

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION¹

Bitter disputes and political instability have characterized Malawi's evolution in the last two years. The inauguration of President Bingu wa Mutharika in May 2004 signaled the first democratic transition in the country's history. Mutharika was the handpicked successor of former President Bakili Muluzi, but he soon distanced himself from his former mentor by launching an anti-corruption campaign that extended investigations to former members of the Muluzi governments. Prosecution of Muluzi himself, who remains the chairman and strongman within the United Democratic Front (UDF), led to a public power struggle that resulted in an attempt by UDF members loyal to Muluzi to impeach the president in June 2005 for allegedly violating the constitution and misusing government funds. Such maneuver prompted President Mutharika's resignation from the UDF and his formation of a new party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), depriving the UDF of its parliamentary majority.

The political crisis hampering governance has continued in 2006 with the arrest in April of Vice-President Cassim Chilumpha under treason charges. Chilumpha is a close ally of Muluzi. In August, Mutharika also forced the resignation of the country's top prosecutor after he dropped corruption charges against Muluzi, who had been arrested the previous month. Political rivalries have led to a paralysis that handicaps the government's ability to respond to the country's chronic food insecurity, worsened by the drought and terrible harvest of 2005. Although Malawi has recently been lauded by international donors for its efforts to curtail corruption and public spending, Mutharika himself has been criticized for wasting state funds in luxury items and moving to the opulent presidential palace built by former dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The elections that brought Mutharika to power in 2004 were also tainted by fraud claims and biased campaign coverage by the media.

MOST RECENT TRENDS

Malawi shows a generally positive human rights record: parties can function relatively freely, the media is critical of the government, and freedom of speech and association are generally respected. Although it lacks resources and training, the judiciary has shown a fair degree of independence from the executive, and the government has demonstrated willingness to combat police brutality and corruption. However, the strong personalization of politics remains Malawi's main challenge, with the ongoing struggle between Mutharika and Muluzi threatening to divert attention from the country's many problems, particularly food security. The distinction between anti-corruption and political witch-hunting is not clear in President Mutharika's government action, and certainly has created political instability that could result in serious democratic setbacks.

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MALAWI - WATCHLIST

STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

World Bank Institute Governance Indicators 2005	Score	Key
Voice and Accountability	33.8	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak voice and accountability; higher value indicates strong voice and account)
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	50.0	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak political stability and high violence; higher value indicates opposite)
Government Effectiveness	25.8	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak government effectiveness; higher value indicates strong govt. effectiveness)
Regulatory Quality	29.2	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak regulatory quality; higher value indicates strong regulatory quality)
Rule of Law	44.9	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak rule of law; higher value indicates strong rule of law)
Control of Corruption	21.7	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak control of corruption; higher value indicates strong control of corruption)

Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2007	Score	Key
Political Rights	4	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of political rights; higher value indicates bad system political rights)
Civil Liberties	3	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of civil liberties; higher value indicates bad system civil liberties)
Status	PF	3 Categories: F (Free); PF (Partly Free); NF (Not Free)

Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006	Score	Key
Stateness	8.0	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development)
Political Participation	6.5	
Rule of Law	6.3	
Stability of Democratic Institutions	6.5	
Political and Social Integration	4.0	
Total Score Political Transformation	6.25	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development) / Arrow shows trend in democratic development (↑Improved; ↓Worsened)
Total Score Political Management	4.73	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates lower quality of political management; higher value indicates higher quality of political management)