

*Full Length Research*

## **Zimbabwe and Malawi's political and electoral intricacies: a comparative analysis**

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Accepted 16 June 2014

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**Zimbabwe and Malawi, while sharing a common historical background, have presented divergent political and socio-economic attributes. However, despite the two countries having shared the platform during the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland between 1953 and 1963, the attainment of political independence for each of these countries paved the way for the political nuances that prevailed in the post-colonial era. Democratic practice has been presented in each of these countries by the way they held and continue to hold elections. Electoral institutions and the attendant electoral management bodies in the two countries have shaped the politics of the two countries. The role of civil society has in the electoral processes in each of the two countries have also helped to shed light on the restrictiveness and/or transparency of the polls in each of the countries. This paper deliberates on the electoral intricacies that have obtained in each of the two countries.**

**Keywords:** Zimbabwe; Malawi; Elections; Electoral processes; intricacies; transparency; civil society; electoral management bodies.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe and Malawi share a common historical and political background, having been members of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland between 1953 and 1963. The two countries were colonised by the British and enjoyed (endured?) a sizeable population of whites of British extraction. However differences emerged in how and when each got its independence. While the political independence of Malawi and Zambia came on a silver platter, the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe came about after a protracted liberation struggle. The two modes of political independence were to have an enduring impact on the definition of

democracy in each of the countries as well as on how elections were to be held, as well as the use and abuse of state resources for political gain. In addition, the protracted liberation struggle in Zimbabwe culminated from the socialism/communism parlance where the Executive and other attendant institutions would keep a tight grip on state machinery. Another commonality between the two countries is that both are members of the SADC regional bloc and as such are governed by the same electoral principles, notably the SADC Guidelines on the Conduct of Democratic Elections. However, despite the existence of such principles, the two countries

have conducted elections differently, with allegations of vote rigging have been common in both cases, as has become common in most African states.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this paper is based and hinges on desktop research with snippets of personal interaction with different stakeholders, notably members of electoral management bodies of each of the countries, members of civil society from the two case studies as well as personal observation of electoral processes of the cases. In addition, the paper utilises documentary analysis of international and regional legislative instruments guiding electoral processes. Through documentary analysis, the author seeks to establish the extent to which the conducts of elections in the two countries comply with existing international and regional instruments.

## INTERNATIONAL<sup>1</sup> AND REGIONAL<sup>2</sup> STANDARDS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

There are several guidelines that seek to determine and provide a framework for the conduct of electoral processes<sup>3</sup> which, if followed to the letter, would most likely produce results acceptable to all contesting parties as well as civil society organisations observing such elections. Only within such a context can the media serve society in an ethically responsible and constructive manner. This paper explores the content of some of the major instruments providing a guideline on the conduct of credible elections. These are the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; the 2002 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

International standards on media coverage of elections are premised on Articles 19 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression and the right to everyone to take part in the governance of their country through elections<sup>4</sup>. These principles have been expanded to give more detailed standards. One of the most important elaborations on these principles is found in the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression's 1999 annual

<sup>1</sup>Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation; Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

<sup>2</sup>The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

<sup>4</sup> Articles 19 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

report. In the Report, the Rapporteur denounced the "monopoly or excessive concentration of ownership of media in the hands of a few". In the Malawian Tripartite elections, the incumbent President Dr Joyce Banda dominated the airwaves, especially the electronic media. However the private media came in to fill the gap by providing publicity to opposition political parties, notably Zodiac which went all out to attempt to level the playing field insofar as publicity is concerned. In Zimbabwe during the 2002 and most importantly 2008 elections, the media was used by major political parties, especially the incumbent party, to denounce each other and as a conduit for hate language. An illustration is when the then Vice President Joseph Msika lamented that

*If you vote for Tsvangirai (leader of the opposition) you are voting for the former Rhodesians and thus you are voting for war<sup>5</sup>*

This utterance by a high ranking personality illustrates the tense environment courted by such reckless speech, which eventually explain the disputed nature of such electoral processes and the outcome of the resultant election that resulted as different political parties would most likely contest the attendant results. In some cases the vanquished may resort to citing among other irregularities the dominance of the media by the incumbent political party.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ELECTIONS

A lot has been written about elections and electoral processes, more so in Africa where elections are a beacon for democracy. Building on the work of Schumpeter, Dahl, Diamond, and others, one may want to distinguish between authoritarianism and democracy. These two concepts can be distinguished by the degree of contestation and participation in the selection of national leaders (Dahl, 1971). Closed authoritarian regimes are those in which a country's leaders are not selected through national elections, opposition political parties remain banned, political control is maintained through the use of repression, and there is little space for a free media and civil society.<sup>6</sup> This has been a predominant feature of politics in Swaziland, a country which boast of monarchical democracy. Then there are those hegemonic authoritarian regimes which hold regular elections as a formality and as part of their

<sup>5</sup> Vice President of Zimbabwe, Mr Joseph Msika, Manica Post, 20 June 2008.

<sup>6</sup>Marc Morje' Howard and Philip G. Roessler 'Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes' *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2, April 2006, Pp. 365–381.

system of governance. In such a dispensation, the electoral environment is characterised by widespread violations of political, civil, and human rights, and the elections are not actually competitive. This was the situation in Zimbabwe prior to, during and on the aftermath of the 2008 elections. Because no other party, except the ruling one, is allowed to effectively compete (i.e., the opposition is completely shut out from access to state-owned media coverage, banned from holding political rallies, or forced into exile or in jail), the dominant candidate or party wins overwhelmingly leading to a *de facto* one-party state (Diamond, 2002:23).<sup>7</sup> In competitive authoritarian systems, on the other hand, regular, competitive elections are held between the ruling party and a legal and legitimate opposition, which usually chooses to participate, rather than to boycott (Dahl, 1999). Once again this was the situation in Zimbabwe during the 2013 elections which were characterised by peaceful co-existence between and among political parties. The same can also be said of Malawi's Tripartite elections of May 2014, where only isolated sporadic pockets of violence were reported. However in competitive authoritarian system of the then incumbent President Dr Joyce Banda ensured that other contesting parties did not get fair media advantage. The incumbent regime still accused the opposition of using fraud, repression, and other illiberal means "to create an uneven playing field between government and opposition" (Levitsky and Way 2002:53) to try to ensure that it ultimately prevails in the electoral contest. Since both hegemonic authoritarianism and competitive authoritarianism involve regular elections under conditions that are generally authoritarian, they can be grouped within a larger category that some have called "electoral authoritarianism." Using the latter term, Diamond (2002:28) has noted that "the distinction between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism turns crucially on the freedom, fairness, inclusiveness, and meaningfulness of elections"

As has become common in most African countries, elections in the two countries are governed and guided by both national legislation and regional instruments. For Zimbabwe, electoral processes are guided by the Zimbabwe Electoral Act. The Act provides a framework on which elections are to be conducted. It has been argued that because the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13] has been amended so often, and because the latest amendments were made barely six weeks ago, there is some uncertainty amongst candidates and political parties as to what precisely the Act's provisions are. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has done little to

<sup>7</sup>Perceiving any chance of a fair contest beyond reach and not wishing to legitimize the electoral victory of the incumbent or ruling party, opposition candidates and parties in hegemonic regimes sometimes boycott the elections out of protest.

dispel the uncertainty.<sup>8</sup> In Malawi, the country depends on the Malawi Electoral Act. While politically-motivated violence characterised elections in the two countries, it was more so in Zimbabwe during the 2008 elections, and less so in Malawi where pockets of violence, especially at Thyolo district where two people are reported to have died due to political violence.

Another commonality between how elections are held in the two countries is the harmonisation of the different processes that cater for the different tiers of government. From 2008, Zimbabwe conducted the Harmonised Elections combining Presidential, Senatorial and Local Government electoral processes simultaneously. Taking a cue from Zimbabwe's Harmonised Elections starting from May 2014, Malawi conducted its Tripartite Elections, the first of its kind in the Southern African country. The harmonisation and combination of the different electoral processes has attendant challenges such as overwhelming the Electoral Management Body, especially given the limited resources that many African countries have to contend with. In Zimbabwe, the electoral contestation of 2008 and 2013 were characterised, among other things, by the absence of the voters' roll which was due to the fact that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was overwhelmed by the number of people who had registered to vote. In Malawi, similar challenges were encountered.

## DETERMINING WINNERS IN ELECTIONS

There are various ways of determining winners in electoral processes. There are those countries where presidential contestation is pre-determined, such as in Swaziland where monarchical democracy dictates that the position of King is not contested and as such elections is for Members of Parliament only. In such instances, the political leader of the country is unquestionable and pre-determined. However, given the increasing voices of dissent in Swaziland as well as across the globe against such practice, the prospects of such democracies is bleak. It has also been noted that the African Union, in its last Observer Mission report of September 2013, voices concern that such a form of democracy is increasingly becoming obsolete and untenable in modern day Africa.

In addition to monarchical democracy, there is the first-past-the-post form of determining winners in an election. While this form of determination enables those who garner more votes to govern, but it is not inclusive as it excludes other political players from participating in the governance of public affairs. In addition this method excludes interests of sections of the society who will have

<sup>8</sup> "Problems with the Electoral Act" *The Zimbabwean*, 20 July 2013.

voted for other parties other than the winning party. Such practice usually creates discontent from sections of society whose interests are not catered for in the new dispensation.

Besides the foregoing method of determining winners in elections, there is a third method- the inclusive government or coalition in which different political parties which garner votes from the electoral process are given the chance to participate in the governance of the country as they seek to represent the interests of their constituency. Such a method leads to a government of national unity (GNU) which was popularised in Kenya (2007) and Zimbabwe (2008) after disputed electoral results were posted in the two processes (Mapuva, 2010).<sup>9</sup> Malawi uses the *first-past-the-post* method, and irrespective of what percentage the winners get, they will proceed to govern. For Zimbabwe, the outright winner should get 50% + 1 in order to be declared a winner. This means that this method is exclusive as it does not cater for other political parties whose supporters do not share the spoils of governing the country. In the May 2014 elections, Professor Peter Mutharika romped to victory, having garnered 42% of the vote against his opponents who garnered different percentages. In such a case, members of the opposition may enter government if the leader of the winning party deems it necessary to do so.

## MALAWI AND MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

Africa adopted multiparty from the 1980s as the former liberation movements which had dominated political space from the 1960s being dismantled. However, multiparty democracy does not allude to having many political parties in a country, but the quality of political competition and meaningful engagement emanating from these political parties as well as the credibility of the various political players. Malawi treaded the multiparty route belatedly, as Dr Kamuzu Banda dominated much of the country's post-colonial era.

## ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES

The mandate of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) is to manage the conduct of elections and to ensure that all logistics necessary for the conduct of free and fair elections are in place. However, one of the most contentious issues about the EMBs is their composition and the appointment of those mandated to run the affairs

<sup>9</sup> See Mapuva, J (2010). "GNU as a Conflict Prevention Strategy" in *Journal of Sustainable Development*. 12 (6) 247-263, December, 2010).

of these bodies. While in Zimbabwe, the senior management of ZEC are appointed by the Executive, in Malawi, members of the Malawi Elections Commission (MEC) are appointed by the President from a list of credible individuals forwarded by the Malawi Judicial Commission, which explains why the chairperson of MEC, Mr Maxon Mhendera is a senior judge. This tends to compromise the neutrality of ZEC, hence there was controversy and mayhem when Justice Chiweshe, was appointed as the chairperson of ZEC during the 2008 elections. The fact that Justice Chiweshe<sup>10</sup> has military credentials (Owen, 2012)<sup>11</sup> raised suspicions, leading to his replacement with Justice Rita Makarau, a renowned High Court Judge for the 2013 elections. However, most important aspect of EMBs is whether they are able to act as instruments of separation of powers. In Zimbabwe, the fact that senior members of ZEC have the blessing of the Executive implies that they are most likely to dance to the whims of politicians, especially those responsible for their ascension. This could be the most probable explanation for the perennial production of contested electoral results, notably in the 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 (SW Radio, 2012)<sup>12</sup> and most recently 2013 elections in Zimbabwe<sup>13</sup>. In Malawi, the recent May 2014 elections showed that the EMB is not and refused to be pushed by the Executive. Firstly when the incumbent President of Malawi, Dr Joyce Banda moved to annul the preliminary election results which showed that she was losing, the MEC chairperson was quick to challenge the President in this regard, telling her off that she does not have the power to annul election results, especially given that she was a contestant in the same elections. This most important point to note from the chairman of MEC is that the events in Malawi, unlike in Zimbabwe, is that the doctrine of the separation of powers prevailed. In the Zimbabwean case, the delay by more than a month by ZEC to announce election results indicated the extent to which ZEC is not in control of itself, let alone its mandate.

## POLITICS, CANDIDATURE AND FAMILY LINE

Politics have been known to follow the bloodline as shown in cases where children of politicians waded the rough political waters and in Malawi, the story is not

<sup>10</sup> Justice Chiweshe chaired ZEC from 2005 until 2010. In 2008 the Justice Chiweshe-led ZEC delayed the announcement of presidential results by more than six weeks.

<sup>11</sup> Owen Gagare, "Zimbabwe: Elections- How far Will the Army Go?" *Zimbabwe Independent*, 22 June 2012, Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201206221065.html> (Accessed 16 May 2014).

<sup>12</sup> "Chiwenga threatens coup if Mugabe loses election". *SW Radio Africa*, 10 March 2008

<sup>13</sup> M. R. Rupiya, *Civil-Military Relations in Zimbabwe*.

different. Making reference to the Kennedy family which has dominated American politics for more than a century-and-a-half, Jon Terbush<sup>14</sup> (2012) has noted that politics follows family lines and improves with each passing generation. According to Fackler, (2011) a hereditary dictatorship, or family dictatorship, in political science terms a *personalistic regime*, is a form of dictatorship that occurs in a nominally or formally republican regime, but operates in practice like an absolute monarchy, in that political power passes within the dictator's family.<sup>15</sup> Thus, power is transmitted between members of the same family due to the overwhelming authority of the leader (Johnson, 2006).<sup>16</sup> Because a family dictatorship exerts significant control on its succession, a successor is often determined well in advance (Fackler, 2011).<sup>17</sup> This is the case with the politics of Swaziland. Consequently this paper provides live examples of similar precedents in Malawi. The concept of politics following family lines has been more visible in Malawi after the despotic reign of Dr Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Bakili Muluzi took over the reins as the new and first President of multiparty democracy in Malawi. Muluzi was forced out of active politics after serving for the stipulated two-terms, and Binguwa Mutharika took over. However, the untimely death of Binguwa Mutharika saw the then Vice President Dr Joyce Banda taking over as the leader of Malawi to complete waMutharika's term. Both Muluzi and Binguwa Mutharika introduced politics into the bloodline of their kith and kin. During the May 2014 Tripartite elections, Atupele Muluzi contested for the presidency of the country, having taken a cue from his father Bakili Muluzi. The youthful Atupele had sought to appeal to the youths as he saw this category of voters as most likely to vote for him. However, the electorate saw Atupele as too young to contend with the rough political waters of Malawian politics. On the same note, Professor Peter Mutharika, the younger brother of the former late president waMuharika also waded the political waters as he contested for the presidency of the country. Bingu had earned fame for improving the lives of ordinary Malawians. Given credit which his brother had enjoyed for resuscitating the Malawian economy, Professor Mutharika sought to ride on the popularity of his late brother, which he did successfully. In addition to politics running within families, during the reign of Dr Kamuzu

<sup>14</sup> Jon Terbush (2012). A Brief History of the Kennedys in American Politics.

Available at <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-kennedy-political-dynasty-family-tree-infographic-2012-1>

<sup>15</sup>Fackler, Martin (2011-12-19). "Kim's Heir Likely to Focus on Stability". *The New York Times*.

<sup>16</sup>Johnson, RW; Town, Cape (September 3, 2006). "Playboy waits for his African throne". London: *Times Online*.

<sup>17</sup>Fackler, Martin (2011).

Banda, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), had become Banda's personal party and as such a family party. Upon his death, the Malawian strongman and brother to the State hostess Mama Kadzamira, John Tembo briefly took over, but his association with the late Kamuzu Banda, as well as ill-health provided an impediment to his popularity. Sensing that he could not make it, he handed over the presidency of the party to a clergy, one Dr Lazarus Chakwera who commanded and still commands a lot of respect among Malawians.

However, while this is true for Malawi, there is a sharp contrast to politics in Zimbabwe. Although one can cited several heroes of Zimbabwean politics, notably heroes of the liberation struggle, not many of their siblings have gone into politics. Josiah Tongogara may have children and/or siblings but not much is heard of them in political circles. Herbert Chitepo died during the liberation struggle and only the wife continued with politics, but left due to old age and not much have since been heard about their children's desire to go into active politics. The late general Mujuru's children do not seem to consider politics as a profession.

## ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Civil society organisations play a very prominent role in national development and as such strive to maintain good working relationships with a wide range of interest groups (Electoral Assistance Bureau, 2012). This indicates that strong civil society organizations can provide constructive channels for democratic participation. In Malawi civil society organisations (CSOs) are a free operating entity and takes an active role in creating an enlightened citizenry that is able to make informed political decisions and potential political choices. In the country, CSOs operate as a collective body as they strive to mobilise the electorate to make wise political choices. Through the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), civil society engages in civic education to conscientise citizens. On the contrary, the situation in Zimbabwe is different. Civic education is the mandate of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) as stipulated under the Zimbabwe Electoral Act. The ZEC plays a dominant role in civic education and any CSO that would like to be involved in civic education should seek permission from ZEC. In conducting this education these organisations must either use voter education materials supplied by ZEC or, if they want to use their own voter education materials, these materials must be approved by ZEC. There are various other legal restrictions upon the provision of voter education by civil society organisations.<sup>18</sup> The civil

<sup>18</sup> Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, "Role of Civil Society and Media". Available at <http://www.zec.gov.zw/voter->

society organisation must be either registered as Private Voluntary Organisation or be registered in the Deeds Registry as a Trust. The organisation must consist wholly or mainly of Zimbabwean citizens or permanent residents or, in the case of a trust, it must have a majority of trustees who are citizens or permanent residents. The constitution or trust deed must mandate the organisation to conduct voter education. Persons employed to conduct voter education must be citizens or permanent residents. The materials used must be provided or approved by the Commission. The programme must be funded solely by local contributions or donations; any foreign contributions must be channelled to the Commission which may allocate such funds to the organisation. No foreign contribution or donation for the purposes of voter education shall be made except to the Commission, which may allocate such contribution or donation to any person. The materials used must not be misleading. Copies of the proposed voter education material must be provided to the Commission.<sup>19</sup>

## MAJOR POLITICAL CONTENDERS IN MALAWI'S ELECTORAL CONTESTATION

The May 2014 Tripartite Election were a watershed electoral process because for the first time in the electoral history of the country, Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections were held simultaneously. Over the years, Local Government elections were either ignored or a ceremonial or a dummy form of contestation was held. However in the May 2014 electoral contestation, it dawned on the political players, civil society and policy-makers as well as the MEC to hold these elections simultaneously. This could have a result of what had occurred in Zimbabwe where such elections were harmonised. In line with multiparty democracy, a total of 56 political parties contested for the last two tiers of government, but for the presidency, only 4 political parties fielded candidates. These were the Malawi Congress Party led by Dr Lazarus Chakwera, the People's Party (PP) led by the incumbent President Dr Joyce Banda, Democratic People's Party (DPP) led by Professor Peter Mutharika as well as the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by Atupele Muluzi.

It would have been common knowledge that the incumbent **Dr Joyce Banda** would manipulate state resources for political gain, in line with the dictates of the

Theory of the Preponderance of the Incumbency. Firstly, she was able to make maximum use of the airwaves for campaigning purposes at the detriment of other political parties. Viewers could not help seeing Dr Banda shuttling between venues and dishing out goodies to the impoverished communities as a vote-buying gimmick. However, despite common perceptions that with state resources at her disposal, she would romp to an easy victory, deep-seated issues lived to haunt her. The 'cashgate' scandal where government Ministers looted government coffers during Dr Banda's tenure tarnished her image.<sup>20</sup> Despite her efforts to turn a blind eye on the scandal, the incumbent faced a daunting task to convince the electorate. Eventually the events of Election Day (20 May 2014) were to haunt her further as poll results coming in the next day indicated that she was not fairing very well. Apart from the 'cashgate' scandal, people in Malawi are predominantly patriarchal by nature and find it hard to live with the idea of a female President. Dr Banda had ascended to the Presidency by virtue of her being the Vice President then. It would have been unimaginable for the electorate to choose her as their first choice for President. Hence this could have accounted for her dismal performance at the polls in May 2014.

Another major contender in Malawi's electoral contestation was Professor Peter Mutharika, the brother to the late President Binguwa Mutharika. The untimely death of Binguwa Mutharika could have landed sympathy in the hearts of many Malawians such that most began to identify with the brother Professor Peter Mutharika during election time. In addition, Binguwa Mutharika had enjoyed a large following most of which were passed on to Peter Mutharika at the time of his death. In addition society in Malawi hold educated people in high esteem. This could explain why Malawian called on Dr Kamuzu Banda to come back home from overseas to preside over the affairs of the people of Malawi. Additionally, after the tenure of Bakili Muluzi, Malawians opted for Binguwa Mutharika as their next President by virtue of his academic credentials. There is also evidence that people in Malawi have a penchant for those of their own based overseas just as what they showed in the case of Dr Kamuzu Banda in the 1960s. This could partly explain why they opted for Professor Peter Mutharika who was known to be based in United States of America where he was a lecturer. As such Professor Peter Mutharika became the most favourite candidate for the majority of Malawians, although simmering rivalry had lingered between Dr Joyce Banda and Professor Mutharika. Surprisingly upon winning elections by 36.4% during the May 2014 electoral contestation, Professor offered an

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[education/role-of-civic-society-media](#) (Accessed 28 May 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, "Role of Civil Society and Media". Available at <http://www.zec.gov.zw/voter-education/role-of-civic-society-media> (Accessed 28 May 2014).

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<sup>20</sup> Transparency International (2014). "Malawi: Time for Action on 'Cashgate' Corruption Scandal". Available at [http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/malawi\\_time\\_for\\_action\\_on\\_cashgate\\_corruption\\_scandal](http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/malawi_time_for_action_on_cashgate_corruption_scandal) (Accessed, 2014).

olive branch to the vanquished Dr Joyce Banda.<sup>21</sup>

Another contender, Atupele Muluzi hails from a family of politicians, notably among these being the former President Bakili Muluzi who took over from the then ailing Kamuzu Banda who had held the people of Malawi to ransom through his despotic rule and authoritarian tendencies. People still remembered Muluzi as their first President in a multiparty democracy. As such many people in Malawi still regard him as having brought about democracy and called for reconciliation with those who had presided over the despotic rule of Dr Kamuzu Banda, notably the strongman John Tembo as well as the hostess Mama Kadzamira both of the MCP. With the constitutional limitations of holding political office for two terms, Bakili Muluzi was forced to relinquish power in 2003, leading to the ascension of Binguwa Mutharika. Despite his stepping down due to constitutional stipulations, Bakili Muluzi still commanded a large following, and his name still rang a bell in the minds of pro-democracy Malawians as well as civil society at large. He has been credited for bringing about multiparty democracy to Malawi at a time when opposition to Dr Kamuzu Banda's rule was suicidal. Upon ascension to power Bakili Muluzi preached reconciliation among people of Malawi. He is also credited for bringing Malawi back to negotiating terms with multilateral financial institutions for balance of payment support, at a time when Malawi had been banished by many of these institutions as a result of Dr Kamuzu Banda's authoritarian rule. It is these positive attributes of Bakili Muluzi that his son, Atupele sought to ride on during the May 2014 Tripartite Elections to appeal to the electorate. In addition, the youthful Atupele sought to appeal to and impress upon the vote of the youths in Malawi, most of whom were excitedly looking forward to cast their vote for the first time. Given the economic challenges, high poverty levels and most importantly high unemployment rates, the prospects of landing a job upon voting for a prospective Atupele government excited most of the youths. Because of his youthful character, Atupele was able to attract the youths to his side. However, the elderly Malawians could not contend with the idea of surrendering their destiny to youthful Presidential aspirant, hence Atupele could not lend the vote of the elderly Malawians.

Dr Lazarus Chakwera contested on an MCP ticket. After the death of Dr Kamuzu Banda, the strongman of Malawian politics then, John Tembo had taken over the leadership of the MCP. A holder of an honorary doctorate, Dr Chakwera commands a lot of respect within Malawian clergy, civil society and political spectrum. However, unpopularity and ill-health led to Tembo

relinquishing power to Dr Lazarus Chakwera, a member of the clergy whose untarnished character would most likely attract popularity to the MCP. Dr Chakwera would also help resuscitate the weaning MCP given his religious background. The MCP was most popular in the Central region where Dr Kamuzu Banda, John Tembo and Mama Kadzamira hail from, the two latter in the Dedza District. Despite the despotic rule of Dr Kamuzu Banda during his tenure from 1964 to 1992/3, the MCP still command respect, especially given the fact that people (mostly the elderly) still harbour the euphoric moments when Malawi got its independence in 1964 after calling on Dr Kamuzu Banda to come back home and rule the country. As a result the MCP, just like ZANU PF in Zimbabwe, still has pockets of supporters due to the fact that these are political parties that presided over the first independent state.

Given the different background of the major political contenders, Malawians had a wealth of personalities to choose from. However, Professor romped to victory, having earned sympathy from all and sundry of Malawians, especially as he was harassed by the then incumbent Dr Joyce Banda, as well as on the untimely death of his brother, Binguwa Mutharika. For former President Dr Joyce Banda, it came as a surprise to many that she conceded defeat, despite spirited threats that she had indicated that she would die fighting.

## CONCLUSION

Elections in Malawi have shown that the wishes of the electorate will always prevail despite the fact that incumbent political leaders manipulate state resources for their political survival. The elections also defied the dictates of the preponderance of the incumbency theory which presents incumbent leaders as likely to win elections by virtue of state resources at their disposal. In Malawi, despite the fact that the incumbent Dr Joyce Banda had state resources at her disposal, she succumbed to defeat by Professor Peter Mutharika of the Democratic People's Party (DPP). The lessons to be drawn from the Malawian elections are that incumbent political leaders should not base their chances of winning the next elections on the availability of state resources at their disposal.

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