



## Research Article

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**Choice of Candidate and Political Party Performance in Parliamentary Elections in Cameroon, 1992-2013**

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the question of the choice of candidates in the parliamentary elections in Cameroon. It examines the relationship between candidacies and electoral performance. It aims to show how the choice of candidates influences the results of elections and the political lives of the parties. Drawing on empirical data and field surveys, the paper analyses the various factors that justify the choice of political actors who represented their parties in the parliamentary competitions. It also describes the mechanisms for nominating candidates for the various elections since 1992. Using rich and specialized literature, plural primary sources and empirical data, the author adopted the empirico-deductive approach in the analysis of the facts. This has led to the revelation that the choice of candidates objectively explains the outcome of the elections and has an impact on the performance and stability of political parties.

**Keywords:** Political Parties, Candidates, Elections, Election Performance, Choice.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Sub-Saharan African countries in the aftermath of the 1990s experienced structural changes that had an impact on the functioning of states. This period was marked by the democratization of political and state institutions. These changes were reflected in the return to multi-party rule and the regular electoral consultations. Cameroon never escaped this reality as she observed the birth of several political parties such as the Social Democratic Front (SDF, 2015)<sup>1</sup>, Movement for the Defence of the Republic (MDR) and National Union for Development and Progress (UNDP). It was in this context that the 1992 parliamentary elections were held, which saw the participation of a number of political parties (Tata-Ngege, 2010)<sup>2</sup>. The parliamentary elections are governed by the electoral code that spell out qualification of candidates, term of office, polling, nomination of candidates, electoral disputes and proclamation of results (The National Assembly, 2012)<sup>3</sup>. The holding of multiple elections in Cameroon since the first multi-party elections of 1992, makes it necessary to interrogate the choice of candidates within the various political parties (Fung-Nchia, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, this study borders on attempt to appreciate the process of selection of election candidates and showing how this was quintessential to performance in electoral consultations (Ngoh, 2006)<sup>5</sup>. From this problem the fundamental question that emerges is: how was the choice of candidates decisive to the performance of a political party in parliamentary elections? Besides, the study also provides clues to responding to the question: does the nomination of candidates in legislative and even senatorial elections always meet the requirements inherent in the statutes and ambitions of political parties? This reflection revolves around the factors that influence the choice of candidates by political parties for parliamentary elections. It also analyses the different modes of selections adopted by politicians since the 1992 legislative elections and focuses on the impact of these candidates' choices on the various political movements and their results.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DESIGNATION OF PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES BY POLITICAL PARTIES**

The factors that influence the designation of candidates for parliamentary elections by political parties are many and varied but can be classified into the internal party factors and the external factors. The internal factors include the following:

**The Internal Regulations or Factors of the Parties**

<sup>1</sup> SDF, *The struggle of democracy and good governance*, Presbyterian printing press, Limbe, 2015, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> S. Tata-Ngege, *Citizenship for Cameroon Schools and Colleges*, Barak Boo-Nko University Press, ENS-Bambili, 2010, pp. 39-48.

<sup>3</sup> Electoral code of the Republic of Cameroon, adopted at its plenary sitting held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012, the National Assembly, Yaoundé, pp. 35-39.

<sup>4</sup> C. Fung Nchia, Party politics in the Bamenda Grassfields 1955-2004 Ph.D Thesis, University of Yaoundé I, 2013, pp. 163-171.

<sup>5</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *Democracy and democratization in Sub-Sahara Africa: The case of Cameroon 1960-2000*, University of Buea, 2006, pp. 10-11.

The candidate's personality and charismatic nature is a vital consideration in the process selecting a candidate for an election. Whether out of ignorance or sheer human inclination, the physical buildup of certain candidates has tended to be a significant consideration by electorates to vote certain personalities for management positions. Similarly, the manner in which they present their political ideology makes some of the electorates to directly confirm their candidature as opposed to some of the candidates who are even well educated without a personality and lack of charisma to convince the electorates of his capabilities makes it difficult to support such a candidate for an election for its already the beginning of failure.

The financial viability of the candidate is an important point in the process of selection of a candidate. This is because there are a number of situations wherein the candidate for election is expected to spend personal resources for the interest of the party he or she represents. Once there are two equal candidates for an election and one of them has better financial potentials, he/she will automatically be selected for the simple reason that by judgment of the electorate and the party, such a candidate will make his/her financial resources readily available for the party, when need be to handle administrative and logistic expenditures of the party which cannot be managed by a poor or financially weak candidate. Cases abound in election candidates' selection process in both the opposition and the ruling parties in Cameroon since 1992. A case in point in Cameroon was the influential position of Busheme Syvester<sup>6</sup> the proprietor of Conglecam who was the head of Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM) list in the West Region for the senatorial elections of 2013 and 2018, the parliamentary elections of 2007 and 2013. Similarly, the head of the CPDM list in the Kung-Khi Division was the Board Chairperson of Express Union and the Rector of the University of Dschang, Albert Konche and Veronique Fotso. These are individuals who came into politics not with the objective of making money but with the intention of contributing to the development of the country and the party for they already have enough financial stability.

At the end a candidate is much more appreciated by the immediate voters who decide for whom they are going to give their vote but the above are just guidelines which at times are considerations by most of the major political parties in selecting their candidates in times of elections. We have to equally accept that some of the candidates are not selected based on the above explanations but rather on family relationship as it is seen in parliamentary competitions in the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) party and some of the political parties that family members consider the party as a form of "family business"<sup>7</sup>. This is seen in the CDU party from the period of the return of multiparty politics that any person who has stood and taken a position in the party for the post of mayor, parliamentary or presidential candidate is related to the party chairman, Adamou Ndam Njoya especially in the Noun Division of the West Region of Cameroon. This justifies the fact, family ties are equally an important criteria for the selection of candidate for various elections in Cameroon.<sup>8</sup>

New candidates are sometimes difficult to be selected for an election as opposed to militants who have been militating in the party for a number of years because such a militants have a good mastery of the party's ideology and hierarchy. The old candidates could easily fight to get the support of the other party members for their candidacies in an election as compared to new militants who wanted to take an elective position. The explanation is that, in some parties the militants agreed on a set of individuals who would ever take positions of responsibility including those who would go in for the positions of mayor, members of parliament and even for the president of the republic. In such situations new militants in the party never really had an opportunity to be selected as a candidate for an election except in very few instances<sup>9</sup>.

### **The External Factors**

The popularity of the candidate at his base is a very important consideration for selection to represent a party in an election. Candidates with a long history of supporting developmental projects in their constituencies before election periods make them influential in those communities which form the basis of their selection to represent their parties in an election. This is opposed to candidates that are little known within their areas of jurisdiction.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the selection of a popular candidate is good for the candidate and for the party as the electorate easily assumes such a developer, if given an elective position will engage in implementing other developmental projects in the constituency as compared to a new candidate that is not really known in the area of development<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>Piaplié Rodrigue, 35 years, Ph.D student, University of Yaoundé 1, Yaoundé, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

<sup>7</sup> P. Nzeucheu, politics in the Bamileke region of Cameroon, 1946-2013: Dynamics and implications, Ph.D thesis, University of Bamenda, April 2018, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup>Cyrille Sam Mbaka, CDU Vice President, Douala, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Abbo Ulsmanu, 71 years old, Vice Secretary General of NUDP in Adamawa, Ngaoundere 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Mudoh Walters, 54 years, Human Right Activist and later on a politician of various political parties, Douala, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

<sup>11</sup>Honourable Abi Enwi Francais, 48 years, CPDM Parliamentarian from Momo East, Yaoundé, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

The availability of the candidate is an added criterion in the process of selecting candidates for an election. In fact, individual availability and personal contribution for the development of his or her constituency is seriously considered both by a political party and the electorate. Potential candidates who hardly keep touch with grassroots/base in their constituencies are usually considered to be of no elective value and will not contribute positively to the development of that constituency. As such, his or her selection for an election is usually greeted with aversion by the grassroots members of the party as well as the electorate. The reverse is true for popular and available candidates who are well known at the level of the grassroots.

A number of parties take into consideration, the adversary candidate for the selection in their competing candidate. In the situation wherein the adversary has a prominent candidate and some personalities that are appreciated by either population, the opponent party becomes keener in the process of selecting their candidates. In this regard, the Former Prime Minister and a great political figure in Cameroon, Simon Achidi Achu, makes relevant statements that are analysed below:

[Politics is]; scratch my back, I scratch your back. What did Achidi Achu mean by “politics na njangi”? In a context where Cameroonians are compelled to perceive and relate to politics as a game of infinite attempts to balance between competing and conflicting regional, ethnic, linguistic and religious interests (Nyamnjuh 1999), selecting and relating to intimate others involves juggling and joggling myriad competing and conflicting claims and counterclaims of belonging. It is in this regard that “politics nanjangi” means different things at different levels. At one level, Achidi Achu was using it to invite Anglophone Cameroonians to appreciate and reward the fact that one of their own – “a son of the soil” of the Anglophone community that comprises two of Cameroon’s ten Regions – had been appointed and entrusted by the President of the Republic, in a highly competitive context, to the most prestigious office - that of the Prime Minister of the Republic. It was an invitation for them to understand that the President had honoured the Anglophone community and Regions by playing or “hipping” njangi for them, and the ball was now in their court for them to reciprocate<sup>12</sup>.

In a situation wherein there is a prominent candidate on the opposite side, the competing party has to equally choose a strong candidate to compete with the opponent’s experience else there is going to be little match during the election. A number of parties select candidates who are committed with the ideology of the party, a candidate who can easily follow the instructions of the hierarchy of the party. This is so that the party can easily guide and orientate the candidate on how to manage the affairs of the party to the satisfaction of the members of the party and hierarchy.

### **Modes and Processes of Selection of Candidates**

The different political parties have different criteria for the selection of candidates for the parliamentary elections. Most of the political parties take into consideration the specificities of the election and the conditions prevailing at the time of the elections. In fact, the type of election determines the method put in place for the selection of the candidate<sup>13</sup>. Generally, since the return of political pluralism in Cameroon in 1992, all the political parties be they of the opposition parties or the ruling party divide, there were three major methods of choosing a candidate for an election adopted by a majority of political parties<sup>14</sup>. Some of these methods include among others, the use of Investiture Committees and the organization of primaries.

Most of the major political parties use the Investiture Committees which is generally made up of very senior and devoted members of the party or those who know and fight to keep the ideology of the party alive<sup>15</sup>. Some political parties went through the organization of primaries within the party to select the best candidate for parliamentary elections. In spite of this, there were some cases in some constituencies where parliamentary positions remained dominated by almost the same individuals who have virtually dominated the political sphere. A number of political parties determined who is a candidate for election without necessarily organizing primaries or going through an investiture process. This was a good strategy parties in which its hierarchy never wanted to bring divisions and hatred into the party in the process of organizing primaries or using the investiture approach to select a candidate. The selection of the candidate was always done on the eve of the election and a number of political parties did not want to jeopardize the strength and cohesion within the party which ingredients were necessary for the party’s performance in the elections.

### **Investiture Committee**

Various political parties developed sets of rules which were to guide the process of the selection of candidate(s) for elections by hierarchies of the parties. Sometimes, the process was based on what the individual had been doing to

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<sup>12</sup> See Francis B. Nyamnjuh “Politics of Back-Scratching in Cameroon and Beyond,” in: Petr Drulák and Šárka Moravcová, (eds), 2013, *Non-Western Reflection on Politics*, pp. 5-6 and S. Tata-Ngenge, *Citizenship for Cameroon Schools and Colleges*, Barak Boo-Nko University Press, ENS-Bambili, 2010, pp. 39-48.

<sup>13</sup> Souleymane Ali, 69 years old, member of ADD, Garoua-Boulai 19 December 2019.

<sup>14</sup> The electoral code of the Republic of Cameroon, adopted by the National Assemblée, Yaoundé, 2012, pp., 35-38

<sup>15</sup> Honorable Mbah Ndam Joseph, 64 year, SDF, CEMAC and African Parliamentarian, Yaoundé, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2019

ensure its success and growth. Finally, the impact a chosen candidate will have on the party and its consequences were some of the variables the various hierarchies of parties took into consideration for the selection of parliamentary candidates. What mattered most in the criteria for the selection of candidates for an election was the type of election whether there were parliamentary, senatorial or presidential elections? Besides, the area where the election was taking place was equally primordial in determining the criteria to be used in selecting the candidates. For instance, in an election in Bamenda which is the stronghold of the SDF party, more robust criteria would be taken to choose the candidate as opposed to an election in Ebolowa which is the stronghold of the CPDM party.

Sometimes it was important to see that the selected candidate have the support of the influential ethnic or religious groups in the area. Preferably if the candidate was from the areas to make sure the influential groups were in support of the selected candidates it was an advantage for the candidate and the party. Once the selected candidate had strong attachment to the influential group it was already a good sign for the candidate. In Yaoundé II for instance during the parliamentary elections, the parliamentary candidate was chosen from among the Bamelike ethnic group that constituted a majority of the electorate in the area. Similarly, the election of Madame Françoise Fonong as Mayor of Douala V was because most of the electorate there were from the West Region of the country where she hailed from. The situation of Joshua Osih who could not win in Kumba and decided to relocate to Douala where he was able to secure a winning base from among the combination Anglophones and Bamelike indigenes in the constituency also point to the importance of a dominant group in the process of choosing a candidate. In fact, it has been proven in Cameroon politics that the only ethnic group that has stood for elections out of their regions of origin and succeeded in most cosmopolitan centers is either from the West Region or from the Anglophone North West and South West Regions of the country. This is a vital reason and/or advantage for the Investiture Committees of political parties to take into consideration the cultural and regional backgrounds of postulating candidates.

A similar situation occurred in past elections in Mayo Danae particularly in Yagwa of the North Region of the country which was Christian-dominated area, making it difficult for a Muslim to successfully run for an election against a Christian candidate. From this context, it was in the interest of the Investiture Committees of political parties to invest candidates with Christian background to be sure of victory in especially for parliamentary elections. The same scenario was equally seen in Maroua town of the Far North Region where majority of the electorate were Muslims. It followed that for the interest of the party, the Investiture Committees would always invest candidates with Muslim background<sup>16</sup>.

In some of the areas, the electorate agreed for a rotatory investiture as it could be seen in the Tubah/Bafut Constituency of the North West Region of Cameroon where the parliamentary seat is rotated between Bafut and Tubah<sup>17</sup>. This was intended to make sure the both areas were represented and in such a situation the Investiture Committees played an important role of ensuring the will of the electorate were respected. This was however an unwritten rule and a gentlemanly understanding between both parties and communities accepted by politicians and other stakeholders in the election process.

Finally, there was the question of equilibrium based on gender to make sure both the male and female sexes were represented in the selection of the candidates especially in parliamentary elections. The Cameroon electoral code imposes on political parties the necessity to invest female candidates on parliamentary lists in every constituency else the list would be rejected on account of gender inequality. The age factor was another criterion that was taken into consideration in the process of choosing candidates for parliamentary. All the above explanations were strategies taken by political parties in the process of selecting party candidates as it greatly contributed in the advancement of the party.

### **Organization of Primaries**

There were two main reasons that encouraged political parties to go through primaries for the selection of their candidates for elections. Firstly, when the opposing candidate was strong or well implanted, it was usually advisable for the party to go in for primaries in order to come out with a strong competitor. This process also gave various aspirants to conduct competitive campaigns within the party for the selection of the best candidates to represent the party in elections<sup>18</sup>. Secondly, political parties went for primaries as a strategy to mobilize the electorate for the upcoming elections. This was aimed at developing the interest of the electorate for elections and to remind the militants of the battle ahead for the party. In fact, the selection of the candidate for the elections through primaries had its strengths and weaknesses.

The selection and endorsement of candidates was aimed at getting the best candidate to represent the party in an election. This was a strategy considered as pre-campaign strategy as it is intended to tell the electorate to be prepared to

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<sup>16</sup>Piapié Rodrigue, 35 years, Ph.D student, University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

<sup>17</sup>Nyanjoh Sunday Mulunh, 64 years, Retired Sub Divisional Delegate for Tubah, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Bamenda.

<sup>18</sup>Atekwana Joseph, 67 year, SDF National Treasurer, Bamenda, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

accompany the candidate toward election especially when the elections have taken quite some years. This was equally seen as some sort of renewal to the relationship between the electorate and the candidate, in view of the Election Day<sup>19</sup>.

The organization of primaries was another means to make the electorate acquainted with their candidate and his/her ideology for a particular election. Once the electorate and the candidates met face-to-face during the primaries, it gave the opportunity for the electorate to exchange views with the candidate on diverse issues and concert on how to agree on their divergence. This gave the electorate the opportunity to be familiarized with the candidate's program and roadmap for development before the Election Day proper. In fact, this could only be made known vividly through primaries which offered the candidate the opportunity to present some sort of campaigns to sell his or her ideas to party officials, militants and even outsiders to make sure his/her candidacy is the most favorable<sup>20</sup>. From the foregoing, it can clearly be established that primaries were very good strategies of selling the ideology of the party to members and would-be members before the day of elections<sup>21</sup>.

It should be understood during primaries, the electorate developed interest in the candidate as it was considered the people's candidate for the election as opposed to when the candidate was invested by the Investiture Committee<sup>22</sup>. It has also been realized that during primaries the candidate's popularity was reinforced. Over the years primaries were a strategy mostly used by the opposition political parties with the objective that their candidates would be made known to the general public. By implication most of the candidates of the ruling party were always known individuals with political track records within the constituency. In some instances, the candidate was an old civil servant who had been supporting the party with some developmental projects within the community and was already known by the electorate as opposed to the opposition that wanted their candidate to be known through the primaries<sup>23</sup>. All the same, sometimes the ruling party went for primaries once they realized that on the opposition camp there was a very strong candidate. At this level the ruling party was going to organize primaries in order to equally get a strong candidate to challenge the opposition candidate.

#### **Electioneering by various candidates at party level**

Once elections were announced, at the level of all the major parties, militants lobby to be the candidates of choice to represent their parties in the elections. This struggle is done at the level of the different parties and sometimes, the process is very tense, marked by bickering and bitter exchanges. However, once the candidate is settled on, calm usually returned to the party. This internal struggle to campaign to be selected as a party candidate did not involve the government administrators but rather mostly involved those who lobbied for elective positions as parliamentary or presidential candidates<sup>24</sup>.

By way of example, the situation of the Batibo Constituency in the 2013 parliamentary election can be instructive. The leading party in Batibo was the SDF where the Member of Parliament Honorable Mbah Ndam Joseph had been parliamentarian since 2007 when he was invested by the Investiture Committee of his party. In 2013 there were other vibrant candidates who wanted the position but in the campaign language of Honorable Mbah Ndam Joseph he said it was his last mandate to make sure his social insurance is guaranteed and for him to have enough time to train his successor. After numerous campaign attempts, those who were lobbying to be parliamentary candidates gave up their intentions, as the hierarchy of the party still wanted Honorable Mbah Ndam. After the mandate was over, he did not give the position to another aspirant as he still vied for the position of parliamentarian for the Batibo Constituency<sup>25</sup>.

As far as the CPDM was concerned, Fon Teche Njei had regularly held the position of the Sub Section President of the CPDM for Batibo and parliamentary candidate cumulatively for several years. This situation created a tussle within the party between the Fon of Guzang, Fon Ngwan Mbayemsig and Fon Teche over who was going to be the parliamentary candidate. Unable to have his way, the Fon of Guzang decided to temporarily quit the party<sup>26</sup>. The occurrence of this situation in a number of political parties were commonplace and went a long way to separate party militants and friendship within the party because of the strategy of lobbying to be the party candidate for an election. The fact is that, once a militant was chosen as the party candidate for parliamentary election especially in its stronghold, the candidate was sure to be a parliamentarian once the elections are organized.

Apparently, once there was serious electioneering within the party and a candidate was eventually arrived at, the electorate knew that the candidate representing the party was chosen by them, based on their conviction and not even that

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<sup>19</sup> Alioum Moussa, 65 years old, second deputy mayor of CPDM, Maroua 20 November 2018

<sup>20</sup> AbboUlsmanu, 71 years, NUDP Vice Secretary General, Ngoundere, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Nuggets of Hope, A collection of Press Statements, speeches and interview of the SDF National Chairman, p. 86.

<sup>22</sup> Adoum Gassaba, 59 yaers old, member of ADD, Maroua 19 november 2018

<sup>24</sup> Darkimba Wayang, 67 years, leader of MDR in Mayo Danai, Datcheka, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019

<sup>25</sup> Werewum Maurice, 56 years, SDF Districk Chairman for Batibo, Bamenda, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

<sup>26</sup> HRH Ngwan Mbayamssig III, 58 years, Fon of Guzang, aspirant for Parliamentary candidate for CPDM in 2013, Yaoundé, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

of the candidate. Such a candidate was always supported by the masses and party members as opposed to a candidate invested by the Investiture Committee based on his ethnic affiliation or on the strength of his/her financial status. This gave credibility to the candidate in the election. With this strategy, the militants invested their time and financial resources to see that their chosen candidate succeeded in the election. Also, once the electorate contributed in designating the candidate to represent them in an election, the electorate was more committed to see the candidate succeed. It is in this light that we can conclude that the primaries were a motivation to call the electorate to go and vote.

## IMPACTS OF THE CHOICE OF CANDIDATE BY THE POLITICAL PARTY

### Impact on election performance

The investiture had both negative and positive effects on the final candidate they are presenting on behalf of the party. One of the negative aspects was that it could divide the militants of the party. That is to say those whose expectations to be invested by the party were dashed were likely to become disgruntled thereby creating division within the party. Some of these candidates accused the Investiture Committee of favoritism which could further paint a sordid image of the party to the electorate. This in itself had the potential of destabilizing the party in question leading to poor performance in elections. A case in point was during the parliamentary election of 2013 in the Nkam Division of Littoral Region of Cameroon where the wife of former Minister Pierre Mukoko Mbonjo was a selected candidate for both the parliamentary and council elections. This created difficulty within the CPDM party in this constituency because the population was angry with the choice of candidate and decided to vote for the opposition party. Consequently, for the first time in 2013 the CPDM lost the election to the opposition party for making a wrong choice of the candidate<sup>27</sup>. This resulted to a sanction vote for the CPDM that had always emerged victorious in previous elections in the Nkam Division<sup>28</sup>. Infighting resulting from the choice of the candidate could weaken the campaign strategies of a political party as some of the members whose bids to be invested by the Investiture Committee failed could refuse joining the campaign team in support of their internal contestants.<sup>29</sup>

In as much there were negative effects of the investiture processes in political parties, there are a number of positive effects if the right candidate was eventually presented. In situations where the right candidate was chosen and supported by a majority of the militants, there was going to be unity in the party and as such the campaign was going to move on smoothly for the interest of the party and the candidate<sup>30</sup>. It has been observed that a majority of political parties opted for the Investiture Committee strategy to be sure they were going to be victorious in elections by choosing the right candidate but at times the candidate of the Investiture Committee was the source of difficulties within the party. This is the reason why during particular elections or in some particular cases in spite the advantages of the investiture strategy the party still decided to call for primaries in order to choose the election candidate.

### Impact on the Life of the Party

Like any method or strategy used by political parties for the selection of candidates for an election, there exist negative and positive impacts before the election. Once the strategy had negative backlash it considered not good for the party. If the strategy led to positive results, it was good for the advancement of the candidate and the party. A negative impact had the potential of bringing division within the party especially at the eve of election which could lead to a sanction vote from those who were not satisfied with the decision of the party.

The party as a matter of fact, would waste resources in fighting for their candidacy representation in the form of internal campaigns which otherwise would have been used in fighting the real opponent when the elections are announced. In such situations, the invested candidate spends much finances and energy at this pre-campaign phase and tends to be exhausted and weakened to continue with the real campaign against the opponent in elections. This gives the opposing party which did not go for primaries more strength. Besides, the refusal of those who lose in the primaries to contribute financially or materially in support of the invested candidate in elections or to participate in the campaigns usually punctures the party's ability to perform brilliantly in an election.

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<sup>27</sup> Pascal Nzeucheu, politics in the Bamileke region of Cameroon, 1946-2013: Dynamics and implications, Ph.D thesis, University of Bamenda, April 2018, p. 239.

<sup>28</sup> Tamstsua Sidollin, 39 years, CPDM Sub Section President of Bafoussam 1, Bafoussam, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>29</sup> I remember when I was not invested for the council list elections in Batibo in 2013, when my name was integrated into the campaign list for Batibo Sub Division, I told the organizers to give me financial means for me to join the campaign team which was not given and I refused going for the campaigns. The reason was simple. If I went for the campaign trip then I am going for the interest of those selected on the council list and the party wherein my own interest was not protected for going on a campaign trip in one's area of origin there is absolutely going to be some of expenditure especially on drinks and transportation which one cannot present for the party for refund, so it needs to be taking care of by one of the party hierarchy or competing candidates.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Walters Chimasa, 63 years, SDF administrative secretary for Bamenda head office, Bamenda, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

In spite of the fact that there are negative effects of the primaries, there also exist a number of positive impacts. The chosen candidates were made well-known to the electorate which was going to guarantee some level of success in an election. The fact, that the candidate was selected by the voters and not by the party made most of the militants to be committed to push them both morally and give financially to succeed<sup>31</sup>. It has been observed that, in the process of internal campaigns for the primaries, some new militants were integrated in the party either because such a democratic process of choosing a candidate for elections does not exist in their previous parties thereby pushing them to decamp. Among other issues, it should be noted that during the selection of candidates through the primaries, candidates came up with their agenda and the projects they were going to realize if elected into office. In the course of presenting solution to some of the difficulties in the localities, some of the onlookers developed sympathy for the party which was a positive point in the process of the organization of primaries. Once the electorate was happy with the candidate the majority of the voters had chosen, they were equally pleased to support the party financially and to even join the campaign teams on the field in order to get more militants for the party in elections. This was to make sure the envisaged projects of their chosen candidate were realizable while in office.

In actual fact, the selection of candidates by investiture was a very developed and appreciated strategy by a number of political parties. The use of primaries for the selection of candidates was a strategy which was well-developed in a number of political parties and greatly contributed in the advancement of the party ideology and the emergence of a credible candidate for an election<sup>32</sup>. However, it is equally realized that many political parties in Cameroon because of egoism and the influence of the founders of the party established the rule of the natural candidate especially in the presidential elections both for the ruling party and the opposition parties.

## CONCLUSION

The study sought to establish the nexus between choice of candidates and party performance in elections in Cameroon. Different political parties adopt different strategies to nominate candidates for different elections. As varied as the processes may be, it has been observed that the process of selection of a candidate for an election affected the kind of candidate eventually selected which in turn affected the party's performance in an election. In actual fact, in preparation for elections, the major opposition political parties never only made efforts to see that the electoral law was friendly, they also ensured that the internal dynamics inherent in the processes for selecting candidates were scrupulously respected to ensure good representation. Once a party accepted to participate in an election, efforts are made to mobilize their militants to get themselves registered on the electoral lists ready to vote when elections are announced by the Head of State. This was done through the organization of rallies to present the parties' projects and to raise funds for the party campaigns. Financially viable supporters of the party were expected to donate generously for the party to succeed. Besides this, selection of candidates was either done through the Investiture Committee or through the organization of primaries within the party. To do this end, the paper highlights the factors that influenced the choice of a candidate in the legislative elections in Cameroon; the method of selecting candidates and their impact on the results of the elections. Thus, through this study, it is revealed that the choice of candidates had direct implications on both the performance of the party in elections and on the life of the party.

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<sup>31</sup> Tazoacha Asonganyi, Cameroon: Difficult choices in a failed democracy. Published in United State of America, 2015, p. 331.

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