

**EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS ON POLITICAL PARTY
STRATEGIES: THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DPP AND MCP IN
MALAWI'S 2019 AND 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

MA (POLITICAL SCIENCE) THESIS

WANANGWA CHARLES MTONGA

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

JULY 2025



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MA (POLITICAL SCIENCE) THESIS

By

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Submitted to the School of Law, Economics and Governance, Department of Politics
and Government in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts (Political Science)

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

JULY 2025

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. Where contributions of others have been used, references have been provided and all such sources duly acknowledged. I therefore declare this work originally mine and hereby present partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Political Science).

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Full legal name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis presents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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Second Supervisor

DEDICATION

I first dedicate this work to God almighty for the grace to have this privilege to do my Master's Degree. But much appreciation goes to my Father, Mother, Wife and Daughter, Mr and Mrs Charles Mtonga, Agnes and Ayanda Mtonga respectively. They sacrificed through prayers and ability to create space that I further my education to this far.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of Malawi's transition from a First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system to the 50+1 majority system on the strategic behaviours of major political parties, specifically the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), during the 2019 and 2020 Presidential elections. The research focuses on three critical dimensions of party strategy: the nature of political alliances, campaign messaging, and the composition of party politburos. The study finds that the 50+1 system incentivized coalition-building, broader messaging, and recalibration of leadership structures within parties. These changes suggest a shift in the logic of party competition under a majoritarian electoral framework. The study recommends future research on the institutionalization and sustainability of electoral alliances under the 50+1 system.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFORD	Alliance for Democracy
CCAP	Church of Central African Presbytery
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CMD	Centre for Multiparty Democracy
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CVE	Civic Voter Education
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FP	Freedom Party
FPE	Fresh Presidential Election
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MEJN	Malawi Elections Justice Network
MESN	Malawi Electoral Support Network
NEC	National Executive Committee
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
NSO	National Statistical Office
PAC	Public Affairs Committee
PP	People's Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UTM	United Transformation Movement

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Institutions, defined as formal and informal rules that structure political, economic, and social interactions, are important in determining strategies and actions of political entities (North, 1990). Among others, these institutions include constitutions, legal systems, electoral rules, and norms, which collectively form the framework within which political actors operate. The significance of institutions is underlined by their ability to create incentives or disincentives for behaviors, thereby influencing the stability and effectiveness of political systems (March & Olsen, 1989).

Electoral rules, as part of political institutions, play a crucial role in shaping political behavior. For instance, they determine how votes are translated into seats, which influence party strategies and candidates' behavior. One of the most prominent electoral rules is the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) system. Under FPTP, the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins, which favors big parties and often leads to a two-party system (Duverger, 1954). This system can discourage smaller parties and independent candidates, as their chances of winning significantly diminish unless they can secure a plurality of votes in individual constituencies. In contrast, the absolute majority or two-round system requires a candidate to obtain more than 50% of the votes to win. If no candidate achieves this threshold in the first round, a second round of voting is held between the two top candidates. The system is designed to ensure that the winner has a

broad base of support reflecting most of the electorate (Blais & Massicotte, 1996). Overall, as institutions, electoral rules influence the general behavior of political actors thus this study examines the effects of electoral systems on political party strategies through a comparative study of Malawi's 2019 and 2020 Presidential elections with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as litmus paper for the test.

1.2 Background

The context of politics and Government may be looked at under four different phases of Malawi's history. These are the pre-colonial (before 1891), colonial (1891–1964), post-colonial one-party era (1964–1993), and the democratic era; 1993 and beyond (Magolowondo (2007)). During these different phases, the types of Government and politics changed both in terms of how they were perceived and how they were in practice as the subsequent discussion demonstrates. Magolowondo (2007) positions Pre-colonial Malawi as predominantly, a collection of chiefdoms, each one of them with their leadership structures and traditions. Leadership succession was and remains hereditary, following a defined lineage. Under this hereditary monarchy, leaders are not accountable to their subjects. Clan membership is the main source of social identity. Chiefs exert some form of authority over their subjects. They demand that they get some tribute such as a tusk of every elephant or skin of every lion or leopard that was killed in their respective territory. The chiefs also settle disputes that arose among their subjects. In this regard, some governmental functions were being performed. The system of Government changed when the colonial administration was established. Further, Magolowondo (2007) highlights that the colonial administration represented

and defended the interests of the monarch in Britain to whom it was also accountable. Unlike the pre-colonial, the traditional chiefs became mere subjects and loyal supporters of colonialism. They were brought into the system of Government only after the attempts to establish a direct rule failed in 1896. The country was too vast for the small colonial administration to effectively manage. More districts were created, and the districts were further divided into smaller units that were put under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders who were appointed by the colonial authorities. However, Political consciousness among the Africans in Malawi started emerging with the establishment of native associations when some of them (the Africans) had the opportunity to be exposed to other countries like South Africa. However, despite the formation of these native associations, governance and participation in Government remained the preserve of the colonials until the late 1940s when some reforms in the colonial administration were made, especially in the area of Local Government. The idea of these reforms was to provide Africans with the possibility to participate in political decision-making (Magolowondo, 2007).

1.2.1 Electoral Laws and Politics during the Colonial Era

Still more, despite the reforms that the colonial administration made, resistance against colonialism continued, particularly because institutions of the colonial Government still represented the interests of the colonial Government. The ex-official members, being Government appointees, could hardly be expected to question or depart significantly from the thinking of those who appointed them. Subsequently, the colonial Government entered into political negotiations with the African nationalists under the leadership of Kamuzu (Magolowondo, 2007).

1.2.2 Electoral Laws and Politics after Independence

On 15 April 1961, the MCP had a landslide victory in the first general elections for LEGICO and gained an important role in the Executive Council. Subsequently, Nyasaland was granted internal self-government in February 1963, ten months before the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was officially dissolved. Following the granting of internal self-government, Dr Banda became the Prime Minister, hence assuming the powers of the Head of Government while the British monarch remained Head of State. Colonial rule finally ended in 1964 when Malawi attained independence (Magolowondo, 2007).

Having achieved independence, Malawi then acquired republican status in 1966, with Kamuzu Banda as head of both State and Government. Although Malawi gained independence from the British for the next 30 years, Malawians had to bear one of the worst dictatorial regimes. In the name of building the nation, the Constitution of Malawi declared in 1966 that there should only be one party in Malawi and that party was to be the MCP. In 1971 Kamuzu Banda was declared Life President. Various repressive laws were instituted that significantly curtailed personal liberties. Any forces that were deemed as challenging the leadership were silenced in various ways, ranging from detentions without trial to imprisonment (Mangolowondo, 2007).

1.2.3 Electoral Laws and Politics in the New Democratic Dispensation

At the beginning of the 1990s, Malawi experienced unprecedented political reforms which saw the country being one of the first in sub-Saharan Africa to be included in the category of 'third wave' democracies. Both domestic and external/international factors

contributed to this paradigmatic shift in politics and Government. A referendum in 1993 followed this in which the electorate was asked whether they wanted a one-party or multi-party system. The referendum was followed by founding elections that took place in May 1994. The UDF won with Bakili Muluzi as President. A new Constitution based on democratic principles, which was provisionally adopted in 1994, came into force in 1995 (Magolowondo, 2007). Since then, the holding of elections in 1994 concluded Malawi's transition phase. After these founding elections, therefore, a consolidation process commenced. This is a process in which democratic values will have to be entrenched and become a way of life. This is a lengthy and arduous phase that cannot be achieved overnight. It is within this phase of the democratization process that Malawi finds itself today and one needs to consider Contemporary Politics and Government in Malawi in this context (Magolowondo, 2007).

Hence, as part of leaving no stone unturned, my study takes this contextual background as a benchmark for understanding the test that was conducted. Further, the idea of context supports the study as it agrees with what Nohlen (1996) hints that electoral systems operate within a complex context of multiple factors that vary per different countries and periods. He points out that the analysis of the electoral system and evaluation of its impact have to take into account the specific historical and socio-political circumstances of the country in question. Thus, through the empirical historical approach, the study explores and gets insights supporting the findings. The study does not just stop looking at the context; it goes deeper into understanding the concepts implored to signify that the change in the electoral system had, to a greater extent, influenced the change in political party strategies.

The First concept to share the deeper meaning in the study is the Electoral system itself. Thus, Riera & Cantú (2002) points out that electoral systems constitute critical components that wield significant influence over the dynamics of politics and electoral strategies in democratic nations worldwide. A diverse array of countries has adopted various electoral systems, such as the first-past-the-post system (FTPS), the majority system (50 + 1), the proportional representation system, single-party transferable vote, and mixed-member systems. Riera & Cantú (2002) continues and provides that the selection of an electoral system profoundly shapes the conduct of elections, yielding consequential effects on voter behavior and party systems (Riera & Cantú, 2022).

Of course, Nohlen (1996) notes that scholars and politicians usually disagree on the importance of the electoral system as a factor in structuring the political system: Is the electoral system more important? Important to other institutional variables such as the form of parliamentary government (for example, the relationship between parliament and the cabinet)? Is it more important than socio-political factors, such as the structure of society or the prevailing patterns of conflict resolution?

Taking into account the assertions of major political scientists, there exists no doubt about the prominent role played by electoral systems. According to Giovanni Sartori (1994: IX), the electoral system is "a most essential part of the workings of political systems. Not only are electoral systems the most manipulative instrument of politics, but they also shape the party system and affect the spectrum of representation" Arend Lijphart (1994: 1) even stresses that "the electoral system is the most fundamental

element of representative democracy" Several scholars link the fate of democracy in some cases to the particular electoral system in use (Nohlen, 1996).

Over the years, scholars, like Norris (1997), have extensively studied the impact of alternative systems, such as the 50+1 electoral system, on political representation, inclusivity, and the overall legitimacy of democratic processes. These studies reveal that electoral systems not only influence political outcomes' representation and inclusivity but also play a crucial role in shaping the behavior of political actors, particularly political parties. Electoral strategic considerations prompt parties and candidates to adapt their campaign tactics and messaging to align with the incentives created by the electoral system (Ibid). For instance, the 50+1 electoral system fosters issue-based politics and coalition-building as parties strive to maximize their chances of securing an absolute majority.

Evidence from across the world demonstrates that adopting an alternative electoral system triggers a change in political party behavior. In Kenya, the 50+1 electoral system encouraged parties to form coalitions as a means of securing an absolute majority (Cheeseman et al., 2019). This was evident in the formation of the Jubilee Alliance and the National Super Alliance (NASA) during the 2013 and 2017 elections, respectively. As Kanyinga and Odote (2019) note, these coalitions enable parties to pool resources and expand their support base to achieve an absolute majority.

In Brazil, the 50+1 electoral system motivated political parties to prioritize voter mobilization through issue-based rather than personalized campaigning. For example,

the 2018 presidential election witnessed parties like the Workers' Party (PT) endeavoring to increase political participation in regions with historically lower voter turnout (Ivanov, 2020). This strategic shift towards policy-focused campaigns reflected parties' recognition of the need to appeal to a diverse electorate to secure victory in the second round of the presidential elections.

In 2020, Malawi adopted the 50+1 electoral system, transitioning from the former First-Past-the-Post system. This change reflects the diversity of electoral systems around the world and the lack of consensus on which system is best for democratic governance and stability (Warioba, 2011). Historically, Malawi utilized the First-Past-the-Post electoral system, which faced challenges to the marginalization of certain groups and the possibility of a minority government (Hussein & Sambo, 2020). Given Malawi's characteristics of ethnicity, regionalism, and the "big man" syndrome (Lars Svåsand, 2013:1), this transition to the 50+1 electoral system was expected to impact political party strategies significantly.

My study aims to examine the effects of the transition from the First-Past-the-Post to the 50+1 electoral system on the strategic planning of political parties in Malawi. The research explores the extent to which electoral change affects political parties' electoral strategies, such as alliances, campaign messages, and the composition of political party politburos.

1.3 Problem Statement

Malawi's transition from the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system to the 50+1 electoral system marks a critical juncture in the country's democratic development. However, the extent to which this shift has transformed political party strategies remains underexplored. While prior studies discuss voting behavior, incumbency, and patronage, they fall short of offering a theory-informed analysis of strategic adaptation by political parties under the 50+1 rule. This study fills that gap by applying the Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) framework to assess how institutional incentives triggered shifts in party alliances, messaging, and leadership composition in the 2019 and 2020 elections. This represents a theoretical and contextual gap in existing electoral studies literature.

The study recommends electoral reform to address such political party strategies. There was a noticeable gap in understanding whether the change in the electoral system would influence political party electoral strategies in Malawi and to what extent. To address this gap, this study investigates and sheds light on whether the electoral system has shaped political party strategies in Malawi by comparing the 2019 elections which were held under First-Past-the-Post in comparison to the 2020 elections, which were held under 50+1. By doing so, my study helps in contributing valuably to the broader discourse on electoral system reforms and their consequences, as it affirms that, to a greater extent, the change in the electoral system leads to a change in political party electoral strategies.

1.4 Study Objectives

1.4.1 Main Objective

- To examine whether the change in the electoral system influences change in political party strategies about the 2019 and 2020 Malawi Presidential Elections

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To explore the nature of political party alliances in light of the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020
- To review campaign messages by political parties in Light of the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020
- To examine the composition of the party politburos in light of the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020

1.5 Main Research Question

- Does change in the electoral system affect the political party strategies?

1.6 Specific Research Questions

- How has the nature of political party alliances evolved following the adoption of the 50+1 electoral system in 2020?
- In what ways do campaign messages of political parties reflect the influence of the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020?
- How has the composition of party politburos changed in response to the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020?

1.7 Justification

This study applies the Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) framework to assess how institutional incentives shape party strategies in shifting electoral contexts. As Babbie (2013) notes, theoretical clarity is critical in framing research puzzles; this study posits that institutional incentives embedded in electoral systems offer a predictable logic for strategic recalibration by political actors (Shepsle, 1986; Ostrom, 1990).

The transition from a First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) to a 50+1 majority system in Malawi presents political parties with a new set of institutional incentives that significantly altered their cost-benefit calculations. This provides an ideal context for observing rational adaptation in strategic decision-making, such as coalition formation, campaign messaging, and leadership restructuring. Through this lens, the study bridges theoretical insights from RCI with grounded realities in a non-Western context, thus contributing to ongoing debates in comparative institutional analysis (North, 1990; March & Olsen, 1989).

Furthermore, this study is justified on empirical and contextual grounds. According to Likoti (2009), participatory and competitive elections are foundational to representative democracy, and their effectiveness hinges on the design of the electoral system. In Malawi, where political party systems are shaped by ethnic, regional, and patronage dynamics (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Posner, 2005), the shift to the 50+1 system offered an opportunity to assess how institutions condition political behaviour.

Additionally, the justification is supported by the difference in political cultures between Western democracies and third-wave democracies like Malawi. While voters in Western democracies often base decisions on ideology and policy (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008), Malawian political behaviour is still shaped by ethnicity, patronage, and regional loyalties (Ferree & Horowitz, 2010; Koter, 2013). This contrast enhances the value of studying Malawi as a case of institutional impact on strategic behavior.

Finally, my study contributes to filling a literature gap, as prior studies on Malawi's electoral politics have not provided a theory-informed explanation of how institutional change affects party strategy. By comparing the 2019 and 2020 elections, this study offers a unique opportunity to analyse how political actors respond to new rules under real-time pressure, and adds to the limited but growing scholarship on electoral reforms in African democracies (Cheeseman et al., 2019; Wahman & Goldring, 2021).

Therefore, this research is justified both theoretically and practically: it contributes to theory building in political institutionalism and provides policy-relevant insights for electoral design and democratic consolidation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Preliminary Literature review

This chapter defines key terms used in my study and discusses the available literature. Furthermore, it is inclusive of the analytical/theoretical underpinnings of the study. The chapter proceeds as follows: the first section unpacks the key concepts anchoring the study, which include; political strategy, electoral system, electoral reforms, candidate-centered electoral system, party-centered electoral system, voter choice, campaign messages, electoral alliances, etc. The analysis of the empirical literature followed this. The last section of the chapter presents and discusses the theoretical literature anchoring the study, where the emphasis is on articulating various strands of institutional theory where the study finally settles for rational choice institutionalism as the viable theoretical framework for understanding the study findings.

2.2 Key Definitions

2.2.1 Political Strategy

According to Paquette (2002); Kadima (2014); Cheeseman et al. (2019); Wahman & Goldring (2021), a strategy is an organized, purposeful effort to create change, and thoughtful planning should guide it. Before taking action, effective strategists thoroughly analyze the current situation, identifying those affected both positively and negatively. They consider potential changes that could improve the situation and assess the available resources, tactics, and tools to implement a strategy that addresses the issue.

People use this knowledge to create a strategy, which guides their planning, implementation marketing, monitoring, improvement, and evaluation. An effective strategy should address the following key questions: First, the Problem, vision, and Change—what problem are you facing? What is your vision for how the world will look once the problem is solved? What changes are needed to achieve that vision? According to Paquette (2002); Kadima (2014); Cheeseman et al. (2019); Wahman & Goldring (2021), it is beneficial to engage your group in exploring the problem, vision, and desired changes. A shared understanding of the issue will inspire ideas for action and help keep your group motivated and focused on the goal. Creating a common vision will also help determine ways to monitor, and adjust the implementation of, the strategy.

The second question for an excellent strategy is on stakeholders, relationships, and targets- who is affected, positively or negatively, by the problem? How are these people or groups related to the problem and each other? Who are you trying to reach? If your strategy is successful, who will be affected?

Paquette (2002); Kadima (2014); Cheeseman et al. (2019); Wahman & Goldring (2021) points out that stakeholders are people, groups, organizations, or institutions that are connected to your issue. Stakeholders may support your strategy, be negatively impacted by the issue, have the power to influence the situation, or even be responsible for the problem you have identified. A crucial step in designing your strategy is to gather as much information as possible about these stakeholders. You should: Understand each stakeholder's connection to the problem and your proposed solution and define the relationships between different stakeholders; Determine the ability and

willingness of stakeholders to help or hurt your strategy; Identify which of these stakeholders your strategy should concentrate on creating the change you desire.

2.2.2 Electoral Systems

According to Lindberg, S. I. (2005), the electoral system consists of the rules that dictate how votes are cast in elections for a representative assembly and how those votes are translated into seats within that assembly. Based on the votes cast, the electoral system determines the composition of the parliament, assembly, or council. This system is distinct from what is referred to as electoral regulations, which encompass a broader range of rules related to elections. These regulations include aspects such as candidate access to the ballot, voting rights, the fairness of election administration, and the transparency of vote counting. While these regulations are crucial for ensuring the significance and legitimacy of an election, they are separate from the more narrowly defined concept of the electoral system itself.

2.2.3 Electoral Reforms

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA 2014 ed; International IDEA (2021)) Political, electoral reform refers to changes in the political environment that an Electoral Management Body (EMB) operates within, e.g., Reforms that grant more independence to Election Management Bodies (EMBs) include administrative and legal electoral reforms. Administrative reforms focus on improving the daily operations of EMBs by implementing new strategies, policies, and organizational structures. On the other hand, legal reforms involve modifications to the constitution, electoral laws, and related regulations. These legal changes encompass constitutional provisions, election laws, and laws connected to elections, such as those

governing political parties and media. Importantly, such reforms require parliamentary approval or are enacted through government decrees.

2.2.4 First-Past-the-Post Electoral System

2.2.4 First-Past-the-Post Electoral System

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the First Post as a voting system in which a person is elected because they get more votes than anyone else in the area that they want to represent. Norris (2007); Carey & Shugart (2022); Bogaards (2020) provides that "First-Past-the-Post," is used for election to the lower chamber in 43 countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, India, the United States, and many Commonwealth states. Plurality systems are designed to create a "manufactured majority" by inflating the number of seats held by the leading party to ensure a stable parliamentary majority for the government. This approach tends to disadvantage minor parties, particularly those with geographically dispersed support. In a "winner-takes-all" system, the leading party enhances its legislative base, while the trailing parties receive minimal rewards. In a first-past-the-post system, candidates typically do not need to meet a minimum vote threshold or secure an absolute majority to win. Instead, they only need a simple plurality—just one more vote than their closest competitor. For example, in a race where the vote is almost evenly split three ways, a candidate could win with just 35% of the vote, while the other candidates receive 34% and 32%. Even though two-thirds of voters preferred other candidates, the candidate with the most votes was declared the winner.

2.2.5 50+1 Electoral System (Two-Round System)

According to Norris (2007); Carey & Shugart (2022); Bogaards (2020) In France, the second ballot "majority-runoff" system is used in elections for the presidency.

Candidates obtaining an absolute majority of votes (50+ percent) in the first round are declared elected. If this is not the case, a second round is held between the two candidates who got the highest number of votes. This system is used in 15 of the 25 countries with direct presidential elections, including Austria, Colombia, Finland, and Russia. In the 1996 Russian presidential election, for example, 78 candidates registered to stand for election, of which 17 qualified for nomination. Boris Yeltsin won 35.3 percent of the vote in the first round, with Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist candidate, close behind with 32 percent, and Alexander Lebed third with 14.5 percent of the vote. After the other candidates dropped out, Lebed swung his supporters behind Yeltsin, the final result, was a decisive 53.8 percent for Yeltsin against 40.3 percent for Zyuganov (White, Rose, and McAllister, 1996). A majority runoff is also used in legislative elections in Mali and Ukraine, and a plurality runoff is used for the French National Assembly. Runoff elections aim to consolidate support behind the victor and to encourage broad cross-party coalition-building and alliances in the final stages of the campaign.

2.2.6 Candidate Centered Politics

Candidate-centered politics is defined as politics focused on candidates, their particular issues, and character rather than party affiliation. According to Collins J. D. (2014), we currently live under a system of “candidate-centered” politics—as opposed to the earlier era of party-centered politics; at least, this is what leading political scientists say. While scholars are quick to make this assertion, however, they often fail to back it up with evidence of a systematic shift from an electoral system dominated by partisan politics to a more fragmented system focused on individual candidates.

2.2.7 Party Centered Politics

Party-centered politics, unlike candidate-centered, is a perspective that emphasizes the importance of political parties as collective actors that coordinate the behavior of individual politicians and shape the outcomes of elections and policymaking (La Raja, 2013). Party-centered politics assumes that parties have coherent policy platforms, stable organizational structures, and loyal supporters. Therefore, by presenting well-defined policy agendas, parties offer voters distinct choices during elections, influencing the direction of policymaking and governance. In this case, the stability and strength of party organizations are crucial factors, as they ensure the continuity of policy positions and facilitate effective coordination among party members.

2.2.8 Voting Choice

A critical evaluation of voting choice determines individual and group electoral choices (Guardado & Wantchekon, 2017; Heywood, 2013; Diener, 2000). Furthermore, studying and understanding electoral behavior such as voting patterns and choices informs an understanding of factors that influence electorate decisions during elections (Goldman, 1966).

Voting choice is an electoral activity. Voting choice is a combination of personal and electoral action, which manifests during an electoral process (Bratton, 2012). Such include voting during elections, involvement in electoral campaigns, and participation in electoral rallies, as well as support for a candidate or a political party (Bratton et al., 2012).

2.2.9 Campaign Messaging

A campaign message is the overall image, narrative, and ideology that a political campaign is trying to communicate on behalf of a candidate. Campaign messaging is

the tactical deployment of the candidate's message through all means of communication available to the campaign. Types of messaging can include explicit or implicit arguments and contrasts; insights into the candidate's values, story, and achievements; messages intended to motivate volunteer recruitment or persuade and mobilize voters; or background on the candidate's positions on important issues (<https://www.masterclass.com/classes/david-axelrod-and-karl-rove-teach-campaign-strategy-and-messaging>).

Political campaigns in the United States spend a great deal of time and effort coordinating a multi-front communications strategy to drive their campaign message. Many elements make up a campaign's message. Understanding each of them, and how they relate to each other, is very important to crafting a strong overall message.

Campaign Narrative: The campaign's narrative encompasses the candidate's personal story, message, and argument; the arc is the strategic sequence by which the campaign directs attention to various elements. Powerful campaign messages are often planned to be delivered or repeated at strategic moments when they can have the greatest impact on winning. In practice, opposing campaigns compete to "control the narrative" throughout the race. A campaign that is perceived to be in control is on the offensive, driving discussions on its preferred topics at its chosen times. In contrast, a campaign that has "lost control" of the narrative is forced to address issues it would rather avoid. While campaigns plan for a specific narrative arc, the actual direction is shaped by the strategic back-and-forth of messaging as the race progresses.

Campaign Argument: The campaign argument is the candidate's overarching message tailored to a specific election and political context. It represents the core rationale for why voters should choose the candidate. This argument serves as a filter

for all messaging and communications, ensuring that everything aligns with and supports the campaign's central appeal to voters.

Campaign Brand: The brand of a candidacy depends on the type of candidacy and campaign being run. Candidates for office fall into one of the following categories, based on their background, their positioning, and the nature of the race in which they compete.

Campaign Slogan: A campaign slogan distills the candidate's message and/ or argument into a succinct phrase used in speeches, or advertisements, and might even become a chant at campaign events, like the "Yes We Can" slogan of the 2008 Obama campaign. Slogans for incumbent candidates, for example, discourage voters from voting for change, as exemplified by versions of the idiom "don't change horses in midstream" used during Abraham Lincoln's 1864 reelection campaign, or "four more years of the full dinner pail," a slogan from the 1900 William McKinley reelection campaign. Cycling through too many slogans can indicate confusion within the campaign based on its singular message and authentic argument. A good campaign slogan is a concise, catchy line that effectively communicates the central campaign message.

Political campaigns have a variety of tools at their disposal to communicate a campaign message in the run-up to Election Day. Political communications are expensive, so the amount of messaging and methods used depends largely on how much a candidate can raise from private donors and political parties.

Correspondence with supporters: Whether through direct email, or text messages, effective communication with supporters is an integral part of communications political mail is useful for increasing a candidate's name ID and highlighting accolades and

public service to voters who might not know much about them. Email and text messaging are used more often for voters who already support the candidate or their respective party.

Media stories: The media plays a huge part in crafting the public's view of political candidates. Engaging with the media through press releases, press conferences, interviews or off-the-record conversations is an important part of campaign communication (<https://www.masterclass.com/classes/david-axelrod-and-karl-rove-teach-campaign-strategy-and-messaging>).

Campaign Ads: Campaign ads are another tent pole of campaign messaging and come in a few different formats. Print ads are the oldest form of political ads but have waned in popularity in the twenty-first century. Television and radio ads are still very popular as these mediums are incredibly popular amongst older demographics who make up a disproportionate percentage of voters. Internet advertising gives campaigns the ability to micro-target their messaging to more specific pockets of the voting population. Internet advertising is particularly useful when trying to reach younger voters (<https://www.masterclass.com/classes/david-axelrod-and-karl-rove-teach-campaign-strategy-and-messaging>).

2.2.10 Electoral Alliance vs. Coalition

Andrew Wyatt (1999); Karol (2023); Dionne & Horowitz (2016) argues that in forming coalitions, politicians leading disciplined parties have a clear idea of their respective strengths whereas politicians forming electoral alliances work with less certainty as they only have an estimate of the strength of their electoral support and how it might be affected by a potential alliance. Likewise, they can only estimate the electoral cost of an ideologically inconsistent alliance. The distinction between an alliance and a

coalition, as highlighted by Wyatt, lies in their timing and purpose. An alliance refers to the collaboration of at least two political parties before an election, aimed at maximizing their votes. In contrast, a coalition is formed after the election, where two or more political parties agree to work together in Parliament or government based on the election results. Both alliances and coalitions involve multiple parties coming together for a specific period to pursue shared goals, using common strategies, joint actions, pooled resources, and a division of any resulting benefits (2006b).

2.3 Electoral Systems Empirical Comparative References

According to Colomer J.M. (2004); Chikulo (2017); Dionne (2016), the significance of the electoral system lies in its impact on the number of political parties and the political makeup of assemblies and governments, making the choice of system crucial. However, electoral systems are also shaped by the existing political parties in power, which often favor institutional frameworks that strengthen or enhance their position. As Colomer (2004) explains, political landscapes dominated by a single party or two equally strong parties tend to favor restrictive or exclusionary systems, such as those based on the majority principle. In contrast, more pluralistic settings with multiple parties generally support more inclusive systems, such as proportional representation.

Andre'Blais and Peter John Loewen (2009) discuss that the most original feature of the French Fifth Republic is the use of a two-round system for both presidential and legislative elections. Hanish (2021) elaborates that France exercised proportional representation under its fourth Republic (1946-1958). He digs history dating back to 1958. This is when General Charles de Gaulle and his supporters introduced a system that was notable because there were two separate elections. The second election comes a week after the first. That is why it is called the two-vote system. For parliamentary

elections, France is divided into the same number of constituencies as the National Assembly. To be elected on the first ballot, the candidate must obtain an absolute majority (50 percent + 1) of the votes cast in his district. Only candidates who appeared on the first ballot may be included in the second ballot, and all candidates receiving less than 12.5 percent of the first ballot are excluded. This system was changed but immediately after the 1986 elections, the newly elected parliament changed electoral rules to the previous double voting system. In contrast, André Blais and Peter John Loewen (2009) note that while two-round systems are commonly used for presidential elections (Blais et al. 1997), they are relatively rare for legislative elections (Blais and Massicotte 1997). France is unique among established democracies in employing a two-round system for electing its lower house.

Andre'Blais and Peter John Loewen (2009) further highlight that small parties are systematically underrepresented and large parties systematically overrepresented in the French two-round system. From that perspective, the electoral system works very much like the first past the post. However, there is an important difference: Electoral alliances are much more frequent in a two-round than in a one-round system. And the vote/seat relationship is much more predictable for parties that belong to an alliance. For parties that are not part of a coalition, the link between seat share and vote share appears, to some extent, to be random. However, the evidence suggests that being part of a coalition does not contribute to winning more seats, at least among small parties.

Diamond L. and Planner M. (2005) sum up the Two Round System/Majoritarian used by France and many countries as historically influenced by France. Hence, Zambia is one of those countries that has lately adopted the 50+1 electoral system. According to the Zambia Electoral Handbook (2016), the election of the President is conducted

directly under a majoritarian system where the winning candidate must receive more than fifty percent of the valid votes cast. However, if at the initial ballot or first election, none of the presidential candidates gets more than fifty percent of the valid votes cast, a second ballot will be held within thirty-seven days of the initial ballot or first election. Edward Goldring and Michael Wahman (2016) point out the significance of the elections that were held on 11th, August 2016 in Zambia after just adopting the new electoral law. He resonated that: It was the first contest under a newly amended Constitution, which introduced important changes to the electoral framework. It also marked a break with Zambia's positive historical record of arranging peaceful elections. Further, Edward Goldring and Michael Wahman (2016) observe that the 2016 Zambian election occurred on an uneven electoral playing field, favoring the incumbent party. Edgar Lungu of the Patriotic Front narrowly defeated opposition candidate Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development. Despite the opposition's legal challenge to the results, it was unsuccessful. Goldring and Wahman question whether the 2016 elections marked a decline in Zambia's democratic quality and raised concerns about its prospects for democratic consolidation. The election followed significant institutional changes, including amendments to the Constitution in January 2016 and updates to the Electoral Process Act in June of the same year.

On the other hand, the Carter Center elections report (2021), reports elections that were held on August 12, 2021, Despite the presence of many registered parties, the main competition at all levels was between the ruling Patriotic Front and the long-standing opposition party, the United Party for National Development, as seen in 2015 and 2016., at the presidential level, the race was mainly between UPND leader Hakainde Hichilema and incumbent President Edgar C. Lungu of the PF. This is also similar to

the French two-round system, which usually also sums up to two major parties. The 2021 elections took place in the context of a democratic decline prevailing since the contested 2016 elections, which The Carter Center had assessed as “a significant step backward for democracy in Zambia,” leading to further political polarization. Hakainde Hichilema of the UPND was elected president of Zambia with a count of 57.5% of the vote. His nearest challenger, incumbent Edgar C. Lungu of the Patriotic Front, received 37.7%. The 14 other candidates for president received a combined total of 2.2%, less than the percentage of votes rejected (invalid ballots). Turnout in the presidential election was 70.61%.¹⁹⁵ In comparison, the ruling Patriotic Front won the 2016 presidential election by a count of 50.4% to 47.6% for the opposition, UPND. 100,000 votes then separated the same two leading candidates.

Hichilema’s 2021 margin of victory of almost 1 million votes emphasizes the decisiveness of the result. Further, the other notable observation regarding the results was the weakness of the performance of the 14 other presidential candidates. Before the election, some interlocutors believed that some of the minor parties would play a decisive role in taking votes from the main opposition party, perhaps leading to neither major party achieving victory on the first ballot and leading to an unprecedented second round between the top two vote-getters. The public moved decisively to the two major parties, continuing a trend noted in previous election observation reports (The Carter Center Report, 2021). Therefore, I believe this literature also entails similar traits to how Malawi has adopted 50+1 and this happened in a brief space before the 2020 fresh elections. Also, another notable thing is that minor political parties were still in existence during the 2021 Zambia elections.

2.4 How Electoral Systems Shaped the Behavior of Political Parties in Malawi

In reference to Chunga (2014:2) In Malawi, the history of political-parties traces back to the struggle for independence, with the first multi-party elections occurring in 1961. However, in 1966, under Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's rule, Malawi transitioned to a one-party state, with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) being the sole legal party. During this period, the MCP did not need to compete or cooperate with other parties, resulting in a lack of accountability and responsiveness to voters. The MCP imposed its ideology and policies without consultation or compromise, suppressing dissent and controlling the media, judiciary, and civil society. The party promoted a nationalist and socialist ideology, emphasizing loyalty to Banda and his policies, and was organized along regional and ethnic lines.

With Banda favouring his Chewa group over others. The party also had a forceful presence at the grassroots level, with branches and committees in every village and district. This changed again with the re-democratization in what has been popularly termed the third wave of democratization. In a referendum that took place in 1993, Malawians overwhelmingly voted for a multi-party democracy rather than a one-party state. Since then, political parties have mushroomed in the country such that over 40 political parties have been registered by the Office of the Registrar of Political. Under this system, Malawi adopted a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system for presidential and parliamentary elections. This means that the candidate or party with the most votes in each constituency wins the seat or office, regardless of whether they have a majority or not. This system tends to favour large and dominant parties that can win many seats with a small percentage of votes while disadvantaging smaller and newer parties that may have a significant share of votes but no seats. This system also

encourages regionalism and ethnic voting, as parties tend to focus on their strongholds and mobilize their supporters along these lines (Chunga, 2014). In 2020, the country experienced yet another unique Political Juncture as the 2019 elections were contested by Saulos Chilima and others. According to Nkhata, et al (2020:65-66), the Chilima Case-HC, held that section 80(2) requires a candidate to secure at least 50% + 1 of the votes cast. This translated to a change in the electoral law. Under this, we witnessed a coalition government. The political parties had to cooperate and compromise with each other to form a stable and effective administration. They had to share power and resources among their partners and balance their interests and agendas. They also have to maintain their identity and support base while working with others. The coalition government also faced opposition from other parties that were not part of the alliance, such as the DPP and the UDF. However, is the experience in the first 3 years of running a coalition government desirable? Or would it change the way coalitions will be managed in the future?

2.5 Theoretical Approach

This study adopts Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) as its primary theoretical lens, complemented by an empirical-historical approach. RCI posits that political actors are rational and utility-maximizing, making decisions based on the incentives and constraints created by institutional rules (Shepsle, 1986; Hall & Taylor, 1996). Institutions shape behavior through a logic of consequences rather than a logic of appropriateness (Peters, 2005).

By applying RCI, my study seeks to explain the strategic choices made by political parties during Malawi's electoral transitions. The empirical-historical approach complements this by situating these decisions within the broader context of Malawi's

political evolution (Nohlen, 1996; Thelen, 1999). The hybrid approach addresses the dynamic interplay between structure and agency.

The inclusion of this framework also responds to calls by institutional theorists to ground case studies in models that account for actor rationality and institutional constraint (North, 1990). It further aligns with recent studies that explore electoral reform impacts through institutional lenses (Carey & Shugart, 2022; Bogaards, 2020).

2.5.1. Rational Choice Institutionalism

Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) is an analytical approach that explains political behavior based on the assumption that actors are rational and utility-maximizing individuals who make strategic decisions within institutional constraints (Shepsle, 1986; Hall & Taylor, 1996). Institutions in this framework are seen as rule-based structures that provide incentives and constraints, shaping behavior through a logic of consequences rather than a logic of appropriateness. RCI emphasizes how institutional design influences strategic calculations, coalition-building, and political decision-making processes (Peters, 2005).

The Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) framework posits that actors behave strategically within institutional constraints to maximize utility (Shepsle, 1986). In this study, the behavior of political parties under the 50+1 electoral system is explained through this lens. However, this framework is enriched by the empirical-historical approach (Nohlen, 1996), which situates institutional behavior within temporal and socio-political contexts. Hence, RCI provides the micro-foundations of actor behavior, while empirical-historical analysis supplies the macro-structural narrative within which these behaviors unfold.

This hybrid approach helps to overcome the limitations of purely rational or purely historical models. Political actors in Malawi's elections made strategic decisions — such as forming alliances or adjusting campaign messaging — that are consistent with RCI predictions, but these decisions were also rooted in Malawi's historical electoral shifts, elite behavior, and societal cleavages.

2.5.2. Empirical and Historical Approach and Rational Choice Institutionalism

While RCI provides the analytical lens, the Empirical-Historical Approach (Nohlen, 1996) ensures that the analysis remains grounded in Malawi's unique political context. This approach emphasizes the importance of historical trajectories, socio-political structures, and temporal processes in shaping institutional outcomes. It is particularly useful in African democracies, where formal institutions often coexist with informal norms, ethnic allegiances, and patronage networks (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Koter, 2013).

Unlike the empirical-statistical approach, which seeks generalizable patterns across large datasets, the empirical-historical method values case-specific insights and contextual interpretation. It allows this study to trace how Malawi's political parties have evolved from the one-party era to the multiparty system, and how historical experiences—such as regionalism and coalition fragility—continue to influence strategic decisions under the 50+1 system.

Farrell (2018) argues that the boundaries between rational choice and historical institutionalism are increasingly blurred, with both approaches converging on the importance of temporality and institutional evolution. This supports the integrative use of both frameworks in this study.

Together, RCI and the Empirical-Historical Approach offer a complementary framework: RCI explains the strategic logic behind party behavior, while the empirical-historical method situates these strategies within Malawi's political evolution. This dual framework strengthens the study's ability to interpret findings not just as isolated behaviors, but as institutionally conditioned and historically embedded responses.

Moreover, this theoretical integration directly informs the coding and interpretation of data. For instance, alliance formation is not only coded as a strategic move (RCI) but also interpreted in light of Malawi's history of fragmented opposition and regional voting patterns (Empirical-Historical). This layered analysis enhances the explanatory power of the study and addresses the examiner's concern regarding the need for a more analytical and theory-driven interpretation.

This approach is consistent with recent institutionalist literature that emphasizes the value of context-specific, temporally grounded analysis (New Institutionalism, 2020). It also aligns with the study's broader aim of contributing to theory-informed, empirically grounded understandings of electoral reform and political strategy in transitional

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has given the conceptual definitions of terms that were key in this study, and it has given the theories on which this study is hinged. The chapter has also explained how the electoral system has shaped the behavior of political parties in Malawi.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the strategic responses of political parties to electoral system changes. Qualitative research allows for the collection of rich, detailed insights into how political actors interpret and adapt to institutional reforms. Through interviews with key informants and a review of relevant documents, the study gathered narrative data which was thematically analyzed using content analysis.

3.2 Research Design and Methods

This study follows Yin's (2018) approach to case study research by employing an embedded design that enables both within-case and cross-case comparisons. The embedded design allows for a nuanced understanding of how political party strategies evolve under different electoral systems by examining the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) as distinct units of analysis. This design is particularly useful in capturing the complexity of institutional change and strategic adaptation in a transitional democracy like Malawi.

The research design is qualitative in nature, focusing on the interpretive understanding of political behavior. Qualitative research is chosen for its ability to capture the depth and complexity of political actors' motivations, perceptions, and strategic decisions. The study employs multiple data sources, including elite interviews, party documents, and campaign materials, to ensure triangulation and enhance the credibility of findings. Importantly, the study avoids over-reliance on theoretical citations by grounding the research design in fieldwork realities. The theoretical framework—Rational Choice

Institutionalism—is not merely referenced but actively informs the selection of cases, the formulation of interview questions, and the interpretation of data. This ensures that theory and empirical inquiry are closely aligned throughout the research process.

3.3 Sampling

Following Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), purposive sampling is employed to select participants based on their insider knowledge of political party decision-making processes. The sampling strategy is criterion-based, targeting individuals who had direct involvement in electoral strategy formulation within the DPP and MCP.

A total of 15 participants are interviewed: 5 from the MCP, 5 from the DPP, and 5 political analysts or electoral experts. This sample size is deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation, given the focused nature of the study. Participants are selected to ensure diversity in roles, including party executives, campaign strategists, and political commentators.

By focusing on relevance to the research objectives, the study ensures that the data collected will be rich in insight and directly applicable to the analysis of strategic behavior under different electoral systems.

3.3.1 Sampling Techniques

3.3.1.1 Purposive Sampling

The selection of participants, settings, or other sampling units is criterion-based or purposive (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002). The sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics that will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles that the researcher wishes to study

(Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke, 2004). These may be socio-demographic characteristics or may relate to specific experiences, behaviors, roles, etc.

Burgess (1984) and Honigmann (1982) call this judgment sampling. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) maintain that criterion-based is a more appropriate term than purposive because all sampling is purposive, but purposive is the term most commonly used in the literature. A purposive sample targets individuals who are particularly knowledgeable about issues under investigation (Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke, 2004).

3.4 Data Collection Technique

3.4.1 Primary Data Collection-Key informants

Primary data is collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in person and via online platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Meet. The interview guide is informed by Rational Choice Institutionalism, focusing on how institutional incentives shaped party strategies. Berg (2001) defines interviewing simply as a conversation with a purpose, specifically to gather information. Interviews can either be structured or semi-structured, but this research uses semi-structured interviews because it gives the researcher room to guide the interview and also helps the interviewee not to lose focus and direction of the topic under study. Semi-structured interviews are additionally employed to probe for information from all the respondents in the interview guidelines. This method is advantageous because it guarantees the freedom of the researcher to probe further in areas that are not clear and in areas that require further and more detailed explanations. The researcher is guided by questions formulated before the interviews.

3.4.2. Secondary Data Collection Technique-Desk research

To gain more knowledge of the topic under study, the research utilizes sources of secondary information. Secondary data is collected through document analysis, including party manifestos, campaign materials, and media reports. Triangulation of sources enhances the credibility of the findings.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation- Content Analysis

Thematic content analysis is employed to analyze the qualitative data, following Silverman's (2013) guidance on inductive pattern-matching. The analysis involves both deductive coding, based on RCI concepts such as utility maximization and institutional constraints, and inductive coding, allowing themes to emerge from the data. Codes are grouped into thematic clusters such as alliance formation, campaign messaging, and leadership restructuring. The analysis is iterative, with themes refined through constant comparison and peer debriefing. RCI informs the interpretation by linking strategic choices to institutional incentives created by the electoral system.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adheres to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria:

- Credibility: Achieved through triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement with the data.
- Dependability: Ensured by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions and analytical memos.
- Confirmability: Enhanced through reflexive journaling and external audits of the coding process.
- Transferability: Supported by thick description of the research context, participant roles, and institutional settings.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The research considers all the research ethics, which are professional guiding principles for researchers. The respondents are asked to give consent, including those online, before the interviews as well as before the publication of the work. Besides that, the environment and questions are asked in a neutral environment, non-hostile and non-emotional. Ethically, the research is at its utmost cautious of the respondents' privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation.

3.9 Strengths/Limitations

3.9.1 Strength

- **Triangulated Data Sources:** The study uses elite interviews, campaign materials, and party documents, allowing for cross-verification and enhancing the credibility of findings.
- **Theoretical Integration:** Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) is applied in both the research design and data interpretation, enabling analytical insights into how institutional incentives shape party behavior.
- **Thick Description:** Rich contextual detail is used to present findings, improving the transferability of results to similar electoral contexts.
- **Purposive Sampling:** Participants are selected based on their insider knowledge of political party decision-making, increasing the dependability and relevance of the data.
- **Peer Debriefing and Audit Trails:** These techniques ensure confirmability by grounding interpretations in the data and minimizing researcher bias.

3.9.2 Limitations

- **Interviewer Bias:** Despite efforts to maintain neutrality, the presence of the researcher during interviews may have influenced participant responses, particularly on politically sensitive topics.
- **Limited Generalizability:** The qualitative case study design focuses on Malawi's 2019 and 2020 elections, limiting the applicability of findings to other countries or electoral systems.
- **Recall Bias:** Participants are asked to reflect on past events, which may be affected by memory lapses or retrospective rationalization.
- **Language and Interpretation:** Interviews conducted in local languages are translated into English for analysis, which may lead to the loss of nuanced meanings.
- **Temporal Scope:** The study focuses on the 2019–2020 electoral period and does not capture long-term strategic shifts or the sustainability of alliances formed under the 50+1 system.

3.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology. Specifically, it presents the study approach, sample and sampling methods, data collection, and data analysis. It also brings forth the study strengths and limitations of the study and the ethical considerations that this study upholds.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings on the effects of electoral systems on political party strategies, focusing on a comparative examination of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in the 2019 and 2020 presidential elections in Malawi. The findings presented and discussed are collected from key informants drawn from key figures representing different political parties, various electoral-focused Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/Civil Society Organizations, Political Scientists, and seasoned political commentators. Employing a multifaceted approach, this chapter conducts a thorough examination utilizing in-depth interviews, analysis of campaign materials, and scrutiny of party organizational structures. The chapter is structured around three primary objectives: firstly, exploring the nature of political party alliances under the 50+1 electoral system implemented in 2020; secondly, reviewing the campaign messages propagated by political parties within the framework of the 50+1 electoral system; and thirdly, examining the composition of party leadership structures in the context of the 50+1 electoral system. Thematic discussions are interpreted in light of the Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) framework, emphasizing utility-maximizing behavior of political actors under institutional constraints

4.2 Exploring the Nature of Political Party Alliances in Light of the 50+1 Electoral System Adopted in 2020

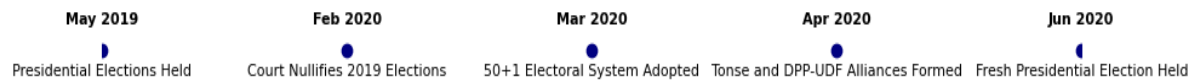


Figure 1: Timeline of Alliance Formation by DPP and MCP

The first specific objective that my study is trying to achieve is to explore the nature of the political alliances that mushroomed in the political landscape during the 2020 presidential elections. Electoral alliances play a significant role as an electoral strategy, especially within the context of party-centered and candidate-centered electoral systems. In a party-centered electoral system, alliances can amplify the collective strength of parties, providing a united front that appeals to a broader electorate. Conversely, in a candidate-centered system, alliances can enhance the appeal of individual candidates by associating them with the strengths and support bases of allied parties.

This study poses several key questions to the respondents to understand the dynamics of these alliances. Among the questions asked are: What factors did the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) consider when deciding to contest without an alliance in 2019 and with an alliance in 2020, respectively? Additionally, the study uncovers the specific issues that led to the decision of the DPP to ally with the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the MCP to form the Tonse Alliance in 2020.

The findings reveal a significant shift in the political strategic moves of political parties in response to changes in the electoral system. The adoption of the 50+1 electoral system necessitates strategic alliances to secure the required majority, illustrating the adaptive nature of political strategies in evolving electoral landscapes.

The transition from a First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system to a 50+1 majority requirement necessitated a re-evaluation of campaign strategies, particularly concerning the formation of political alliances. Under the FPTP system in the 2019 elections, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) capitalized on its incumbency and resources and established countrywide structures to contest elections with no alliance. A belief in their ability to secure a simple majority underpinned this approach, as articulated by a respondent:

*"DPP, being in government, had all the resources and structures across the country. With their experience of winning previous elections and considering the simple majority we were using; they were confident they could secure power without allying."*¹

Similarly, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), despite receiving endorsements from smaller parties like the People's Party and the Freedom Party, pursued a strategy focused on consolidating votes in their central region stronghold, opting to run on a solo ticket as well. Just like the Historical, Empirical approach Nohlen (1996), emphasized that the study of concrete electoral systems and the analysis of their socio-political context is indispensable for understanding the functioning and effects of electoral systems, Historically, the Malawian electoral institutional structure has not

¹ Key informant interview, political expert respondent

been compatible with coalition politics, as noted by Lembani (2014), who highlighted the lack of adoption of coalition governance as a democratic tool, particularly in minority governments since 1994. This sentiment was evident in the 2019 presidential elections, where significant coalitions were absent. However, the introduction of the 50+1 electoral threshold in 2020 disrupted this pattern. Political parties, recognizing the necessity of securing an absolute majority, were compelled to form alliances. This strategic shift aligns with Riker's (1962) theory on the formation of minimal winning coalitions, which posits that political actors, driven by rational self-interest, seek to form alliances that maximize their share of governmental power and access to ministerial positions. A key respondent, in agreement, pointed out that:

"...Without alliances, winning the presidential election in 2020 was unlikely and both MCP and DPP knew. Mind you MCP, had been in opposition for nearly 25 years. Now faced with a new challenge of meeting the 50+1, threshold, they had no option but to partner with another party to meet the 50+1 requirement. And similarly, DPP was aware that the way things were going, it was important for them to ally. So, they partnered with the UDF.²"

Such evidence underscores the adaptability of political parties to strengthen electoral institutional frameworks and the instrumental role of such systems in shaping the nature of political alliances and the broader political landscape. Further, the findings indicate that the shift to a 50+1 electoral system in Malawi was a catalyst for change in the political strategies of parties, as it fostered an environment conducive to the formation

² Key informant interview

of alliances. However, the motivations for such alliances were multifaceted. An executive member of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) emphasized that their decision to form the Tonse Alliance was not merely a strategic response to the new electoral requirement, but was also driven by a commitment to bring a transformative government:

“Our decision to enter into the Tonse Alliance wasn't solely about meeting the 50+1 threshold... It was about a commitment to serve the people of Malawi. Yes, the 50+1 necessitated partnership, but beyond that, Tonse Alliance is rooted in a shared vision for a transformative government for all Malawians. By joining forces, we sought to harness the collective strength of like-minded parties to deliver improvements in the lives of Malawians. Our goal wasn't just to win elections; it was to effect meaningful change and uplift our nation together”³

Similarly, a representative from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) articulated that their alliance with the United Democratic Front (UDF) was a strategic necessity in the face of the 50+1 rule, but it also symbolized a collaborative approach to governance:

“The alliance with the United Democratic Front (UDF) was a move driven by the realities that had befallen us. With the introduction of the 50+1 requirement, it became abundantly clear that collaboration was essential to securing electoral success. While electoral considerations undoubtedly motivated our partnership with the UDF, it also reflected a united

³ Key informant interview, political party representative

approach to governance. By pooling our resources together, we aimed to provide stability and continuity in leadership, ensuring that the interests of all Malawians were served”⁴

For smaller parties, alliances presented an opportunity to exert governmental influence.

A key respondent observed:

“Even for the ‘briefcase’ parties, it was an opportunity for them to test power by being in alliances. Because if you look closely, some parties in the Tonse Alliance did not add significant value, and they knew getting into the alliance was the only way to test power”⁵

The findings also showed that the electoral system's transformation led parties to compromise on their ideologies and campaign manifestos. The MCP, for instance, adopted populist policies from their alliance partner, the UTM, during the 2020 elections. These included promises like 3 meals a day (kudya katatu), low-cost passports, and a universal subsidy on fertilizer. A respondent concurred:

"Compromises were inevitable. A president from party A found themselves in subordinate roles within the alliance. Again, Manifestos had to be adjusted, sometimes including pledges that were challenging to fulfill, such as the promise of a 14-thousand-kwacha passport. Today you cannot find a 14-thousand-kwacha passport, but they agreed on it just so they could secure victory. Again, you cannot buy fertilizer at K4500”⁶

⁴ Key informant interview, political party representative

⁵ Key informant interview

⁶ Key informant interview

These findings underscore the profound impact of the 50+1 electoral system on Malawi's political landscape, compelling parties to embrace a new era of collaborative politics. The shift has not only altered electoral dynamics but also reshaped the possibilities for governance, highlighting the potential of alliances in determining the nation's political future. This aligns with Kadima's (2014) observations that constitutional requirements for a majority vote in presidential elections often lead to pre-election alliances, as seen in Kenya in which the requirement that presidential candidates must obtain a minimum of 25% of the votes cast in each of more than half of the country's 47 counties reinforces the need for parties to coalesce before the elections (Kadima, 2014). A respondent further emphasized the enduring nature of the 50+1 system and its implications for political alliances in Malawi. He emphasized that:

“Parties should come to the reality of the 50+1 electoral system, it is here to stay and they have to adjust their structures to accommodate these eventualities because in our politics there is no party in the current political setup that can win with a 50+1 majority by itself. So, one way or the other, the parties have to learn to work together because this is the reality that we are going to have for the foreseeable future”⁷

Therefore, the change in Malawi's electoral system from a First-Past-The-Post to a 50+1 majority requirement has had a profound impact on the strategic moves of political parties. This institutional transformation has catalyzed a shift from individual party campaigning to a collaborative approach, where alliances have become a critical

⁷ Key informant interview

component of electoral success. The study reveals that while the new system incentivized alliances for pragmatic reasons, such as meeting the electoral threshold, it also fostered partnerships based on shared visions for governance and national development. Ultimately, the findings suggest that the 50+1 electoral system has reshaped the political strategies of parties in Malawi, leading to a new era of alliance-based politics.

4.3 Examining Campaign Messages by Political Parties in Light of the 50+1 Electoral System

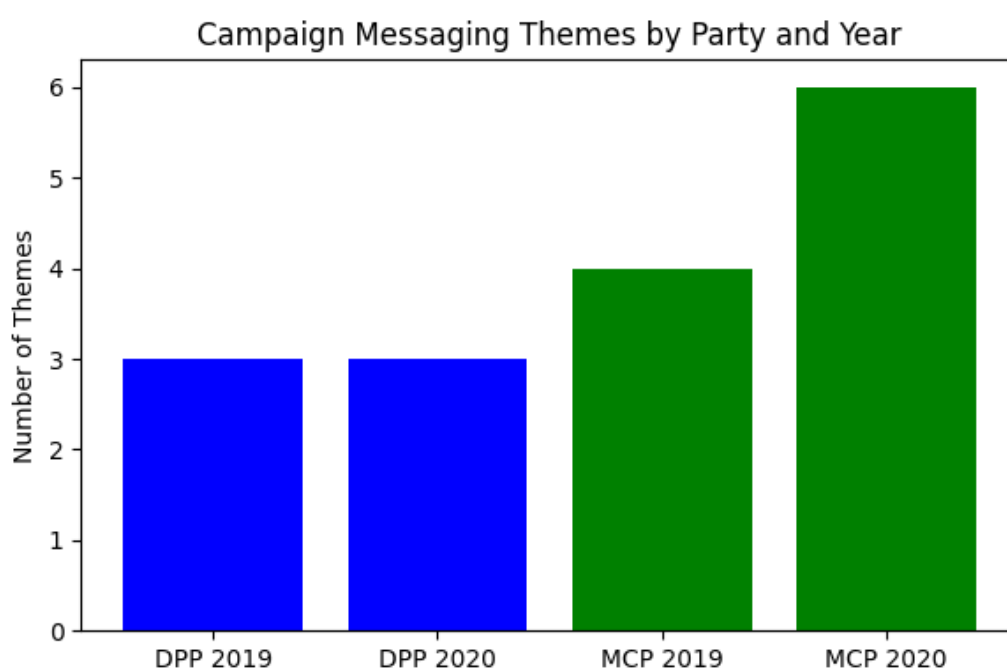


Figure 2: Campaign Messaging Themes by Party and Year

This objective aimed to analyze campaign messages by political parties in Malawi's 50+1 electoral system, focusing on the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) during the 2019 and 2020 presidential elections. Insights from seasoned political commentators were incorporated to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the campaign strategies employed by these parties. It ought to be noted that, in a candidate-centered electoral system, campaign messages focus on the individual candidate's qualities, leadership abilities, and personal characteristics. The messages often emphasize the candidate's vision, policies, and promises, aiming to establish a personal connection with voters. In contrast, in a party-centered electoral system, campaign messages are based on the party's ideology, platform, and collective goals. The messages often highlight the party's achievements, policies, and vision for the country, emphasizing the party's identity and values.

My study sought to understand the factors that influenced the campaign messages of the DPP and MCP in both the 2019 and 2020 elections. Respondents were asked questions such as what factors did the DPP and MCP consider when crafting their campaign messages in 2019? How did the parties balance their manifestos and messages with those of their alliances in 2020, considering the DPP-UDF Alliance and MCP's Tonse Alliance had their distinct party messages?

The findings suggest that the change in the electoral system had a notable impact on campaign messages, particularly for the MCP, while the DPP's messaging remained relatively consistent.

In 2019, the MCP centered its campaign around the concept of a developmental state, emphasizing cutting government spending, economic growth, infrastructure development, and poverty alleviation. In contrast, the DPP highlighted its achievements in governance, leveraging its incumbency advantage to project itself as the guardian of

economic prosperity and stability. These findings were reinforced by a respondent's observation, who highlighted that:

*“MCP’s manifesto takeaway in 2019 showed their commitment to bringing change to the status quo. The 2019 manifesto should be highlighted as a challenge to the DPP manifesto. They tried to paint a picture of the DPP as a failure and that they were a better alternative for Malawians.”*⁸

Conversely, the DPP capitalized on its incumbency, underscoring past accomplishments to fortify its image as the custodian of economic growth and stability. It advocated for policy continuity and proven governance expertise. A respondent highlighted:

*“The DPP 2019 manifesto aimed at sustaining their grip on power. They based their manifesto messages on their economic successes, including maintaining a six-month forex reserve, reducing interest rates, and achieving single-digit inflation.”*⁹

The findings revealed that both the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) sought to broaden their electoral appeal beyond traditional strongholds in the 2019 elections. Despite these efforts, regional and ethnic loyalties persisted as elements in campaign strategies. The DPP, for instance, intensified its focus on southern and eastern regions, anticipating a vote split in the central region between

⁸ Key informant interview

⁹ Key informant interview

the MCP and the United Transformation Movement (UTM). This aligns with Karol's (2023) assertion that vote mobilization along ethnic lines is a common tactic in African politics, where politicians leverage regional and ethnic identities to consolidate support. This practice is particularly pronounced in highly diverse societies like Malawi, where ethnic affiliations hold significant political value. A key respondent cementing on this strategy of mobilization pointed out that:

*“It was evident DPP wanted to consolidate its base in the southern region. Because when you hear rhetoric like we don’t want your votes, such rhetoric shows that they had confidence they were going to win with the southern region votes as it had been the case in previous elections”*¹⁰

Furthermore, the findings revealed that in the 2020 elections, while the DPP maintained its messaging, the MCP shifted towards a populist agenda influenced by its alliance with the UTM. The MCP's adoption of a populist manifesto, influenced by UTM's agenda, was a deliberate move to expand its electoral appeal. This messaging involved promises of affordable fertilizer for farmers, the creation of one million jobs, the establishment of mega-farms, and a robust crackdown on corruption. These populist messages were designed to resonate with a broader electorate, transcending the MCP's traditional strongholds and aiming to secure the required majority vote. The effectiveness of such populist strategies is supported by the research by Kim Yi Dionne, who analyzed the political effects of agricultural subsidies in Africa. Dionne's study revealed that agricultural subsidies, a form of populist policy, have become increasingly common across the continent. These policies are particularly advantageous for

¹⁰ Key informant interview

candidates in regions where traditional partisan or regional identities do not strongly influence voting behavior (Dionne, 2016). The study finds that even in the absence of targeted distributional programs at the local level, incumbents could derive political benefits from broad-based subsidies (Ibid). This suggests that populist policies like those advanced by the MCP can be a powerful tool for winning votes, especially in a political landscape where the 50+1 rule necessitates a wide-reaching appeal to diverse voter groups. A respondent underscored this campaign messaging strategy by highlighting that:

“High sounding messages like the three meals a day, universal subsidy fertilizer and one million jobs was a way of painting a picture or selling to Malawians that indeed, Tonse Alliance was a better alternative bearing in mind the requirement for the 50+1 threshold”¹¹

Another respondent echoed the same argument saying:

“The institutional change to 50+1 brought the need to expand the base. So much was at stake, hence the need to use rhetoric that appealed to the broader electorate. Such promises as one million jobs, K4500 fertilizer, and duty-free week were narratives that focused on appealing directly to the people with promises that address their immediate concerns and desires”¹²

Expanding on the above findings, despite the shift towards issue-based politics, the 2020 elections were not free from the personal attacks characteristic of Malawi’s

¹¹ Key informant interview

¹² Key informant interview

political campaigns. However, there was a noticeable balance between substantive issues and personal attacks, particularly with the formation of alliances, which altered the nature of these attacks as they started focusing on their collaborative potential if elected. This finding is consistent with Söderberg and Bjarnesen's report on electoral violence in Africa, which posits that personal attacks are often a significant aspect of campaign messages, with almost all elections from 2011 to 2017 experiencing negative campaigning, including character assassination and mudslinging (Söderberg & Bjarnesen, 2018). This suggests that personal attacks remain a prevalent tactic in Malawi despite the change in the electoral system to the 50+1.

Therefore, the findings partly underscore the evolving nature of campaign messaging in response to the new electoral system.

4.4 Examining the composition of the party leadership structures in light of the 50+1 electoral system adopted in 2020

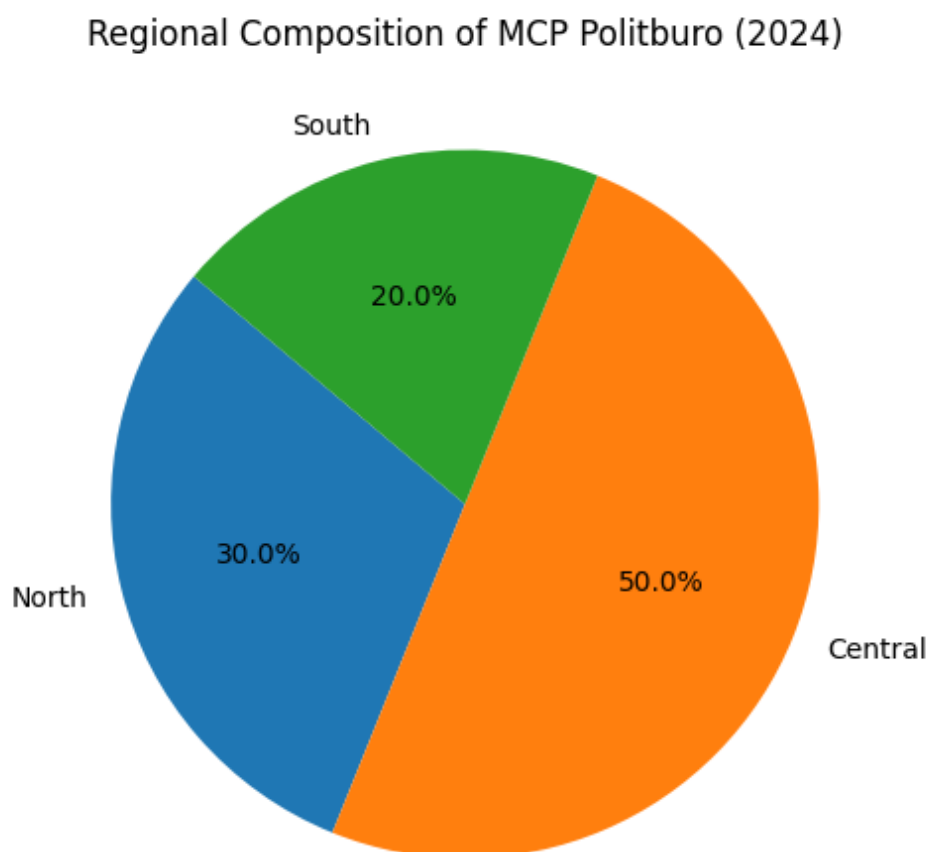


Figure 3: Regional Composition of MCP Politburo (2024)

The final objective of the study was to analyze the composition of party leadership structures in the context of Malawi's 50+1 electoral system. In first-past-the-post electoral systems, political party leadership structures are typically structured around a centralized leadership, with a clear hierarchy and decision-making process. The focus is on individual candidates and their respective constituencies. In contrast, in 50+1 electoral systems, where alliances are common, party leadership structures may be structured to accommodate diverse interests and representation from various parties

within the alliance. This may involve a more decentralized approach, with negotiations and consensus-building among alliance partners.

The study sought to understand the factors that influenced the composition of party leadership structures in the 2019 and 2020 elections. However, to ensure a more comprehensive discussion to ascertain a more cemented position on the effects of electoral change on the composition of the party leadership structures, the study consideration of the MCP and DPP 2024 party conventions to address the issue that in 2020 the electoral law changed when the party conventions had already been held in 2018 hence a litmus test was not sufficient. In the discussion, respondents were asked: What factors did the DPP and MCP consider in their respective conventions to create a youthful politburo while maintaining the presidential position? What led to the DPP-UDF alliance having a DPP torchbearer and the Tonse alliance having an MCP torchbearer? What specific adjustments in leadership roles/positions could have occurred in both the DPP and MCP party leadership structures in the 2020 presidential elections? Key questions on specific adjustments to the 2024 MCP and DPP party conventions were relayed, as well as secondary data from interviews adopted.

The results reveal that in the 2019 elections, political parties made an effort to create diverse and inclusive party leadership structures during their elective conventions. However, the 2020 elections did not see significant restructuring within party leadership structures, despite the formation of alliances largely because party conventions were already held in 2018. On the other side, consideration of the 2024 party conventions indicated that the shift from FPTP to the 50+1 electoral system has

had profound implications for Malawi's political parties, particularly in how they structure their leadership and appeal to voters.

4.4.1 Continuity in Leadership

The findings suggest that both the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) aimed to maintain their leadership, particularly for the president's position, which remained unchallenged in the 2018 elective conventions. A respondent commented on the implications of potential leadership changes:

“Change from Chakwera to another leader would have been catastrophic for the MCP and especially the DPP with the Mutharika brand, which had been there for years. The leadership there obviously thought we needed the same candidate that gave us victory in 2014”¹³

This assertion is also evident in both the MCP and DPP 2024 party conventions, where both Dr Lazarus Chakwera and Professor Peter Mutharika were unopposed for the presidential seat. A political commentator, Chikondi Nyirenda (2024), raised a concern on the 2024 MCP convention as he alluded that the most striking aspect of the convention was the unopposed re-election of President Lazarus Chakwera as the party leader. This situation, where no one dared to challenge Chakwera, underscores the strong grip he holds over the party. However, this raises concerns about the health of democratic processes within the MCP. The lack of competition suggests a possible suppression of open debate and dissent, which are crucial components of a vibrant democracy. As political commentator

¹³ Key informant interview

Chikondi Nyirenda remarked, "*The fear to challenge Chakwera points to a worrying trend where internal party democracy is sacrificed at the altar of political expediency*" (Nyirenda, 2024). This is similar to the 2024 DPP convention, where Professor Mutharika also stood unopposed.

These sentiments are echoed in the African political landscape, where parties often retain established leaders to preserve party identity and leverage their recognition. Osaore Aideyan's study supports this notion, providing insight into the strategies used by party leadership to maintain influence and legacy within the political arena, even amidst calls for change (Aideyan, 2007). The study suggests that the tradition of leadership continuity is deeply entrenched in African politics, reflecting a preference for stability and continuity over the uncertainties of leadership change, particularly under the 50+1 electoral system, where broad-based support is crucial. This also reflects the Historical, Empirical approach to the study as Nohlen (1996) hinted that the analysis of the electoral system and evaluation of their impact has to take into account the specific historical and socio-political circumstances.

4.4.2 Regional Dynamics and Representation

Further, the study realized that in reference to Nohlen (1996) where he mentions that the electoral system and evaluation of their impact has to take into account the specific historical circumstances; the paper alludes that the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) has historically been strong in the Central and Northern Regions, and this continues to be reflected in its strategic choices. Under the FPTP system in 2018, MCP's primary goal was to secure a plurality in its strongholds, which required less emphasis on cross-

regional appeal. In contrast, the 50+1 system implemented by 2024 forced MCP to adopt a more inclusive strategy, focusing on coalition-building and national representation. This represents a significant departure from its 2018 strategy, where the party's focus was not as nationally oriented.

Further, in 2018, the MCP's strategy was largely focused on consolidating its influence in the Central and Northern Regions, with little emphasis on expanding its reach in the Southern Region. The leadership choices reflected this narrow regional focus. However, the 2024 convention results indicate an effort to maintain this dominance while also attempting to penetrate the Southern Region. The election of Catherine Gotani Hara and Richard Chimwendo Banda, who are prominent figures in the Northern and Central Regions respectively, underscores this approach. Additionally, the election of John Paul as Treasurer General suggests a tactical move to increase MCP's influence in the Southern Region, traditionally dominated by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

In contrast, the DPP's 2018 convention displays a relatively unified front, with fewer visible internal divisions and a strong focus on maintaining its dominance in the Southern Region. Whilst, the DPP's 2024 convention highlights regional fragmentation rather than cohesion. The intense competition among key figures for the vice presidency in the Southern Region, such as Joseph Mwanamvekha, George Chaponda, and Ben Phiri, reveals deep-seated regional rivalries. This internal division is a blunt contrast to the more unified regional strategy the DPP attempted in 2019. Unlike in 2018, under the FPTP system, the DPP's strategy relied heavily on regional dominance and the

incumbency advantage of Peter Mutharika. The party's 2024 convention vividly portrayed difficulties in adapting to the new 50+1 requirements. Thus, in 2018, the strategy was more straightforward than in the 2024 convention where the party seemed to lack a clear, unified strategy to appeal to a broader electorate, signaling a struggle to transition from a regional to a national focus (Chirwa, 2024).

The above finding aligns with Nohlen's historical empirical approach that highlights the significance of considering specific historical and socio-political contexts in electoral system analysis (Nohlen, 1996). In Malawi's case, the regional dominance strategy of MCP aligns with the historical necessity for broad-based support under the 50+1 system, as outlined by Nohlen. One of the political analysts commented that,

“MCP’s focus on regional leaders is a classic strategy to maintain its stronghold, but their attempt to penetrate the Southern Region shows adaptability necessary under the new electoral system¹⁴”

So, with this trajectory, I would say that the introduction of the 50+1 electoral system has significantly influenced MCP’s strategic outlook. Unlike in 2019, where the focus was primarily on consolidating its base, the 2024 convention reflects a broader regional strategy aimed at securing majority support across all regions. The MCP’s selection of leaders like Jesse Kabwira and Jivason George Kadzipatike indicates a shift towards building a coalition that can appeal to a national audience, a necessity under the 50+1 system.

¹⁴ Key Informant, Political Analyst

The DPP, on the other hand, seems to be struggling with the demands of the 50+1 system. While the party's 2019 strategy was centered on leveraging regional dominance and Mutharika's incumbency, the 2024 convention shows signs of strategic disarray. The DPP's failure to present new leadership or policy shifts that could appeal to a broader electorate suggests an inability to adapt effectively to the 50+1 requirement, potentially weakening its position in the upcoming elections. Former DPP executive remarked that,

“The 50+1 system requires flexibility and coalition-building, areas where DPP has not effectively restructured its strategies, unlike MCP¹⁵”.

The reflections provided above resonate with Oyugi's (2006) work on coalition politics in Africa that supports the notion that the distribution of power within alliances, such as the MCP's dominant role in the Tonse Alliance, significantly influences party strategies. This aligns with the 50+1 system's requirement for broader coalition-building to secure a majority.

4.4.3 Party Unity and Strategic Cohesion

The paper also noted that the MCP's 2024 convention displays a strategic focus on unity and cohesion, particularly in light of the 50+1 system. The selection of figures like Baba Steve Malondela and Jean Sendeza for key positions within the party highlights an effort to appeal to youth and women, crucial demographics under the new electoral system. This focus on inclusivity and representation suggests that the MCP is aiming for a broad-based appeal, which is essential for securing a majority.

¹⁵ Key informant, DPP Former executive member

Conversely, the DPP's 2024 convention exposes significant challenges in terms of party unity. The internal divisions, particularly in the Southern Region, combined with an aging leadership that fails to inspire confidence, suggest a party at odds with itself. This lack of cohesion is a major departure from the DPP's 2019 convention, where the focus was on presenting a unified front despite underlying governance issues. The failure to address these divisions in 2024 could severely impact the DPP's ability to mobilize effectively for the 2025 elections.

Political analysts argue that the DPP's failure to present a united front in the 2024 convention is indicative of deeper issues within the party, which could jeopardize its performance in future elections. This lack of unity contrasts sharply with the MCP's strategic cohesion, which political commentators believe will strengthen its position in the upcoming elections.

Bergman and Müller (2013) highlight that political parties often preserve internal structures to maintain distinct identities within coalitions. This is evident in the DPP's inability to adjust its internal structures in response to the 50+1 system. One of the Political commentators stated that,

“DPP’s internal disunity is a critical flaw that MCP has effectively capitalized on by presenting a united and inclusive front¹⁶”

¹⁶ Key informant, Political Commentator

On the other hand, one of the MCP's top leaders amidst the 2024 convention stated that,

*“Our focus has always been on unity and inclusivity, which is why our politburo reflects diverse regional representation”.*¹⁷

The MCP's strategy in 2024 represents an evolution from its 2019 approach. While the 2019 convention was more focused on securing dominance in its traditional strongholds, the 2024 convention reflects a more balanced, nationwide campaign strategy. This shift is driven by the 50+1 system, which necessitates a broader appeal across all regions and demographics. The MCP's efforts to build a more inclusive leadership team are indicative of its preparation for a more competitive electoral environment. One of the Political strategists noted that,

*“MCP's adaptive strategy under the 50+1 system contrasts sharply with DPP's static approach, positioning MCP favorably for future elections”*¹⁸.

The DPP's 2024 convention, in contrast, appears to be a missed opportunity. While the 2019 convention was marked by strategic pragmatism aimed at navigating the new electoral system, the 2024 convention reflects a party that is struggling to find its footing. The absence of significant policy shifts or the introduction of new leadership suggests that the DPP may not be adequately prepared to meet the demands of the 50+1 system, which could hinder its chances in the 2025 elections. DPP top executives commented on this by acknowledging that,

¹⁷ Key Informant, MCP top Executive

¹⁸ Key Informant, Political Strategist

*“We recognize the need to adapt our strategies under the new electoral system and are currently reassessing our politburo composition to better align with these requirements”.*¹⁹

Aideyan (2007) suggests that African political parties often prioritize leadership continuity to maintain stability, which aligns with the findings in this paper, where both MCP and DPP retained established leaders in their party leadership structures, reflecting a broader trend in African politics under the 50+1 electoral system. However, the MCP seemed more strategic than the DPP in terms of strategic adjustments in their leadership.

4.4.4 Representatives of Alliances

The 2020 elections saw the question of representation within alliances emerge as a significant issue. The DPP/UDF alliance easily nominated Mutharika as their presidential candidate, capitalizing on the DPP's incumbency and considering UDF's long absence from power. The Tonse Alliance faced a more complex decision given the presence of two strong contenders: Lazarus Chakwera and Saulos Chilima. The choice of Chakwera can be attributed to the larger influence and established power base of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), which he led. A respondent's observation reflects this dynamic, suggesting that:

“The desire to maintain Chakwera as the torchbearer of the alliance springs from the fact that the core centers of power in the MCP, which was

¹⁹ Key Informant, Top DPP Executive

a more powerful party, was more powerful than that of Chilima such that at the end of the day it must be Chakwera leading the alliance”²⁰

These findings align with the works of Oyugi (2006) in his study on coalition politics in Africa, which discusses how power distribution among coalition parties often dictates leadership dynamics. In scenarios where one party wields greater resources, its leadership typically dominates (Oyugi, 2006). In the context of the Tonse Alliance, the MCP's status as a larger and more established party may have given it greater leverage to determine the presidential candidate for the alliance.

4.4.5 Political Parties' Internal Structures and Alliances

Despite the 2024 party conventions showing a different picture altogether with the MCP showing more signs of adapting to the 50+1 than the DPP, in the 2020 elections, political parties retained their internal structures, leading to conflicts within alliances like the Tonse Alliance, as parties operated as separate entities. A respondent highlighted the consequences of not adjusting internal structures:

"Up to this day, they have not adjusted the internal structures, and this is why we are seeing the conflicts in the alliances, especially the Tonse Alliance because the parties internally are operating as separate entities. But if they had adjusted the internal structures, they would have accommodated the realities of the alliances and we could have seen different things than what we are seeing today”²¹

²⁰ Key informant interview

²¹ Key informant interview

This inclination to maintain separate identities, even within coalitions, is a strategic choice aimed at preserving party autonomy and identity. Bergman & Müller (2013) note that political parties whether in majority or minority governments or coalitions, intentionally preserve their internal structures to navigate governance challenges while maintaining their distinct identities.

Therefore, while the 2019 elections saw efforts to diversify party leadership structures, the 2020 elections maintained the status quo, despite new alliances. This trend reflects a broader pattern in African politics, where party identity and leadership continuity are favored over structural adaptation to electoral alliances, influencing the dynamics of coalition governance and the stability of political alliances post-election. The lessons drawn from this give a hint on how party structures should be organized in preparation for possible alliances.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings and analysis of the study based on its specific objectives. Through a comparative examination of alliance formation, campaign messaging, and party structures between the 2019 and 2020 elections, the findings show that there is a notable change in political strategy, as evidenced by the increased reliance on alliances by parties such as the DPP and MCP to navigate the challenges posed by the 50+1 threshold. The findings further underscore a transition towards issue-based campaign messages in the 2020 elections, with a noticeable persistence of personal attacks. Lastly, the examination of the composition of party leadership structures reveals that despite entering into alliances, political party structures had remained largely unchanged, hinting at a disconnect between alliance formation and internal

party structure adjustments. However, the incorporation of the 2024 MCP and DPP conventions highlighted a different picture where it revealed that whilst the DPP has shown some signs of adapting to the new system, its continued focus on regionalism and exclusion of key demographics may have hindered its ability to compete effectively in 2025; the MCP, on the other hand, appeared to be more strategically positioned to take advantage of the new electoral landscape, with a leadership structure that better reflects the demands of the 50+1 system.

Overall, this study affirms the role of rational decision-making by political actors in navigating an evolving electoral landscape, signaling a significant shift in political strategies by political parties in Malawi.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to analyze the effects of Malawi's transition from a First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system to a 50+1 majority system on political party strategies, focusing on the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Through a comparative analysis of the 2019 and 2020 presidential elections, the study found that the institutional shift significantly influenced party behavior within the 50+1 institutional framework across three strategic dimensions: alliance formation, campaign messaging, and politburo composition.

First, the findings confirmed that the 50+1 system incentivized coalition-building, as no single party could realistically secure an outright majority. Both DPP and MCP formed alliances in 2020, a departure from their solo strategies in 2019. Second, campaign messaging evolved from regionally focused and personality-driven narratives to more inclusive, issue-based appeals. The Tonse Alliance, in particular, adopted populist promises to broaden its electoral base. Third, while party leadership structures remained largely unchanged in 2020 due to pre-existing structures, the 2024 conventions revealed a growing awareness of the need for inclusive leadership to meet the demands of the 50+1 system. MCP demonstrated greater adaptability in this regard than DPP.

Overall, the study affirms that electoral systems are not merely procedural mechanisms but powerful institutional incentives that shape political strategy. The 50+1 system has

ushered in a new era of alliance-based politics in Malawi, compelling parties to recalibrate their approaches to leadership, messaging, and coalition-building.

Building on the findings of this study, future research should explore the long-term sustainability and institutionalization of electoral alliances under the 50+1 system. Specifically, scholars should investigate whether these alliances evolve into stable coalitions or remain short-term electoral arrangements.

Additionally, further studies should assess the impact of coalition politics on governance and policy implementation. Understanding how alliance dynamics influence decision-making, resource allocation, and legislative cohesion would provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of coalition governments.

Finally, comparative studies involving other African countries that have adopted the 50+1 system—such as Kenya and Zambia—could offer valuable lessons on best practices and pitfalls. Such cross-national analyses would enhance the generalizability of findings and contribute to broader debates on electoral reform and democratic consolidation in transitional democracies.

5.2 Overview of the Study

The primary goal of this study was to analyze the effects of the change in the electoral system on political party strategies in Malawi. The study's introduction, problem statement, objectives, and justification are presented in the first chapter. A review of relevant literature aligned with the study objectives is discussed in the second chapter. The chapter also discusses the theoretical approach guiding the research and employs empirical and historical approaches to provide context. The third chapter focuses on the methodology and details the research design and methods used in the study. It explains the sampling techniques, data collection techniques, and analysis methods, while also

addressing ethical considerations and acknowledging the limitations of the study. Presenting the findings and analysis of the research, chapter four provides the findings and analysis aligned with the study's specific objectives. It provides insights from key informant interviews with political science experts, political party representatives, and representatives from electoral-related NGOs, offering a multifaceted view of the effects of electoral system changes.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

In light of the shift from the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system to the 50+1 majority requirement in Malawi, the study embarked on an examination of the political landscape in Malawi, particularly focusing on the strategic shifts in political party strategies following the adoption of the 50+1 electoral system. Through a comparative approach of the 2019 and 2020 presidential elections, the study investigated the major political parties, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), under two distinct electoral systems: The First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) and the majoritarian 50+1.

5.3.1 The Nature of Political Party Alliances in Light of the 50+1 Electoral System Adopted in 2020

The hypothesis positing that the transition to a 50+1 electoral system would catalyze a strategic shift in political party strategies has been substantiated by the findings of the study. The evidence demonstrates that the major political parties in Malawi the DPP and MCP, adjusted their strategies to form strategic alliances in response to the new electoral system. This shift is particularly noteworthy when compared with the independent approaches both parties adopted during the 2019 elections under the First-

Past-The-Post system. The formation of the DPP's alliance with UDF and the MCP's coalition under the Tonse Alliance banner in 2020 exemplifies a significant adaptation to the electoral demands, highlighting the flexibility of political parties to institutional changes. The findings are consistent with a study by Kadima (2014) on Kenya's political landscape in which he argued that the constitutional requirement for a majority vote to win elections incentivizes parties to enter into pre-election alliances. It reveals that such alliances are instrumental in securing electoral victory, particularly in a political environment where no single party can confidently claim an absolute majority. The Kenyan experience aligns with the findings of the current study, suggesting a broader trend across African democracies where changes in electoral systems prompt strategic realignments among political parties.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that the adoption of the 50+1 system has profound implications for political parties' strategies, not only within the context of Malawi but also in other African nations with similar electoral institutions. The strategic behavior observed in the 2020 Malawian presidential elections, therefore, can be seen as part of a larger pattern of electoral strategy evolution in response to constitutional and institutional mandates for majority voting systems.

5.3.2 Campaign Messages by Political Parties in Light of the 50+1 Electoral System Adopted In 2020

Examining campaign messages in light of the 50+1 electoral system revealed that there was a significant shift towards issue-based campaign messaging in 2020, marking a departure from the personal attacks campaigns of 2019 and the previous electoral

campaigns. The study's findings highlight how the Tonse Alliance's campaign promises, such as affordable fertilizer, a crackdown on corruption, and job creation, were not merely electoral pledges but strategic messages crafted to resonate with the electorate's needs and aspirations hence securing the necessary majority to win the elections. This shift towards issue-based messaging is particularly relevant in areas where traditional regional and ethnic voting patterns are weak, as it allows political parties to appeal to voters' practical concerns and immediate needs. Dionne's 2016 study supports this observation, affirming that political parties often resort to populist campaign messages, such as affordable agricultural inputs, to entice voters.

Despite the persistence of personal attacks, the prominence of issue-based messaging in the 2020 elections suggests a maturing political environment where voters are increasingly driven by policy over personality. Overall, the findings of the study reveal a strategic adaptation by political parties in Malawi to the demands of the 50+1 electoral system, with a clear pivot towards issue-based campaigning. This approach not only aligns with global trends towards populism in political messaging but also reflects a deeper understanding of the electorate's priorities, paving the way for more policy-driven politics in Malawi's future electoral contests.

5.3.3 The Composition of the Party Leadership Structures in Light of the 50+1 Electoral System Adopted in 2020

Furthermore, the study looked into the composition of party leadership structures, noting efforts in 2019 to foster inclusivity within party leadership. However, the 2020 elections saw a continuation of top leadership roles, reflecting a preference for stability and recognition over change. This was consistent with the literature, which suggests

that parties often maintain known leaders to avoid uncertainties associated with leadership changes. Despite the formation of alliances in 2020, internal party structures remained largely unchanged, a deliberate choice to preserve party autonomy as suggested by Bergman & Muller (2013).

Conversely, the 2024 party conventions highlighted a divergence in strategic adaptation: while the MCP demonstrated a more inclusive and nationally oriented approach, the DPP struggled with internal divisions and a lack of innovation, which could hinder its competitiveness in future elections (Chiumia, 2023; Phiri, 2024).

5.4 Implications of the Study Findings for Political Parties and the Electorate

The recent findings highlight the critical need for political parties in Malawi to adopt a strategy that is not only flexible but also responsive to the dynamic concerns of the electorate. This strategic adaptation is essential for political parties to remain relevant and effective in addressing the ever-evolving issues that voters find most pressing. It is not enough for parties to rely on traditional platforms or charismatic leadership; they must be proactive in bringing policies that resonate with the needs and aspirations of the people.

Furthermore, the findings point to the complexities of coalition politics, which is becoming increasingly common in the Malawian political landscape. Voters must recognize that the nature of coalition governments often requires a degree of compromise and negotiation. Campaign promises made by individual parties may not be fully realized as coalitions work to find a middle ground that accommodates the

diverse interests represented. This reality necessitates a more nuanced understanding of political promises, as voters must temper their expectations with the practicalities of coalition governance.

For the voters of Malawi, these findings have significant implications. Firstly, they suggest that voters should approach the political process with a discerning eye, prioritizing policy discussions over the allure of political personalities. This shift towards a more policy-driven engagement is crucial for the development of a mature and issue-based political culture. Voters are required to critically evaluate the policies proposed by political parties, considering how these policies will impact their lives and the future of the nation.

Overall, this study underscores the adaptability of political parties to changes in electoral systems, revealing a shift from individual party strategies to alliance-based politics under the 50+1 system. This transition not only altered the electoral dynamics but also reshaped governance possibilities in Malawi, signaling a new era where coalition-building and strategic inclusivity are pivotal for electoral success.

The findings of this study also contribute to the broader understanding of how electoral systems influence political strategies and the nature of political competition. As Malawi continues to operate under the 50+1 system, political parties must continue to adapt their strategies, focusing on coalition-building and broader national representation to remain competitive in future elections. This study affirms that electoral systems are not

merely procedural frameworks, but are powerful determinants of political behavior and strategy.

With reference to the 2024 MCP and DPP party conventions, the paper derived important notes that the change from FPTP to 50+1 has altered the political landscape for both MCP and DPP. Under the FPTP system, both parties could focus on securing their traditional regional strongholds with no need for a broad-based majority. However, the 50+1 system has compelled both parties to adopt more inclusive strategies aimed at building wider national coalitions. The MCP has shown a greater ability to adapt to the demands of the 50+1 system by selecting a leadership team that reflects broader regional representation and inclusivity. This shift from a regionally focused strategy in 2018 to a more balanced, nationwide approach in 2024 is directly attributable to the need to secure a majority under the new electoral system (Chiumia, 2023).

Conversely, the DPP has struggled to adapt effectively to the 50+1 system. The party's 2024 convention revealed significant internal divisions and a lack of strategic innovation, which contrasts sharply with the more coherent approach it employed under the FPTP system in 2018. The inability to present a united front and the lack of a clear strategy to appeal to a broader electorate are challenges that have arisen due to the shift to the 50+1 system (Phiri, 2024).

Therefore, the study findings confirm that the 50+1 electoral system has indeed reshaped political strategies in Malawi. Political parties have demonstrated a capacity to adjust their strategies, aligning with the new electoral institution.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Studies

Based on the findings of my study and in as much as the research was thorough, there are still several areas that future studies can address to deepen our understanding of the political landscape under the 50+1 electoral system. Firstly, subsequent research could focus on the long-term sustainability of political alliances formed in response to the 50+1 system. Investigating whether these alliances are merely electoral conveniences or if they have the potential to develop into more stable political coalitions would provide valuable insights into the future of party politics in Malawi. Secondly, there is a need to explore the impact of these alliances on policy-making and governance post-election. Future studies should assess how coalition agreements and compromises influence the implementation of campaign promises and the effectiveness of governance. This would help to understand the practical implications of strategic alliances beyond electoral success.

Lastly, the effect of the 50+1 system on voter turnout and engagement is another critical area for future research. Examining whether the system encourages greater voter participation or if it leads to voter fatigue because of the potential for re-run elections would be significant. This research could also include a comparative analysis with other countries that have similar electoral systems to draw broader conclusions about the efficacy of the 50+1 system in promoting democratic engagement.

Overall, while the current study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the immediate strategic responses to the 50+1 electoral system, these recommendations for future research highlight the need for ongoing scholarly attention to the growing political dynamics in Malawi and similar electoral contexts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Political Experts and Observers

This research, *Effects of Electoral Systems on Political Party Strategies: The Comparative Study of DPP and MCP in Malawi's 2019 and 2020 Presidential Elections*, is being conducted by Wanangwa Charles Mtonga, a student at the University of Malawi. This study is in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Political Science. You are there for requested to participate in this study by truthfully answering the questions herein and many others that may be posed to you in the course of the interview. Information collected in this interview is solely for academic purposes and confidentiality will be observed throughout this study by, among others, concealing your identity and keeping information safe by not communicating it to anyone. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Objective 1: Nature of Political Party Alliances

1. In 2019, the Democratic Progressive Party went solo and the Malawi Congress Party went with the Freedom Party and an endorsement by the Peoples Party as they contested for the presidential elections in Malawi. However, this changed in the Malawian 2020 presidential elections, as we saw the DPP entering into an electoral alliance with UDF and Similarly, MCP entered into an electoral alliance with UTM and 7 other political parties.
 - a. In light of this, what could have been the factors that were considered by the DPP to contest the 2019 presidential elections without an alliance?

- b. In light of this, what could have been the factors that were considered by the MCP to contest the 2019 presidential elections with an alliance with Freedom Party and People Party Support?
- c. What could have been the specific issues that led to the decision of the DPP to enter into the electoral alliance with UDF during the 2020 presidential election?
- d. What could have been the specific issues that led to the decision of the MCP to enter into another electoral alliance with UTM and the other 7 Political Parties during the 2020 presidential election?

Objective 2: Campaign Messages

- 2. With the understanding that Party campaign messages center around the Political Party Manifesto which guides the advancement of the agendas or goals for a Political Party within a specified period, During the 2019 Presidential elections, the DPP boasted of the 2019-2025 Manifesto that envisioned “a government we trust” and Similarly the MCP presented its 2019-2025 manifesto on “Building a New Malawi on the foundation of a Democratic Developmental State powered by the Chakwera Super Hi 5”. However, in 2020 yet another presidential election took place, but this time both the DPP and MCP had entered into major electoral alliances with UDF and UTM together with other 7 political parties (Tonse Alliance) respectively, all these political parties had their manifestos during the 2019 elections,
 - a. What could have been the factors that were considered by DPP whilst coming up with campaign messages in 2019?

- b. What could have been the factors that were considered by MCP whilst coming up with campaign messages in 2019?
- c. What could have been the issues that influenced the decisions of the DPP-UDF alliance when coming up with campaign messages during the 2020 Presidential elections considering that each stand-alone party in the alliance had its manifesto for campaign messaging?
- d. What could have been the issues that influenced the decisions of the Tonse alliance when coming up with campaign messages during the 2020 Presidential elections considering that each stand-alone party in the alliance had its manifesto for campaign messaging?

Objective 3: Composition of the Party Politburos

- 3. In 2018, the MCP President highlighted that he was pleased that the party had decided to share the Party Politburos (National Executive Posts) equally across the country in efforts to curb calls for secession and federalism by some legislators, However the President was an unopposed contestant and similarly, DPP was applauded for the youth packed National Executive committee but also the President went unopposed during the Political Party's convention, These were the executive committees that supported both parties during the 2019 presidential elections. However, in 2020 both the DPP and MCP ventured into electoral alliances, and this demanded the alliances choose the Presidential torch bearers to lead the alliances, Consequently, still, the unopposed DPP leader and Unopposed MCP leader were chosen as Alliance torchbearers through statements signed by the secretary generals from the DPP-UDF as well as Tonse alliance members, this was sought to come from decisions of the member alliance politburo.

- a. What could be the factors that were considered by DPP during the 2018 convention that led to a youthful composition of the politburos but having the president's seat Unopposed for the 2019 presidential elections?
- b. What could be the factors that were considered by MCP during the 2018 convention that led to an equal distribution of seats in its composition of the politburos but having the president's seat Unopposed for the 2019 presidential elections?
- c. In your opinion, what could have been the factors considered in the decision by the DPP and UDF National Executive Committees to have the DPP lead the alliance for the 2020 Presidential elections?
- d. In your opinion, what could have been the factors considered in the decision by the MCP and UTM together with the other 7 National Executive Committees to have the MCP lead the alliance for the 2020 Presidential elections
- e. What specific adjustments in leadership roles or positions could have occurred within the DPP's Politburo/leadership in light of the DPP-UDF alliance in the 2020 presidential elections?
- f. What specific adjustments in leadership roles or positions could have occurred within the MCP Politburo/leadership in light of the Tonse Alliance in the 2020 presidential elections?

Thank You for your time.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for MCP Respondents

This research, “Effects of Electoral Systems on Political Party Strategies: The Comparative Study of DPP and MCP in Malawi’s 2019 and 2020 Presidential Elections”, is being conducted by Wanangwa Charles Mtonga, a student at the University of Malawi. This study is for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Political Science. You are there for requested to participate in this study by truthfully answering the questions herein and many others that may be posed to you in the course of the interview. Information collected in this interview is solely for academic purposes and confidentiality will be observed throughout this study by, among others, concealing your identity and keeping information safe by not communicating it to anyone. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Objective 1: Nature of Political Party Alliances

4. In 2019, the Malawi Congress Party went with the Freedom Party and an endorsement by the Peoples Party as they contested the presidential elections in Malawi. However, this changed in the Malawian 2020 presidential elections as we MCP entered into an electoral alliance with UTM and 7 other political parties.
 - a. In light of this, what could have been the factors that motivated you as MCP to contest the 2019 presidential elections in alliance with the Freedom Party and People Party endorsement?

- b. What could have been the specific issues that you considered as MCP to come up with the decision to enter into the electoral alliance with UTM and the other 7 Political Parties during the 2020 presidential election?

Objective 2: Campaign Messages

- 5. With the understanding that Party campaign messages center on the Political Party Manifesto which guides the advancement of the agendas or goals for a Political Party within a specified period, MCP presented its 2019-2025 manifesto on “Building a New Malawi on the foundation of a Democratic Developmental State powered by the Chakwera Super Hi 5”. However, in 2020, yet another presidential election took place, but this time both the MCP had entered into major electoral alliances with the UTM together and the other 7 political parties, respectively. These were political parties that had their manifestos during the 2019 elections.
 - a. What could have been the factors that you considered as MCP whilst coming up with campaign messages in 2019?
 - b. What could have been the issues that influenced your decisions as the Tonse alliance when coming up with campaign messages during the 2020 Presidential elections considering that each stand-alone party in the alliance had its manifesto for campaign messaging?

Objective 3: Composition of the Party Politburos.

- 6. In 2018, the MCP President highlighted that he was pleased that the party had decided to share the Party Politburos (National Executive Posts) equally across the country in efforts to curb calls for secession and federalism by some legislators.

However, the President was an unopposed contestant, and this was the NEC that managed the 2019 elections. However, in 2020, the MCP ventured into electoral alliances, and this demanded the alliances choose the Presidential torch bearers to lead the alliances. Consequently, still Unopposed MCP leader was chosen as Alliance torchbearer through statements signed by secretary generals from the Tonse alliance members, this was sought to come from decisions of the member alliance politburo.

- a. What could be the factors that were considered by MCP during the 2018 convention that led to an equal distribution of seats in its composition of the politburos but having the president's seat Unopposed for the 2019 presidential elections?
- b. What were the factors that you considered as the Tonse Alliance with the independent National Executive Committee to have the MCP lead the alliance for the 2020 presidential elections?
- c. What specific adjustments in leadership roles or positions occurred within the MCP Politburo/leadership in light of the Tonse Alliance in the 2020 presidential elections?

Thank You for your time.

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for DPP Respondents

This research, “Effects of Electoral Systems on Political Party Strategies: The Comparative Study of DPP and MCP in Malawi’s 2019 and 2020 Presidential Elections”, is being conducted by Wanangwa Charles Mtonga, a student at the University of Malawi. This study is for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Political Science. You are there for requested to participate in this study by truthfully answering the questions herein and many others that may be posed to you in the course of the interview. Information collected in this interview is solely for academic purposes and confidentiality will be observed throughout this study by, among others, concealing your identity and keeping information safe by not communicating it to anyone. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Objective 1: Nature of Political Party Alliances

7. In 2019, the Democratic Progressive Party went solo as you contested the presidential elections in Malawi. However, this changed in the Malawian 2020 presidential elections as you entered into an electoral alliance with UDF.
 - a. In light of this, what could have been the factors that motivated you as DPP to contest the 2019 presidential elections without an alliance?
 - b. What could have been the specific issues that you considered as DPP to come up with the decision to enter into the electoral alliance with UDF during the 2020 presidential election?

Objective 2: Campaign Messages

8. With the understanding that Party campaign messages center around the Political Party Manifesto which guides the advancement of the agendas or goals for a Political Party within a specified period, During the 2019 Presidential elections, the DPP boasted of the 2019-2025 Manifesto that envisioned “a government we trust” However, in 2020 yet another presidential election took place, but you as DPP entered into major electoral alliances with UDF, political parties which had its manifestos during the 2019 elections,
- a. What could have been the factors that you considered as DPP whilst coming up with campaign messages in 2019?
 - b. What could have been the issues that influenced your decisions as a DPP-UDF alliance when coming up with campaign messages during the 2020 Presidential elections considering that each stand-alone party in the alliance had its manifesto for campaign messaging??

Objective 3: Composition of the Party Politburos

9. In 2018, the DPP was applauded for the youth-packed National Executive Committee, although the President went unopposed during the Political Party’s convention. However, in 2020 you as DPP ventured into a major electoral alliance with UDF, and this demanded that you chose the Presidential torch bearers to lead the alliance, though, Your torch bearer made it to the ballot, and a statement signed by secretary generals from the DPP-UDF were released signifying that this was sought to come from decisions of the member alliance politburo’s.

- a. What could be the factors that were considered by DPP during the 2018 convention that led to a youthful composition of the politburos but having the president's seat Unopposed for the 2019 presidential elections?
- b. What were the factors that you considered as the DPP-UDF alliance with the independent National Executive Committee to have the DPP lead the alliance for the 2020 presidential elections?
- c. What specific adjustments in leadership roles or positions occurred within the DPP's Politburo/leadership in light of the DPP-UDF alliance in the 2020 presidential elections?

Thank You for your time.