

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND NOMINATIONS OF RUNNING MATES - JOHN MAHAMA'S RUNNING MATE AND OTHER MATTERS: BY MARTIN A. B. K. AMIDU

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has become the first major political party to serve notice by a Press Release to the electorate that its Presidential Candidate has formally communicated to it the nomination of his running mate in accordance with Article 45 of the NDC Constitution on 27 February 2024.

The problem with the manner the NDC Press Release was couched is that from my personal experience whosoever has been nominated by John Mahama as his running mate must have been invited and offered the nomination and he or she must have accepted the nomination already. In my case, on 3 September 2000, Vice-President Mills who had to present his running mate to the NDC the same afternoon told me that if his nomination of me was not acceptable to the Council of Elders and the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the NDC he would not run himself as its Presidential Candidate. This was before Prof. Mills had to visit Alhaji Mahama Iddrisu, the current Chairman of the NDC Council of Elders, to persuade me to accept the nomination. Prof. Mills' nominee for running mate for the 2004 election was also approved and announced the same day the nominee was offered and accepted the nomination.

A situation that brought conflict within the NDC occurred on 24 December 2007 when former President Rawlings caused Victor Smith to invite me for a discussion to undertake a mission on his behalf to Burkina Faso to underscore to my bosom friend President (Captain) Blaise Compaore the efficacy of the identified Vice Presidential candidate to Prof. Mills and my insistence that he establishes whether Prof. Mills had indeed made the offer to the nominee. I picked the return air ticket to Ouagadougou at the KIA for the mission on 26 December 2007 only to learn after my return on 30 December 2007 that the former President had been snubbed when he went to make the enquiries I had urged on him. The offer of nomination was made after the snub to former President Rawlings and was the beginning of intense acrimony within the NDC.

I had occasion on the forty-second (42) anniversary of the 31 December Revolution to write that history has made John Mahama the inheritor of the leadership qualities of the initiator and founder of the 31 December Revolution, Comrade Chairman and former President Jerry John Rawlings, and the tradition of the leadership of the NDC which President Rawlings exemplified, particularly at this time in Ghana's messy economic and political history. I urged in my anniversary greetings that the inheritor of that great tradition ought to revamp the ideals of the 31 December Revolution for which Comrade/President Rawlings and other gallant comrades laid down their lives. I underscored the fact that history and experience are what keeps a culture and tradition alive. And that is why the NDC needs of so many comrades of the revolution who are still active, whom the NDC must always remember to

carry along even though they may now be aged. Accountability and transparency have been the hallmark of that tradition. In that tradition the electorate are partners in national development and not articles to be used and discarded after every national election.

Expressing gratitude to NDC supporters for their steadfast loyalty and unwavering commitment and urging them to join hands to embark on the journey towards a brighter future for Ghana while confronting them with an opaque fait accompli of a running mate is not accountable and transparent to those supporters or the electors at the 2024 elections.

Whether anybody likes it or not John Dramani Mahama is the elected Presidential Candidate of the NDC and Mahamud Bawumia is the elected Presidential Candidate of the NPP despite any objections or perceived infractions of their respective party Constitutions and Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution in the process of electing them by their political parties. I take the view that having been elected by their respective political parties they are entitled to nominate whom they may as their running mate informed by strategic and tactical considerations that will enable each of them to carry their supporters and the larger electorate with them at the 7 December 2024 Presidential election as the winner.

It will be too damaging for their respective political parties if any of them opted out at this stage because some party bureaucrats opposed their nominees for running mate. The camouflage with Councils of Elders and NECs in the nomination of a running mate ought to be plain to everyone by now if the Presidential Candidates are their own men and not surrogates of political elite power brokers in their parties.

The NPP has the advantage of being in government and exercising executive power with its attendant tacit influence on the electoral processes and security agencies. The NPP has a younger and versatile Presidential Candidate who would still be young beyond election 2024 and 2028. The NPP knows that the 2024 elections is not a fait accompli for it despite President Akufo-Addo's long game to succeed himself with a surrogate. The NDC must also not be deceived with poll numbers or outward public displeasure with the regime because there is still some time to the elections. Anything could happen.

The NDC on the other hand needs to entice everybody disgruntled with his present condition of life across political party lines to support its call to "Build The Ghana We Want Together" and, therefore, it has a more daunting task. Secondly the NDC is presenting a Presidential Candidate who can assume the reins of government for only four years as a former President to nullify the perception of a Jimmy Carter like presidency that terminated after his first term in office. But it is in the interest of the NDC that after face saving, the NDC must be able to win a second term of four years with a successor to John Mahama who has age on his or her side. The impression must never be created that the NDC is still not sure of contesting and winning the 2024 elections and hopes to put forward its Presidential Candidate for re-election in the 2028 election again.

The Ahwoi's and their cohort, who now claim ownership of the NDC, speaking through Kwasi Ahwoi, named Prof. Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang as the successor to the National Democratic Congress flagbearer John Mahama after 2024. Kwasi Ahwoi was quoted by Ghana Web on 28 June 2023 with its source as mynewsgh.com to have said that:

“So, Naana whether she is 78, 79, 80 can still be President of this country when President John Mahama finishes his service, that should not be a worry at all.... It is about time we put a woman in charge of this country... They have a lot to offer this country. We have tried men, we've seen where men have taken us. Let's try the women.”

Let us hope that should Naana Jane Opoku-Agyeman be the presumptive nominee John Mahama has submitted to the NDC in his communication of 27 February 2024, she would be stronger than another tested younger candidate from the NPP for the 2028 election should the NDC win the 2024 elections as already arrogantly predicted. And old age from my experience in my seventies has everything to do with Nana Akufo-Addo's mishaps as President of Ghana. The NDC must in its strategic, tactical planning, and evaluation remember that the first four years after 2024 within the present messy economic dispensation is not going to be any easy tenure for anybody to put money in the peoples' pockets as one of the NDC's young lawyers tried to deceive the electorate recently in the media. The 2028 elections even if John Mahama could contest it would not be a walk over for him, let alone when a new face has to be presented by the NDC. The foregoing arguments are made upon the assumption that the NDC is able to win the 2024 presidential elections for which there is no certainty.

The NPP and the NDC have incrementally resorted to grand deception of their supporters and the electorate to give the appearance of democracy, and rule of law while the emerging party oligarchy and political elite behind the curtains make the decision for the country once they assume power. Even though President Akufo-Addo in his recent State of the Nation Address to Parliament behaved exactly like Chinua Achebe's lizard falling from the tall iroko tree and praising itself if nobody would, it is abundantly clear to the majority of Ghanaians that he rode on the back of a grand demagogic deception to assume power in 2017 and 2020.

I agonize that the NDC is repeating the same grand deception with the announcement of its already identified running mate, whosoever he or she is, by creating the impression that two out of three identified contenders have any chance at the Council of Elders or NEC meeting. The concluding paragraph of the NDC's press release on this matter dated 27 February 2024 is almost identical with the manner both major political parties begun deceiving their supporters since the aftermath of the 2008 elections.

I had wanted to comment on the prospective running mate of the NDC and have same published on 22 November 2023 as a result of several suggestions on the issue in the media

around that time. I did not do so because one of the leading contenders whose 72 birthday fell on that day was out in Kenya and the day did not look appropriate for reasons of courtesy.

The worry I have about the manner the NPP and the NDC treat their supporters and the electorate generally is that the sovereignty of the people guaranteed under Article 1 and re-emphasized under several other provisions of the Constitution, for example under Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution which also specifically enjoins that: “the internal organization of political parties shall conform to democratic principles and its actions and purposes shall not contravene or be inconsistent with this Constitution or any other law” are intentionally and deliberately subverted by the political elite.

The residues from the nomination of the Presidential Candidate of the NPP and the NDC left behind several residual conflicts as to the adherence to the democratic principles enjoined by the 1992 Constitution in the organization of political parties under it. What the recent primaries by the NPP and the NDC has surfaced is that both political parties have evolved since 2008 and taken the character of an established bureaucratic organization in which party leaders who have risen through the ranks over the past 31 years see the political party as an end in itself for these leaders and protecting it as one component of an interconnecting political party organization.

The party leaders of the NPP and the NDC have within the past 31 years risen beyond being representatives of the grass roots and other supporters and are shaped by the inter-party organizational sphere of elites, “playing the game of power in a peer group of other power wielders”. The NPP and the NDC suffer from the residue of this expanding organizational process and conflict in this constitutional epoch as the changes in the leadership of the NDC and NPP in Parliament recently brought out clearly. Instead of the Supremacy of the 1992 Constitution, the dictatorship of the political parties has emerged in a manner inconsistent with the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of parliament.

The crippling dictatorship of the two major political parties is a symptom of how Constitutions die when they are not defended by citizens interested in defending democracy, the rule of law, accountability and transparency, and the fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed under the 1992 Constitution.

We the people still have some time to make up our minds who would better serve our sovereign interest and defend the 1992 Constitution at the 2024 elections. We must exercise our vote at the 2024 elections, come what may, and choose between the better of the evils that will be presented to us as electors at the 2024 elections to assume the executive and legislative powers under the 1992 Constitution considering our experiences during the past 31 years of constitutional governance. We must all, as electors, take a side when it comes to the vote and so will I. In all these things, let’s put Ghana First!

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