratic practices within their internal affairs. While the parties have democratized channels for decision-making and choosing of leaders and candidates, the institutionalization of patron-client relationships has encouraged elite control, violence and stifled grassroots inclusion, access to information, fair competition and party cohesion. A multifaceted approach including the adoption of deliberative and decentralized decision-making, the mass-voting and vertical accountability would neutralize patronage tendencies for effective intra-party democracy.

Keywords: Intra-party democracy; leadership and candidate selection; patronage politics; political parties; Ghana

1. Introduction

Ghana made a successful transition from authoritarian to democratic rule in 1992. Since then, democratic governance has been firmly entrenched. Of the forces that have shaped Ghana's democracy, political parties have been acknowledged (Debrah and Gyimah-Boadi, 2005). They have not only offered the voters choices between competing programs at elections but also provided cohesion to the legislature. The nascent political parties have been responsible for the mobilization and political education of the voters in the six general elections. Despite these, there is growing cynicism against the parties.

¹ Chair, Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.
E-mail: edebrah2001@yahoo.co.uk

Most media reports have alleged that patrimonial practices have been entrenched in the parties' organizations to the extent that they have shaped the course of decision-making. The commentators have argued that the growing incidence of political corruption in the country reflects patronage within the ruling party. Yet, many scholars have exposed the evils of neopatrimonialism and its self-destructive concomitants on the survival of Africa's democracy (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997). Nugent (2012) and Lindberg (2003) have noted that "big men and small boys" politics and inter-party conflicts could obstruct Ghana's democratic progress. Have these developments overshadowed the emergence of democracy within the parties?

Yet democratic theorists maintain that parties' internal functioning must conform to democratic practices because the quality of democracy in a state mirrors internal behaviour of parties. According to Mainwaring (1999:11), 'the way political parties behave and carry out their activities affect such vital questions as the nature of, and citizens attitude to democracy, the level of accountability and quality of elections in a country.' Hence, since Africa's democratic renaissance, there have been calls for African parties to be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within society (Gyimah-Boadi 2004; Bratton 2012). Despite the prevailing analytical focus on Ghana's democratization, including Lindberg's (2003) empirical work on how legislators ascend to office through patrimonial relations, democratic practices within contemporary Ghanaian parties remain largely unexamined. Indeed, inter-party rather than intra-party democracy has been the subject of many scholarly works on democratization in Ghana.

Against this backdrop, the study analyses the parties' internal democratic dynamics and how it has fostered effective party organization and multiparty politics in Ghana. It argues that patronage practices have constrained democracy within the parties' internal functioning. The pertinent questions that guide the discussion include: What is the nature of selecting leaders, candidates and making decisions in the parties? How have the processes fostered fair competition, cohesion and grassroots involvement in decision-making? To what extent has patronage undermined democracy within the parties? How can these obstacles be addressed in order to consolidate democracy in the parties and Ghana?

2. The Methods

In response to these questions, the opinions of 70 mass respondents were surveyed in three constituencies, one each from Volta, Greater Accra and Ashanti regions to reflect the electoral strongholds of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) that have relatively developed structures and alternated power in 2000 and 2008. Volta region lies at the heart of NDC electoral successes and Ashanti region is NPP's electoral support-base. Greater Accra is mixed in demographic and electoral complexion, and the location for the parties' headquarters. Using the random sampling method, Kwadaso, Kpando and Amasaman constituencies in Ashanti, Volta and Greater Accra regions were selected respectively. While 40 of the respondents were ordinary voters randomly selected from the Electoral Commission's list of Registered Voters in the three constituencies, 30 were party executive members comprising 15 each from the NPP and NDC.

In addition, 30 elite groups with experience in the parties' organizational activities comprising 7 senior national and regional executive members and 5 youth activists each of the NPP and NDC, and 6 nonpartisan informants who have made public comments on the parties' performance were purposively selected for face-to-face interviews throughout June 2014. The questions for the survey and interviews covered the nature of decision-making and prevalence of patronage in the parties' organizations and their repercussions on internal democracy. These were supplemented with literature review of scholarly opinions on theory and practice of party organization, politics, democracy and patronage politics in Africa.

3. Theories on Party Democracy

The idea that democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices to govern for the public good is not in dispute. Indeed, scholars agree that political parties are essential to the efficient and proper functioning of democracy. They are instrumental for democratizing and consolidating democracy (Diamond and Gunther, 2001; Scarrow, 2005). However, most scholars have contended that political parties' ability to perform these key functions in a polity depends on their organizational efficacy. As a result, the debate on party democracy has centred on internal organizational behaviour.

For a long time, the dominant argument was that inter-party competition rather than intra-party democracy was what a democracy needed. The argument against intraparty democracy peaked in the immediate post-World War II political reforms in Europe and America when catchall parties replaced mass party organizations. Unlike the mass party that placed the control of party organization in the hands of the members, the catchall party moved power to the leaders and reduced the influence of the individual party members (Kirchheimer, 1966; Katz and Mair, 2002). This was justified by the claim that centralization of power in the party leadership was necessary for electoral efficiency. The proponents contended that electoral victory in modern politics largely depends on how well a party is able to check the extreme attitudes of its activists. For instance, May (1973) cautioned that parties that listen to their activists tend to adopt extreme policy positions which can precipitate electoral defeats. Although May's claim was challenged on grounds that party elites are as extreme as the activists.

Duverger (1978) further observed that in contemporary party organizations where party leaders have assumed the role of financiers, there is a high tendency for the leadership to exercise untrammelled power over the party apparatus without resistance from the ordinary members. For instance, in post-Cold War politics in Africa, decision-making in party organizations have been concentrated in the hands of the leadership of the party in public office rather than the ordinary party members (Carty, 2004). Similarly, since post-World War II electoral reforms in Europe, ordinary party members have gone from being the very substance of the parties to being historical relics (Duverger, 1978; Kirchheimer, 1966). Furthermore, advocates of the policy determination model have argued that the emergence of leadership-dominated parties such as parties of notables or cadres have led to the exclusion of ordinary members from the parties' agenda-setting process. For instance, Scarrow (2005) observed that only party leaders have the ultimate power to give direction and formulate party programs. In addition, Mair (2006) has noted that in post-democratization politics of emerging democracies, civil society groups have shaped public policies of parties in government more than the party delegate conferences. The sceptics of intra-party democracy have further cautioned that too much democratization could dilute the power of party leaders and obstruct their vision about the party's electoral promises. For instance, Scarrow (2005) asserted that inclusive candidate selection procedures could potentially weaken the cohesiveness of legislative parties because national party leaders could lose the power to deny the re-nomination or re-election of candidates to scoundrel party members.

For instance, May (1973) cautioned that parties that listen to their activists tend to adopt extreme policy positions, which can precipitate electoral defeat even though his claim has been challenged on grounds that party elites are as extreme as the activists.

In recent time, some Africanist scholars have argued that post-colonial African politics, which is largely steeped in patrimonial relationships, poses a grave threat to the institutionalization of democracy within parties. Indeed, many scholars have indicated that patrimonialism – a form of political order based on the personal authority of an individual ruler is antithetical to democratic politics (Thomson 2010; Clapham 2003). According to Bratton (2012), the term neo-patrimonialism refers to a hybrid mode of rule in which informal political ties and exchanges suffuse the management of a state. He notes that in a neo-patrimonial system, the leader and his agents exercise authority mainly through personal whim and material incentive rather than through ideology or the rule of law. The distinction between private and public interests is purposely blurred, and officials occupy positions less to deliver public goods and services than to acquire personal wealth and status (Chabot and Daloz 1999; Lindberg 2003). While neopatrimonialism applies to personal rule, its features permeate the internal behaviours of African political parties to the extent that influential party executives use their offices to distribute positions as patronage among close allies and friends. Clapham (2003) defines patron-clientelism as relations of exchanges between a powerful and the weak. While patrons distribute benefits in the form of security, jobs and money to their clients, the latter, in return offer support and perform important assignments that help legitimize the former's position. The patrons (big men) use their powers to influence decision-making and contests to key party positions. The clients may use their received resources from the patron to build their own patronage empire. This system serves as the lucrative channel for leaders to hold monopoly over formal political activities (Thomson 2010; Clapham 2003).

Notwithstanding attempts to discredit intra-party democracy, including the claim that democracy is not tenable in African parties because of inherent patronage politics, there is much enthusiasm to promote its practice in party organizations. This is because the relative strengths of modern political parties largely depend on their internal democratic practices and the methods they adopt to promote leadership accountability. According to Mainwaring and Scully (1995), one of the fundamental indicators of a fully institutionalized party is its inner-democratic ethos.

They view intra-party democracy as important because it establishes legitimacy for membership control over candidates and leaders, fosters unity, peace, law and order. According to the participatory democracy approach, intra-party democracy affords citizens the opportunity to nurture their political aspirations and ambitions through their regular involvement in their parties' programs.

As citizens make informed decisions and choices within their parties, they develop attitudes and behaviours that foster the building of macro-democracy in the country. In contrast to May's (1973) anti-intra-party democracy view, the political agency model argues that the implementation of inclusive policy-setting procedures in a party would enhance the incumbent's chances of re-election. For instance, Scarrow (2005) has observed that parties that are more inclusive towards their supporters offer voters better choices because they are more likely to be open to new ideas and new personnel, and less likely to concentrate on retaining or enhancing the power of a handful of party leaders. Similarly, advocates of the deliberative model have opined that if parties are the avenues for shaping citizens' policy preferences through public discussions of the pertinent issues, then intra-party debates offer the means of reconciling personal interests with that of the common interest (Thompson, 2008).

Some scholars have argued that in contemporary politics where policymaking takes place within the ruling party rather than in the public, democracy within parties is needed in order to ensure that ordinary party members take active part in the setting of their parties' programs and agenda. They have contended that where party members are involved, they are able to exert costly influence to bias their parties' agenda in favour of their preferred policies (Pettitt, 2012). Similarly, Hazan and Rahat (2010) have observed that democracy within a political party is extremely essential and a possibility because it fosters competition among political aspirants and dissipates oligopolistic tendencies among the party elite. Indeed, a significant feature of post-Cold War party politics of most consolidated democracies such as Britain and United States is the fading away of leadership-dominated and clientelist parties. As a result, parties with low levels of inclusiveness in the decision-making processes as in the case of "leaders-dominated", "notables" and "cadre" parties and those that promote patron-client relations have become less attractive to politicians (Pedersen, 2010).

4. Choosing Leaders and Candidates in the NPP and NDC

In this section I interrogate how the leaders and candidates in the two parties were selected? Did the selection processes foster democratic competition of fairness, tolerance of divergent opinions and grassroots involvement? What role did patronage play in the selection process? Democratic theorists have indicated the conditions for a democratic contest. i) the right of all contestants to gain access to information ii) freedom of organization, movement and campaigns and iii) non-violence choice of leaders (Dahl 1998).

Ranney (1981) has emphasized that the survival of any political party depends on its ability to choose candidates to contest national elections and leaders to manage its internal and external affairs. Selection of candidates and leaders is one of the principal ways a political party engages with its membership and the wider electorate. He noted that the kind of candidate a party chooses largely determines its competitive profile against its competitors during national elections and the loyalty of its members and supporters. How democratic was the process used by the NPP and NDC to choose their candidates and leaders?

According to Bryan and Baer (2005), elections have become the most common mechanism for determining leaders and candidates by modern political parties. The constitutions of the NPP and NDC have legitimized elections as the only means for choosing leaders and nominating candidates to compete in national elections. At every level of the parties' organizations i.e., national, regional and constituency, periodic elections are convoked to fill vacancy positions. While the NPP elects its leaders in every four years to manage the polling station, constituency, regional and national organizations (NPP, 1992), in every two years, the NDC chooses its constituency, regional and national executives (NDC, 2000).

Different models exist for choosing leaders and candidates. The most open and inclusive form of leadership and candidate selection is the direct ballot system where eligible party members pre-select party candidates and leaders through direct elections. In most western democracies, participation is restricted to registered party members. A few of the African parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of Nigeria and the Kenyan National Union (KANU) subscribe to the Western model (Salih, 2007).

The Ghanaian parties follow the registered-membership model of the Western democracies even though the NPP and NDC lack a well-developed membership registration policy. For instance, the Constitution of the NPP (1992:15) stipulates that 'in Polling Station Executive elections, all card-bearing and paid-up members in good standing in the Polling Station Area shall vote'. In the case of the NDC, the registered members within the designated branches were directed to elect all the nine branch executive members at a special branch meeting. Sixty-two percent of the respondents out of which 30 percent and 18 percent were party elite and activists respectively admitted that all the registered members of the parties were encouraged to participate in the election of their leaders even though a few of those eligible actually voted.

Thus, to the extent that the processes for choosing the parties' leaders and candidates involved some of the rank-and-file members, albeit, a small number of them, 41 percent of the survey respondents concluded that the parties practiced democracy in their internal affairs.

Outside the polling station/branch levels, the parties have adopted the Electoral College system to select their leaders. This is a form of party caucus in which representatives from the lower branch/constituency levels meet at the national level to formulate and enact rules to guide the party into the future and elect the leaders and candidates. As in 2002 and 2006, the Constituency Executive Members (CEMs) of the NPP were elected by the Polling Station Executives at a constituency delegates' conference. Also, the RECs were elected by two delegates chosen by the Constituency Delegates' Conference and all the CEC members. At the national level, the NEC was elected by a body, which comprised two delegates from each constituency, members of the National Council, representatives of patrons, founding members and overseas branches, among others. In the case of the presidential candidates, a larger Electoral College which was made up of ten delegates from each constituency, representatives of patrons and founding members in each region, and overseas branches elected the flag-bearer at the National Delegates Conference (interview, NPP Organizer, Accra, June 2014).

Similarly, the NDC adopted the Electoral College method to choose its leaders and presidential candidates. In 2010, the CECs were elected by two delegates from the branches and other political appointees. At the regional level, five delegates chosen from the CEC and a small number of political appointees such as the Ministers and MPs elected the RECs.

The NEC and the presidential candidates of the NDC were respectively elected by representatives from the constituencies, regions, affiliated organs, regional parliamentary groups and overseas branches (interview, NDC Vice-Chairmen, Accra, June 2004).

Close to half, (43) percent of respondents said that the parties' procedures for choosing leaders and candidates evinced some degree of fairness and competition. Vacant positions were widely advertised through the parties' internal structures for aspirants to file their nominations to contest the elective positions. The elected leaders were given a fairly short period of office in accordance with democratic norms. The parties' constitutions articulated the rules and procedures for delegates to the parties' congresses/conferences to 'scrutinize' the contestants.

Even incumbent candidates faced strict scrutiny from the parties' scrutinizers. Hence, a majority of respondents (67) percent, of which 18 percent and 21 percent claimed to be ordinary members of the NPP and NDC respectively, corroborated the views of 2 party elite that 'incumbents did not have advantage over new entrants in the vetting processes' (interview, NPP and NDC Organizers, Accra, June 2004). The transparent and objective manner in which the vetting proceeded ensured that even party stalwarts such as Kwame Mpianin who failed the test was disqualified by the NPP scrutinizers in 1996 (interview, NPP Chairman, Kpamdo, June 2004).

At all levels, the elections of the NPP and NDC leaders and candidates were supervised by the Electoral Commission (EC) so as to promote fair contest. Many scholars regard consultation as an essential element of representative democracy (Dahl 1998). It is therefore imperative that delegates to party national congresses and primaries seek grassroots opinions and perspective on the critical issues to be determined (Scarrow 2005). Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that the delegates who formed the electoral colleges to elect the leaders and candidates held consultations with their constituents to obtain their consent on the preferred choice of the candidates. The same number of interviewees of which half (21) percent were party executives and activists indicated that the voting decisions of the delegates in each of the elections reflected grassroots voting decisions.

Despite these observations, majority interviewees (67) percent expressed disappointment about the quality of democracy that has emerged within the parties. Similarly, some of the interviewees bemoaned the facade of democracy within the parties. For instance, while the parties have resorted to the use of elections to choose their leaders and candidates, 'they were only significant for their cosmetic purposes' (interview, Mary Boateng, Kwadaso, June 2004). This is because 73 percent of survey respondents said that 'embourgeoisement' tendencies have manifested themselves in the corridors of the parties through internal manipulations and violence, thereby alienating the rank-and-file.

The procedures for selecting the parties' leaders and candidates were far from being democratic because the members' rights to choose their leaders and candidates were carefully circumvented.

A majority opinion, 76 percent of which 54 percent were ordinary voters) as against 24 percent party executives/activists indicated that the parties' delegates were supposed to be elected by the entire membership of the parties at the sub-national levels. In practice, however, a large number of the delegates were handpicked by the parties' operatives based on their loyalty to the elite. For instance, 71 percent noted that, the use of cooptation by the NDC allowed a number of the former political appointees to be appointed delegates. Hence, when asked whether the parties' selection processes were democratic, a majority 68 as against 32 percent of respondents explained that the widespread use of the indirect election system (congresses/conferences) deprived the entire membership of the parties the real opportunity to choose their leaders and candidates.

The delegate system suffered another setback because the congresses/conferences presented a pyramidal structure that ensured that the parties' financiers, founding members and patrons supervised their own elections or favoured candidates to leadership positions (interview, Charles Buah, Accra, June 2004). In order to prevent the popular candidates from being elected, 67 percent said that the parties' executives or some invisible officials enunciated consensus on those who should be elected. Hence, the parties' congresses/conferences gave undue advantage to the elite, who were well-positioned to utilize the selection process to achieve their selfish goals.

Since gender entered the political discourse, feminists have made participation of women cornerstone in multiparty politics (Hinojosa, 2012). Hence, gender advocates have insisted that political parties' internal organizations should promote women participation in their decision-making processes (Matland and Ballington 2004; Hinojosa 2012). The two parties have established structures to foster women participation in their internal affairs. Hence, they all have women's wings. Despite this, the NPP and NDC procedures for selecting delegates from at every level overlooked the importance of gender balance. Eighty-nine percent of respondents of which 31 percent are party officials agreed that the Electoral College system's excludes quota system for the women. However, 32 percent of party officials insisted that the parties have informal arrangements which ensure that women are represented on the delegate conferences.

According to Norris (2005) democratic contests must stimulate fair competition among all contestants, and (Dahl 1998) insists that the processes for selecting party officials and candidates should engender peaceful outcomes. Yet, the processes for choosing the parties' leaders and candidates manifested violence. Seventy-three percent noted that a limitation on the parties' democratic practice was the perennial conflict-in-competition syndrome. Violence occurred in the parties because of attempts by some party "dinosaurs" to entrench themselves through orchestrated methods to deny other contestants fair competition. For instance, the need to consolidate Rawlings' tradition in Ghana's politics ensured that only his favourites won intra-NDC leadership and candidate contests (interview, Dr Stephen Banson, Accra, June 2014). According to 46 percent of respondents, Rawlings accomplished this through the distribution of the vacant leadership positions to his clients as rewards for loyalty and 'comradship'. It therefore became clear that only those who sang Rawlings' praises and helped propound the 'myth of his political immortality' received his endorsement for positions in the NDC. The patronage eventually led to the entrenchment of membership-subordination to Rawlings. Hence, according to 52 percent of respondents, Rawlings' support for a candidate guaranteed his/her election or re-election. Conversely, those who showed disloyalty and challenged his authority in the party were punished in the distribution of in-party posts (interview, Philip Opoku, Amasaman, June 2004).

It was the attempt to promote Rawlings' hegemony in the NDC that provoked the internal conflict and violence clashes over the selection of leaders and candidates. For instance, the violence that inaugurated the NDC primaries in 2000 was of a magnitude that triggered massive revolt and polarization within the party. In the opinion of 61 percent of respondents, as the eight-year rule of Rawlings came to a close, party stalwarts such as Goose Tandoh and a host of others positioned themselves to contest the NDC primaries to succeed Rawlings. However, a few months prior to the primaries, Rawlings outwitted all the competitors and unilaterally declared Professor Mills as the unopposed presidential candidate to succeed him (interview, NDC activist, Kpando, June 2014). In consequence, 'democratic forces' within the party who felt disappointed by the attempt to deny them the opportunity to contest in the primaries renounced their membership of the NDC and formed the National Reform Party.

Again, the 2004 NDC primaries at the Central Cafeteria in the University of Ghana, which pitted Dr Kwesi Botchway, a former Finance Minister in the NDC government and Prof Mills evicted conflict because according to 36 percent of respondents, Rawlings sponsored violent attacks on Dr Botchway and his ardent supporters. After the election of Mills by the delegates, Botchway vowed not to participate in the internal politics of the NDC and retired to the USA (interview, Mercy Duah, Kwadaso, June 2014). Similarly, the NDC 2008 congress at Ho was soaked in violence.

The appearance of party stalwarts such as Spio-Garbrah, Mahama Iddrisu and Eddie Anan gave an appearance of competition. However, Mills' challengers were intimidated at the congress grounds in order to ensure his victory (interview, Baah Mintah, Kwadaso, June 2014). The continued pursuit of patronage in the NDC led to the repeated conflict in the 2005 congress at Koforidua. Again, undemocratic practices reasserted themselves in the election of the party's leaders. Rawlings saw it as opportunity to decapitate the remaining strengths of his "enemies" in his NDC (interview, Musa Karim, Amasman, June 2014). Hence he orchestrated moves that stifled Dr. Obed Asamoah's ability to defeat Rawlings' favourite, Dr Kwabena. Adjei. On the congress grounds, not only were supporters of Dr. Asamoah humiliated, intimidated and beaten with offensive weapons but also 23 percent partisan respondents agreed that efforts were made to force them to withdraw their support for Dr Asamoah. Rawlings' speech at the congress incited violence against pro-Asamoah supporters, some of whom were manhandled by pro-Adjei's thugs.

The violence that was perpetrated against the supporters of Dr Asamoah led to the mass resignation of some prominent members, including, Dr. Asamaoh, Kweku Baah (vice-chairman), Prof Wayo Seini (NDC MP) from the NDC. Reminiscent of the events following the 2000 congress, the pro-democracy advocates founded the Democratic Freedom Party with Dr. Asamoah as its Chairman.

Similar to the NDC, patronage was the established instrument the NPP elite used to achieve their objectives. Fifty-seven percent of respondents agreed that the NPP elite relied on patronage to get the party's delegates to endorse their candidates. As an informant rightly noted, 'the elites' chosen strategy for marshalling support for their candidates in order to guarantee their election or re-election was to promise jobs, distribute money and other material benefits to woo the delegates (interview, Faustina Boadu, NPP activist, Kwadaso, June 2014). Although patronage has an immediate pay-off to the recipients and distributors, its debilitating effect on the NPP according to 58 percent of the respondents, was the attrition of unity and membership alienation.

The breakdown of membership loyalty and trust as a result of patronage in the NPP reflected post-election defections of large numbers of the aggrieved candidates' supporters to where patronage looked attractive (interview, NPP activist, Kpando, June 2014).

As was the case with the NDC, the manifestation of rivalries as conflict greeted the NPP 2005 selection of the national officers. Whereas in the NDC the election-conflict coalesced around attempts to promote the cult of Rawlings, 68 percent of the respondents agreed that, in the NPP it was framed around pro-Kufuor and Akuffo-Addo's personalities. Hence, the factionalists' struggles in the NPP were created by the 'big men' to get their favoured candidates elected to leadership positions. For instance, in the 2005 delegates' conference at the University of Ghana, Kufuor and Akuffo-Addo's support for Steven Ntim and Mark Manu respectively cleaved the party into two factions. The heightened tension at the congress, encouraged intimidation, insults and acrimony that proved too difficult to repair afterwards. Accusations and counter-accusation over vote buying did not only destroy the beauty of the competition but dented the image of the party that taunted itself as the promoter of democracy and admirers of the rule of law (interview, NDC activist, Amasaman, June 2014).

The evidence so far shows that despite vigorous periodic elections to choose leaders and primaries to elect candidates, intra-party competition rarely encouraged fairness and accountability. The selection processes were dominated and driven by self-perpetrating oligarchies, which in many cases were precipitated by attempts to promote patronage and the elites' personal interests. This partly explained the fact that strategic party nominations and leadership contests tended to be excessively monopolized by the parties' patrons. While weak party organization is a proximate reason for fragmentation, 67 percent of the respondents agreed that the growing occurrence of dissenting factions and the resultant defections hinged on weak intra-party democracy among the parties.

5. Decision-Making in the NPP and NDC

Norris (2005) has indicated that democracy within parties can be measured based on the manner in which they make decisions.

The model found in advanced democracies involves the empowerment of party members to participate in their party's decision-making process (Diamond and Gunther, 2001). A real manifestation of intra-party democracy among the Ghanaian parties is that they have formalized the processes of decision-making. The parties' annual congresses/conferences are at the apexes of their decision-making processes. For instance, the National Annual Delegates' Conference of the NPP is the supreme decision-making body. It possesses deliberative and sanctioning powers in matters of finance, discipline, and expulsion of members, among others (NPP, 1992:12). Similarly, the NDC Congress is the body that determines all policies and approves the annual reports, budgets, audited accounts (NDC, 2000:17). However, when the parties' national congresses/conferences are not in session, the NECs exercise the functions and powers of the National Congress/Conference and their Standing Committees enforce the NEC's decisions while the disciplinary committees exercise oversight powers (NPP, 1992; NDC, 2000).

Many respondents, 78 percent recognized the importance of inclusive decision-making – where grassroots perspectives are admitted in a party's decision-making process. All the party executive respondents, constituting 20 percent admitted that the Constitutions of the NPP and NDC permit the general membership to make contributions to the decision-making agenda.

Also, 76 percent of the partisan respondents said that their parties allow the members to express opinions on policy issues at the formulation stage. Indeed, 31 percent of respondents of which half are NPP and NDC fanatics revealed that the members are encouraged to channel their decision-making contributions through 'open letters and memorandums', among others. For instance, 12 percent of the partisan respondents indicated that they sent letters to their parties' secretariats on aspects of internal reforms. However, 73 percent of respondents agreed that the most commonly used instrument for participating in the parties' decisions was the delegate congress/conference model.

However, majority of respondents, (67) percent challenged the elites' claim that the grassroots participated in the parties' decisions-making. For instance, the parties' strategic initiatives were planned and developed by the executive committee members with little or no inputs from the ordinary members. A majority, 74 percent believe that the exercise of power over decision-making was largely concentrated in the hands of the leaders and their cronies, which they used to influence the parties' policies and programs.

First, in terms of micro decisions, which related to the welfare of the parties at the sub-national levels, 68 percent of the respondents said they were formulated exclusively by the regional executives and the influential local party notables. Second, a higher number of respondents, 73 percent indicated that the parties' patrons, founding members and the NEC formulated the macro policies, and handed them to the lower executives for implementation. Thus, the ordinary members of the parties became consumers of the decisions made by a small coterie of party hacks. While dissent was permitted within the privacy of the parties, it was only entertained so far as the disputed issues were presented as a disagreement over means rather than ends (interview with Kofi Brew, NPP activist Kwadaso, June 2014). Forty-three percent NPP and NDC respondents admitted that, the processes for channelling ordinary party members' grievances from bottom-up were cumbersome to follow. Hence, 32 percent of ordinary party members/activists said they did not use them when they felt dissatisfied with aspects of their parties' activities. Similarly, 34 percent of the partisan respondents from the constituencies maintained that they did not understand the detailed procedures for resolving disagreements within their parties. Of these, more than half said they were doubtful whether the elites' influence would guarantee fair redress for the rank-and-file if the latter had a genuine case against the former.

Thus, the growing influence of the parties' elite have virtually dwindled the power of the ordinary members over decision-making.

The utility of the delegates' congresses/conferences worsened the plight of the grassroots members because according to 71 percent of the respondents of which 50 percent were NPP and NDC activists, they were used as forums for the elite to receive acclamations for endorsements of their decisions rather than a platform for the formulations and adoptions of universal party policies. The popular apprehension about the delegate/Electoral College system has long been the subject of contention by political theorists. For instance, Rousseau's (1968) thesis on popular sovereignty repudiated any attempt to transfer the supreme power of the people to the elite. Rousseau argued that decision-making through congresses/conferences are incongruous with the spirit and letter of modern democracy. For instance, 63 percent partisan respondents vis-a-vis 20 percent party elite claimed that the decisions made by the congresses/conferences represented the interests of the delegates and the parties' leaders rather than that of the rank-and-file.

Ware (1996) and Norris (2005) have noted that one of the strategies party elites use to decapitate the power of rank-and-file is control information. It was revealed that critical information on policy issues flowed from top-down continuum. For instance, 63 percent respondents agreed that the parties' ordinary members lacked access to vital information on issues that engaged the attention of the delegates' conferences. Hence, 57 percent of the partisan grassroots respondents indicated that they obtained information about their parties' policy issues through rumour mills and the media. Thus, the lack of effective communication between the leaders and rank-and-file weakened the latter's ability to participate effectively in the parties' decision-making. This conclusion is consistent with Lindberg's (2003:14) observation that in Ghana, politicians go to their supporters every four years when they need them to renew their mandates to national offices and when they have manipulated them to secure their re-election, any form of communication ceases. Thus, whereas the rank-and-file feel alienated, the parties' executives are growing in importance because of their strategy to make the ordinary members subservient to their interests.

6. Conclusion: towards Party Democratization in Ghana

This article has argued that because political parties contribute to democracy, they ought to be internally democratic.

It has demonstrated that intra-party democracy is desirable for nurturing and sustaining democratic culture within the larger society. It delineated two indices for assessing the democratic behaviour of the two Ghanaian parties. It emphasized the relevance of grassroots' participation in shaping the content and character of the output of the political parties to enhance cohesion and create a sense of collective ownership of decisions. The attainment of these ideals requires an environment that stimulates fair competition, non-violence and unhindered access to information. Democratization scholars with interest in deliberative democracy have emphasized that intra-party democracy can be achieved when party decision-making are debated freely and collectively agreed upon among all members. Institutionalizing decentralization of decision making will foster lower party organs and members' effective participation in the deliberative decision-making process. The immediate payoff of these values is that they can help stimulate liveliness in the parties' political activities and programmes, halt the tide of mass defections, maximize the influence of party extremists and increase the parties' electoral appeal.

Given that patronage politics (which has arisen in the parties due to unequal power structure) is destructive to intra-party democracy, formalizing accountability, especially vertical accountability will be the only neutralizing force against it. While not deemphasizing the performance assessment of the parties' officeholders against important tangible targets of output, efficiency and quality of service delivered, Schedler (1999) has insisted on the question of answerability, i.e., the obligation of leaders to make public what they are doing. This means that the parties' power-holders have the obligation and responsibility to provide reasonable explanations of their actions and decisions. The enforcement of vertical accountability within the parties will be a bold step to shifting power from the top/elite to the bottom (ordinary members/supporters).

Acknowledgement

Funds for this research came from Government of Ghana's annual allowance to lecturers in Ghana to carry out academic research.

References

- Bratton, M., & van de Walle, N. (1997). *Democratic Experiments in Africa: regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton, M. (2012). Voting intentions in Africa: ethnic, economic or partisan? *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 50 (1): 29 – 52.
- Bryan, S., & Baer, D. (Eds.). (2005). *Money in Politics: A Study of Financing Practices in 22 Countries*. NDI: Washington, D.C.
- Carty, R. K. (2004). 'Parties as franchise systems: The stratarchical organizational imperative.' *Party Politics* 10 (1): 5–24.
- Clapham, C. (2003). *Sierra Leone: the political economy of internal conflict*. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations
- Dahl, R. (1998). *On Democracy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Debrah, E., & Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2005). Political parties and Party Politics in Ghana. In Agyeman-Duah, B (Ed.), *Ghana: Governance in the Fourth Republic* (126 – 154). Accra: Digibooks.
- Diamond, L., & Gunther, R (Eds.). (2001). *Political Parties and Democracy*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Duverger, M. (1978). *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. London: Methuen.
- Hazan, R. Y., & Rahat, G. (2010). *Democracy within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hinojosa, M. (2012). *Whatever the Party Asks of Me: Women's Political Representation in Chile's Unión Demócrata Independiente*. Temple: Temple: University Press.
- Katz, R S., & Mair, P. (2002). The ascendancy of the party in public office: Party organizational changes in twentieth-century democracies. In R. Gunther., J. R., Montero & J. J Linz, *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges* (113–135). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindberg, S. I. (2003). It's Our Time to "Chop: Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counteract it? *Democratization* 10 (2): 120–130.
- Mainwaring, S., & Scully, T. R. (1995). *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mair, P. (2006). 'Ruling the void: The hollowing of western democracy.' *New Left Review* 42: 25–51.
- Matland, R., & Ballington, J. (2004). *Political Parties and Special Measures: Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes*. New York: Naciones Unidas.
- May, John D. (1973) 'The Opinion Structure of Parties: The Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity', *Political Studies* 21: 135–51.
- NDC. (2000). *Constitution of the NDC*. Accra: NDC.
- Norris, P. (2004). *Building Political Parties: Reforming Legal Regulations and Internal Rules*. Stockholm: International IDEA.
- NPP. (1992). *Constitution of the NPP*. Accra: NPP.
- Pedersen, H. H. (2010). 'Differences and changes in Danish party organisations: Central party organisations versus parliamentary party group power.' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 16 2: 233–250.

- Pettitt, Robin T. (2012). Exploring Variations in Intra-party Democracy: A Comparative Study of the British Labour Party and the Danish Centre-Left.' *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 14 (4): 630–650.
- Ranney, A. (1981). Candidate Selection. In D H Butler, H R Penniman, and A Ranney (Eds.) *Democracy at the Polls.* (75–106), Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute.
- Rousseau, J. J. (1968). *The Social Contract.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Salih, M. A. M., (Ed.). (2007). *Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multiparty Democracy.* Stockholm, IDEA.
- Scarrow, S. (2005) *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Implementing intra-party democracy.* Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute.
- Schedler, Andreas. (1999). Conceptualizing Accountability In Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Eds.), *Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies.* (34-52), Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Thompson, D. F. (2008). 'Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science.' *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 497–520.
- Thomson, A. (2010). *An Introduction to African Politics.* New York: Routledge.
- Ware, A. (1996). *Political Parties and Party System.* London: Oxford University Press.