

Presidential Candidate Debates in Malawi Pre-analysis Plan*

Eric Kramon[†]

April 26, 2019

*Many thanks to Linda Stern, Rishi Datta, Damali James, Mayeso Mphande, Brian Ernst, Matt Dippell, and others at the National Democratic Institute for their support of this project. I am also grateful to Sarah Brierley and George Ofosu for very useful discussions.

[†]Department of Political Science and Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, ekramon@gwu.edu.

Candidate debates are often important, and highly publicized, campaign events. Increasingly, governmental and non-governmental organizations are organizing them in new democracies around the world, with the goals of increasing voter knowledge and access to information about policy platforms and promises, promoting policy-based campaigning and voting (as opposed to clientelistic or identity based campaigning and voting), and enhancing political tolerance (National Democratic Institute, 2014). Do candidate debates achieve these goals?

To address this question, this project will conduct an experiment around presidential candidate debates organized in advance of Malawi's May 2019 elections. The debates were organized through the Malawi Electoral Integrity Program (MEIP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID). Under this program, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) convened a taskforce of 12 Malawian media and civil society partners to organize the debates. The Media Institute of Southern Africa—Malawi co-chairs the taskforce, which also includes the country's three largest media houses and a broad cross-section of influential civil society organizations (including a quasi-governmental body, a women's network, youth networks, a disability network and other interest groups).

As part of the debates dissemination, 1,500 Malawians living in 12 districts across the country will be sampled and randomly assigned to an individual-level screening of the debates or to control. Outcome measures capturing vote preference, vote choice, candidate evaluations, and political tolerance will be gathered twice: immediately after the individual debate screenings and 4-6 weeks later in a follow-up survey that will be conducted in the week after the election. The study will therefore be able to examine voters' immediate reactions to the debates and whether these reactions persist and impact their voting behavior.

This project is most closely related to a growing body of research on debates in new democracies and electoral authoritarian regimes, including Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster's (2016) research on parliamentary candidate debates in Sierra Leone; Platas and Raffler's (2018) work on debate-like "meet the candidate" sessions ahead of legislative elections in Uganda; Brierley, Kramon and Ofose's (2018) research on parliamentary debates in Ghana; Bowles and Larreguy's (2018) study of parliamentary candidate debates in Liberia; and Ichino's (2018) research on legislative candidate debates in Nepal.

It also relates to research on other party- and candidate-centered campaign events, such as deliberative town-hall meetings, which have been studied in Benin (Fujiwara and Wantchekon, 2013), the Philippines (Wantchekon et al., 2017), and Cambodia (Hyde and Lamb, 2015).

This research shows that debates can enhance voter knowledge about candidates and their platforms (Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster, 2016; Platas and Raffler, 2018) and improve voter support of the candidates who perform well in the debates (Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster, 2016; Bowles and Larreguy, 2018). In some settings, exposure to debates made committed partisan voters more supportive of and willing to vote for candidates from their non-preferred party (Brierley, Kramon and Oforu, 2018; Platas and Raffler, 2018). Evidence from several studies suggests that the policy components of the debates are important drivers of these effects: in Sierra Leone, the debates improved the alignment between the policy preferences of voters and their preferred candidates (Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster, 2016). In Ghana, it was the policy-centered components of the debates that played the most central role in moderating the political preferences of voters with strong partisan attachments (Brierley, Kramon and Oforu, 2018).

This study extends this body of research by studying debates in the context of a *presidential* election. This is important because existing studies on debates focus on legislative elections, often in contexts where these events and the candidates are relatively new to voters. However, there are reasons to expect that voters may respond differently to presidential debates. For example, ethno-partisan (or regional) attachments may play a stronger role in shaping voter responses to presidential debates compared to legislative ones; ethnic or local identities are often constant across all candidates in legislative elections, and ethnic, regional, and partisan divisions may be more salient at the national level, especially in contexts where voters have strong expectations that presidents will favor their own with public goods and resources (Carlson, 2015; Posner, 2005), as has been the case in Malawi (Ferree and Horowitz, 2010). In addition, the information environment can be very different in presidential elections. Many voters will be more familiar with the presidential candidates and will likely have stronger prior opinions of them, and their political party, before watching the debate. Greater familiarity is important not only because it means that voters may have more firmly entrenched priors, but also because it can impact voters' affec-

tive responses to the candidates—both positive and negative—which can impact information processing (Taber and Lodge, 2006).

In what follows, I first describe the setting of the study. I then lay out competing perspectives on how voters will react to the presidential debates and the hypotheses that will be tested. The next sections describe the research design, measurement, and analytic strategies that will be employed.

1 Setting: Malawi 2019

Malawi's May 2019 elections will be the sixth since the end of single-party rule and the introduction of multiparty politics in 1994. Concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections are held every 5 years. The president is elected directly by plurality in a single nationwide district. Because of this system and Malawi's somewhat fragmented party system, several of the country's presidents have been elected with well less than a majority of votes cast.¹

Malawi gained independence from the British in 1964. For the next 30 years, it was ruled as a single-party state by Presidents Hastings Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). In response to domestic and international pressure, Banda and the MCP agreed to hold multiparty elections in 1994. Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) defeated Banda in 1994 and would go on to win re-election in 1999. Muluzi's successor in the UDF, Bingu wa Mutharika, would win the next presidential election in 2004. However, Muluzi maintained power within the UDF, leading Mutharika to break away from the party to form the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 2005. Mutharika was re-elected on the ticket of the DPP in 2009 and formed a government that included Joyce Banda as vice president. Banda soon fell out politically with Mutharika and was expelled from the ruling party, leaving to form the People's Party (PP). However, she maintained her position as vice president. When Bingu wa Mutharika passed away in 2012, Banda took over the presidency despite efforts by the DPP to violate the constitution and install their preferred president (Dionne and Dulani, 2013). In 2014, with her government plagued by a high profile corruption scandal—the so-called “Cashgate” scandal (Dulani and Chunga, 2015)—Banda was defeated in the presidential election by Peter Mutharika, the DPP candi-

¹Unlike a number of other countries in the region, Malawi does not have a two-round run-off system for the election of the president.

date and brother of the late former president Bingu (Dulani and Dionne, 2014). Peter Mutharika is the incumbent president and is competing in the May 2019 elections.

In the multi-party era, there have been ethno-regional patterns of voting in Malawi that are relevant for the current study (Ferree and Horowitz, 2010; Kaspin, 1995). The largely ethnic Chewa Central region has generally voted at high rates for the MCP, while the UDF and DPP have generally received their highest levels of support from the southern areas. The northern region has also tended to vote as a bloc: most recently, the north has been a base of support for Joyce Banda and the PP. Although ethno-regional patterns of voting appear to have been attenuated in 2009, when Bingu Mutharika was able to appeal to voters across the country (Ferree and Horowitz, 2010), some of the older regional patterns seem to have re-emerged in the 2014 election (Patel and Wahman, 2015). It should be emphasized, however, that these patterns are not deterministic and that there are often many districts in the country without a clear co-ethnic/co-regional candidate to support (Dionne and Dulani, 2014).

Although around 8 candidates may ultimately be on the ballot in the 2019 presidential elections, there are likely to be only 4 candidates that receive significant votes. These candidates, and their support as of May 2018 when the Malawi Institute of Public Opinion Research conducted a nationally representative poll, are summarized in Table 1. For informational purposes, the table also includes levels of support for former president Joyce Banda and the PP. The PP recently formed an alliance with the MCP, and so Banda is no longer competing for the presidency.

The IPOR poll has incumbent President Peter Mutharika of the DPP running neck-and-neck with Lazarus Chakwera, leader of the opposition in parliament and candidate of the MCP. Mutharika's government has been dogged by corruption charges, with leaked documents from the Anti-Corruption Bureau implicating him personally in a bribery scandal.² Saulos Chilima, current vice president and candidate of the newly formed United Transformation Movement (UTM)—a party that was formed after Chilima's public falling out with Mutharika and which has emphasized anti-corruption and good leadership—is running in third, although it should be noted that Chilima's campaign was still in its infancy at the time of the survey. Atupele Muluzi, son of former president Bakili Muluzi, is running on the UDF ticket and has support from about 6 percent of the population, while Banda and the PP have support from about 5

²see <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/embattled-malawi-president-will-fight-2019-election-20180703>

Table 1: Presidential Candidates and percentage of voters who would vote for each party “if elections were held tomorrow.”

Candidate	Party	Support
Peter Mutharika (incumbent)	DPP	27%
Lazarus Chakwera (leader of opposition)	MCP	24%
Saulos Chilima (vice president)	UTM	16%
Atupele Muluzi (son of former president)	UDF	6%
Joyce Banda (former president)*	PP	5%
Other/undecided/refused		22%

Source: Malawi Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) survey conducted in May 2018.

* Joyce Banda and the PP have entered an alliance with the MCP.

percent. It must be emphasized that much has happened since May 2018 when this survey was conducted and that fully 22 percent report being undecided (or refuse to answer).

The presidential elections are likely to center around a number of issues. In the May 2018 IPOR survey, about 34 percent rated food shortages and famine as the most important area they would like the government to address, which reflects persistent challenges of food insecurity in the country. About 22 percent also emphasized management of the economy as a central issue. Access to clean water and health facilities were also rated as important. Corruption is also likely to be a central issue.

1.1 The Presidential Debates

In 2019, there were three presidential debates in Malawi: on March 29, April 2, and April 5, 2019. This is the second election in which presidential elections have been featured, as they were first held in 2014. In 2014, then-President Joyce Banda chose not to participate in the debates, a decision that is not unusual for incumbents who may see debate participation as posing more risk than potential reward (Bowles and Larreguy, 2018).

The presidential debates were organized as part of the Malawi Electoral Integrity Program (MEIP). The MEIP is a 14-month program jointly funded by USAID and DfID. The debates were organized by a taskforce convened by NDI, which includes 12 Malawian media and civil society organizations. The Media Institute of Southern Africa—Malawi co-chairs the debates taskforce, the three largest media houses in Malawi comprise the Technical Working Group, and a broad cross-section of influential civil society

organizations (including a quasi-governmental body, a women's network, youth networks, a disability network and other interest groups) are also involved with the taskforce.

Notably, incumbent President Mutharika chose not to participate in any of the debates, alleging that the debates were biased politically against him and his party, the DPP. The first debate included the 3 major opposition candidates (March 29). The second debate included minor party candidates (April 2). The final debate included all candidates, aside from Mutharika (April 5).

In addition to candidate opening statements and closing statements, the taskforce identified issue areas that would guide the moderator's questions across the debates. These include segments on agriculture, health, education, corruption, jobs and unemployment, youth, and foreign policy. Within each issue area, the moderator asked around 3-4 questions, as well as follow ups based upon the arguments put forth by the candidates. Each candidate/party was be given the list of topics ahead of time, but the exact questions were not released before the debate. The MEIP program offered training opportunities for candidates, in an effort to both help them prepare and increase their likelihood of participation.

2 Research Design

2.1 Sampling

Twelve of Malawi's 28 districts were selected into the sample (Table 2). District selection was guided by the goals of achieving balance across Malawi's three regions, selecting a mix of electorally competitive and party stronghold districts, and selecting a mix of urban and rural districts that would correspond with the proportion of the population in Malawi that lives in urban areas (about 16 percent). Since the northern districts are less populated, two districts in the north were selected. In the Central and South, a mix of electorally competitive and party strongholds were selected. Two urban districts, representing Malawi's two main urban centers (Blantyre and Lilongwe) are also selected into the sample.

Within districts, the following sampling procedure was followed. First, sampling areas were selected at random. Sampling areas are defined by census enumeration areas (EAs). There are about 12,000 EAs in all of Malawi. EAs have on average around 1,000 residents. In rural districts, we randomly sample 7 EAs, using the following process. First, we randomly select 4 Traditional Authorities within

Table 2: Districts in the Sample

Region	Competitive ("Hot spot")	Party Stronghold
South	Mangochi Chikwawa Blantyre Rural	Blantyre City (DPP) Mulanji (DPP)
Central	Ntcheu Nkhotakota Lilongwe Rural	Dowa (MCP) Lilongwe City (MCP)
North	Nkhata Bay	Mzimba (UTM)

each district. Traditional Authorities are sub-district units in which EAs are nested. In 3 of those TAs, we select 2 EAs at random for inclusion in the study. In 1 TA, randomly chosen, we select 1 EA. This produces 7 EAs per district. This multi-stage process for EA selection is similar to the process used by the Afrobarometer in Malawi. In the two urban districts, 12 EAs were selected at random from each city, for a total of 24 urban EAs in the sample.

To select respondents in an EA, enumerator teams first identify potential sampling points in the EA. These are usually churches, schools, and other landmarks. The team will identify 4 landmarks, spread across the EA. Each enumerator will work from 1 of the landmarks. Respondent sampling will use the random walk procedure. Walking from the landmark, enumerators will sample every 5th household they encounter. If there is a refusal, they replace with the very next household over.

Enumerators will alternate households by gender. For example, if they interview a male respondent first, then they will interview a female respondent in the next household. To select respondents in a household, the enumerator will list each of the names of people in the household that are of the target gender for the household (ie, they would list all of the men or women). Then one of the names is selected at random.

Table 3: Experimental Design

A	B	C	D
Control	Agriculture	Education	Health/Corruption

2.2 Experimental Design and Randomization

Each participant is randomly assigned into 1 of 4 groups, summarized in Table 3. Randomization will be at the individual level and will be implemented using a random number generator in the Open Data Kit survey software.

Each treated participant is shown a video of the debate that includes the introductory statements, one policy segment, and the concluding statements. Videos are watched on the tablets that are also used for data collection. Each policy segment includes 3-4 substantive questions from the moderator, a number of follow-up questions, and opportunities for the candidates to react and respond to the arguments of their competition. As a result, treated participants observe substantive policy debate in one policy domain. They also observe the introductory and concluding statements, where the candidates generally highlighted their policy priorities, their main policy proposals, and also the reasons that they are best suited for the presidency. The length of the videos is about one hour.

In the study, treated participants are randomly assigned into one of 3 policy segments: Agriculture, Education, and Health/Corruption. Health and corruption are combined for two reasons. First, these two segments were shorter than the segments on Agriculture and Education. Combining them makes the treatment videos more comparable in length. Second, almost all of the debate in the health section focused on the need to reduce corruption in the government health service sector as a key mechanism for improving healthcare provision in the country. As a result, the substantive debates in the health and corruption segments are very inter-related.

The analysis will leverage the randomization of the policy segments to facilitate inferences about two key questions. First, if debates influence voters because of the policy content, we would expect the effect of the debates to be larger when voters observe debate in a policy domain that is important to them (*HA7*). For example, for participants who care most about agriculture and food security, the effect of the debate should be larger in the Agriculture condition than it is in the Education condition.

This design randomizes whether or not participants are exposed to debate about the policy area of most importance to them — which will be measured pre-treatment — which allows for a causally identified test of that hypothesis. Second, existing literature suggests that a candidate’s performance in the debate should also be important (*HA5*). To the extent that there may be variation in candidate performance across the segments — a candidate may perform well on Agriculture but poorly on Health/Corruption — the design also randomizes candidate performance.

This individual-screening approach is similar to Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu (2018), but differs from Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2016) and Platas and Raffler (2018), which included community-level screenings of the debates. While each approach has costs and benefits, one advantage of the individual approach is that we can measure participants’ reactions to the debates, using both survey measures and more qualitative interview questions, before they are influenced by any types of social or community level dynamics. We can then determine whether the initial reactions persist and ultimately impact voting behavior and attitudes in the longer term. A second advantage is statistical power. With individual-level screenings, we can randomize at the individual-level, rather than the community-level, which substantially improves statistical power by avoiding a clustered treatment. Given budgetary constraints, this is important as it is not feasible to organize community screenings in a sufficiently large number of communities. I do note that Platas and Raffler (Forthcoming) also implemented individual-level screenings and compare them to the public screenings and they find similar patterns of results for both mechanisms of dissemination. Similarly, a number of studies in the first *Metaketa* on information and accountability compared private versus public information dissemination and several found no difference in the two methods (Dunning et al., Forthcoming).

I note also that the timeline makes it possible that some participants in both treatment and control may encounter the debates before entering the study. Pre-treatment exposure will likely be higher in urban areas, while it is not expected to be significant in the rural areas. While randomization should ensure balance in pre-treatment exposure, I will address this by 1) controlling for pre-treatment exposure and 2) running robustness tests that subset the sample by pre-treatment exposure.

2.3 Timeline

Data collection will take place following the final debate and continue through the month of April. Beginning around April 8, the study will begin and will continue for 3 weeks. After the consent process is complete, subjects will all take a short baseline survey, which will be used to capture important pre-treatment covariates. After this baseline survey, subjects will view the debate in private on a tablet, if they are in the randomly assigned treatment group. Election day is May 21. An endline survey will be conducted beginning on May 22, after the election.

3 Hypotheses

Before laying out the study hypotheses, it is worth noting how debates are distinct from other campaign events and forms of political information, as well as the types of information that voters might glean from debates. On the former, debates are distinct from other types of campaign events and information-provision programs in several ways that are of potential importance. First, debates allow voters to directly compare candidates (Platas and Raffler, Forthcoming)—candidates generally answer the same or similar questions under the same time constraints and on the same platform. Second, and relatedly, because the candidates can engage with one another and the moderator can ask follow up questions, candidates are often pushed to defend and lay out justifications for their positions. Thus, voters may learn both what a candidate’s positions are and why they hold those positions. Third, debates are generally structured in a way that “levels the playing field” between incumbents, challengers, and candidates from minor parties (Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu, 2018; Levitsky and Way, 2010). Finally, debates involve candidates/parties themselves, which could enhance the credibility of the information—for example, voters are not hearing about policy platforms from an NGO or media organization—and make it less likely that the parties/candidates will work to undermine the program (Platas and Raffler, Forthcoming), thus reducing the potential for the types of backlash that have hindered other types of information provision programs (Arias et al., 2018; Bhandari, Larreguy and Marshall, 2018; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2013). Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that post-debate “spin” on the part of parties and their allies will influence how voters react to the debates (Fridkin et al., 2004).

Debates can provide voters with multiple types of information about candidates. Broadly, we can place this information into two categories: “policy” and “quality” (Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster, 2016; Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu, 2018; Platas and Raffler, 2018). On the former, debates provide a forum for candidates to articulate and justify their positions and platforms, as well as to engage with and potentially argue against the positions of their competition. Furthermore, the structure of debates may create incentives for candidates to move beyond the broad valence appeals that often characterize campaigns in new democracies (Bleck and Van de Walle, 2013; Lupu and Riedl, 2013) and to be more specific about their positions and plans in order to differentiate from their competition (Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu, 2018). Regarding quality, which would include characteristics such as competence and honesty, debates provide opportunities for candidates to discuss their backgrounds, qualifications, and values. Through their performance, candidates can also send signals about their abilities, trustworthiness, and overall likability.

A starting point for this research is that, although many Malawians are likely to know about and have some potentially strong prior opinion about the main presidential candidates, they will generally lack access to the type of information that is likely to be conveyed during the debates. This is especially the case in the policy domain, where many voters are likely to lack awareness of candidates’ policy platforms and, crucially, exposure to discussions about the relative merits of competing policy proposals.

3.1 Family A: Hypotheses on vote choice and candidate evaluations

HAI On average, voters exposed to debates will become more supportive of (or more likely to vote for) the three candidates that participated in the debates. [support measured in *QC1-QC4* and *QC5*, and *QE1-QE4* and *QE6* in post-election survey.]

(a) Will also examine *HAI* for each of the three candidates individually.

HA2 On average, voters exposed to debates will become less supportive of (or less likely to vote for) the incumbent president, who chose not to participate in the debates.[support measured in *QC1-QC4* and *QC5*, and *QE1-QE4* and *QE6* in post-election survey.]

- (a) The effects predicted above will be less pronounced among strong supporters of the president's party (DPP): DPP supporters will punish the president less for not appearing in the debates and will not reward the challengers as much for participating. [partisanship measured in *QA13-QA16*]
- (b) Will also test *HA1* and *HA2* separately for swing versus partisan voters [partisanship measured in *QA13-QA16*]

HA3 Voting across party lines: Debates make partisan voters more supportive of (or more likely to vote for) candidates from different political parties. [partisanship measured in *QA13-QA16*]

HA4 Voting across ethno-regional lines: Debates make voters more supportive of (or more likely to vote for) candidates that are associated with different ethno-regional groups. [ethnicity measured in *QA12* and linked to ethnicity of candidates]

HA5 Debate Performance: Participants will become more supportive of (or likely to vote for) candidates that perform well in the debate. [performance measured in *QB1* and *QB2* in the survey, and in expert survey]

- (a) Will test whether effects above are different for partisans versus swing/independent voters.
- (b) If there is variation in performance ratings across the three different policy segment conditions, will also use this random source of variation in performance to test this hypothesis.

HA6 Debate Performance + Priors:

- (a) When candidates perform better than the voter expected them to before the debate, the debates increase support for that candidate. [prior measured pre-treatment in *QA29*]
- (b) When candidates perform worse than the voter expected them to before the debate, the debates decrease support for that candidate. [prior measured pre-treatment in *QA29*]
- (c) Will test whether effects above are different for partisans versus swing/independent voters.
- (d) If there is variation in performance ratings across the three different policy segment conditions, will also use this random source of variation in performance to test this hypothesis.

HA7 Policy importance: When participants are randomly assigned to view a policy segment in the policy area most important to them, the impact of debates (as predicted above) will be larger than when the participant is randomly assigned to view a policy segment that is less important to them. [policy priorities measured in *QA20-QA22*.]

(a) Will test whether effects above are different for partisans versus swing/independent voters.

3.2 Family B: Hypotheses related to causal mechanisms

HB1 The impact of debates will be greater for participants who report learning a lot about candidates' policy positions [measured with *QB6*]

HB2 Debates impact perceptions about the strength of candidates' policy positions. [measured with *QC9*, and *QE10* in post-election survey]

HB3 Debates make voters more confident that they understand candidate policy positions. [measured with *QC8*, and *QE32* in post-election survey.]

HB4 Debates improve voter knowledge of candidate policy positions. [measured with *QE7-QE9* in post-election survey]

HB5 Debates increase the chances that voters vote for candidates that share their policy preferences. [measured with *QE7-QE9* in post-election survey]

HB6 The impact of debates will be greater for participants who report learning a lot about candidates' quality (qualifications and trustworthiness) [measured with *QB8* and *QB9*]

HB7 Debates impact perceptions about candidate quality (qualifications and trustworthiness) . [measured with *QC10* and *QC11*, and *QE11-QE12* in post-election survey.]

3.3 Family C: Hypotheses on additional outcomes

HC1 Voter turnout: Voters exposed to the debates will be more likely to turnout to vote. [Measured with *QE5* in post-election survey]

HC2 Engagement: Voters exposed to the debates will be more engaged in the campaign and more likely to discuss politics with those in their family or social group. [Measured with *QE17-QE21* in post-election survey]

HC3 Efficacy: Voters exposed to the debates will have a greater sense that they are informed and understand politics, and that their vote is meaningful. [Measured with *QC6-QC7* after the debate and *QE30-QE31* in the post-election survey.]

HC4 Policy-based voting versus Identity or Clientelism:

(a) Voters exposed to the debates will be more likely to report that candidate/party policies or platforms were important in determining their vote. [Measured with *QE16* in post-election survey]

(b) Voters exposed to the debates will be less likely to report that identity or handouts (clientelism) were important in determining their vote. [Measured with *QE16* in post-election survey]

HC5 Tolerance: Debates enhance political tolerance and reduce fear of out-group candidates [measured with *QC12-QC14*, and *QE33-QE35* in post-election survey.]

HC6 Legitimacy of the electoral process: Voters exposed to the debates will have more positive perceptions of the legitimacy and quality of the electoral and democratic process in Malawi. [measured with *QE27*, *QE28*, and *QE29* post-election survey]

3.4 Family D: Community-Level Hypotheses and Persistence of Effects

The hypotheses above focus mainly on individual-level factors. Yet the characteristics of voters' communities and social networks are also likely to be consequential. Consistent with this, Brierley, Kramon and Ofofu (2018) find that although debates in Ghana moderated the political attitudes of strong partisans in all types of communities, these effects only persisted in partisan diverse communities. In communities characterized by partisan homogeneity, the impact dissipated over time.

To build upon these findings, I test the following hypotheses:

HD1 The effects of debates will persist more strongly when voters live in electorally competitive districts. [coded based upon coding in Table 3]

HD2 The effects of debates will persist more strongly when voters have partisan diverse social networks. [measured with *QA19*]

HD3 The effects of debates will persist more strongly when voters live in ethnically diverse enumeration areas. [measured using enumeration-area level census data]

HD4 Effect of debates will dissipate most when voters live in an EA where the majority of the population is a coethnic of one of the main presidential candidates. [measured using enumeration-area level census data]

If the results are consistent with the notion that the partisan and ethnic profile of communities and social networks is influential, I will explore explanations about why this is the case. To do so, I will investigate how a number of potentially important factors vary across different types of communities. These include the types of discussions people had with friends and community members following the debates; media access and exposure; and the role of local traditional authorities and party activists in influencing voters.

3.5 Surveys and Measurement

The main measures are captured using a two-wave panel survey. The survey data is being gathered in collaboration with the Institute of Public Opinion Research — Malawi, a leading survey research organization in Malawi. The surveys are translated in Chichewa and Chitumbuka, two common languages in Malawi.

Wave 1 of the survey will be conducted in April 2019. Wave 2 will be conducted in the weeks following the May 21 election. Pre-treatment measures will be captured during Wave 1. In addition, a first set of outcome measures will be gathered after debate exposure (for those in treatment groups) as part of the Wave 1 survey. These outcomes, and additional ones, will then be measured again in Wave 2 following the election. With this design, both the immediate and longer-term influence of debates can be captured.

Main outcome measures

Outcome measures will be measured through surveys conducted immediately after the debate viewing and in a follow-up survey during the week following the election.

The first outcome is *vote choice*, or *expected vote choice* when measured before the election. The exact wording is as follows: *I want to remind you that I do not work with any of the political parties and that the information you provide will not be shared with anyone. If the presidential elections were to be held tomorrow, which candidate and party would you vote for?* For each participant-candidate dyad, I will create a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent intends to vote for that candidate, and 0 otherwise.

To study whether debates increase voting across party and ethno-regional lines, I will create an additional set of dummy variables using the vote choice measure. These measures will be at the participant level. For those who report a pre-treatment attachment to one of the major parties, I will create a variable, *vote across party lines*, which takes a value of 1 if the respondent intends to vote for, or does vote for, a candidate from a different party. For example, if the vote reports an attachment to the DPP but intends to vote for the MCP candidate, this variable would take a value of 1. In addition, I will create a variable, *vote across ethnic lines*, which takes a value of 1 if voters vote for a candidate outside of their ethnic group. This variable will only be constructed for respondents who have a coethnic candidate in the race. Finally, I will create a variable, *vote across regional lines*, which takes a value of 1 if respondents living in a stronghold of one of the major parties report an intention to vote for a candidate from a different region.

In addition to vote intention, or vote choice, I also examine a 5-point *candidate evaluation* of each of the five main candidates (Brierley, Kramon and Oforu, 2018), which Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2016) describe as “closeness” to each of the candidates. These questions are worded as follows:

I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Peter Mutharika**, who is the **DPP's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Peter Mutharika**?

Partisanship

Partisanship will be measured pre-treatment through two sets of questions. First, pre-treatment survey questions will ask whether subjects feel close to any of the main political parties. Respondents who report feeling “very close” to one of the main parties will be coded as “strong partisans” of that party.

An alternative measure of partisanship will also be constructed from question *QA16*, which asks for a 5-point evaluation of each of the parties. These 5-point evaluations are useful because some voters may have positive (negative) feelings toward more than one party. With these measures, we can interact the treatment indicator with a pre-treatment evaluation of each party to determine how the evaluation conditions the impact of the debates.

Community and Social Networks

To test hypotheses in Family D, I create three measures. 1) The partisan composition of social networks will be measured pre-treatment and captures the partisan preferences of the five people with whom the participant is most likely to discuss national politics (*QA19*). 2) Using official census data, I will code whether or not the respondent lives in an EA where the majority of the population is a coethnic with one of the main presidential candidates. I can also calculate the ethnic diversity of the EA. 3) I will code whether or not the respondent lives in a district that is the stronghold of one of the major parties (see Table 2).

Measuring Debate Performance and Priors

To generate measures of debate performance, I adopt two approaches drawing upon existing literature. First, I will use an “expert” survey with Malawian journalists, academics, and civil society representatives.

Second, I will use citizen survey based measures. This is important because citizen reactions to the debates may be very different from the “experts”, who may judge debate performance along different criteria. Indeed it is not clear that there can truly be an objective measure of debate performance, as each citizen may engage with them differently and be persuaded by different types of arguments, and it could

be problematic to privilege one group’s assessments over another (e.g., perhaps the “experts” do not quite understand what makes for a good debate performance from the perspective of other Malawians).

One measure, *QB1*, asks each treated respondent which candidate they believe won the debate. A second, *QB2*, asks for a 5-point rating of each candidate’s performance. To generate a survey-based measure of performance that can be applied to participants in both treatment and control groups, I take the average response of all other participants living in the participant’s district., an approach that is similar to (Bowles and Larreguy, 2018). I will do this to create a dummy variable capturing the debate winner and to produce an average of the 5-point scale rating. Depending on the variation in the survey-based performance measures across the treatment conditions, I may also create policy segment specific measures of performance. That is, I will use participants in the Agriculture condition only, the Education condition only, and the Health/Corruption condition only, to produce separate performance measures for each.

I measure participant priors about debate performance on the same 5-point scale as the performance measure (*QA29*). I will then calculate the difference between actual performance and priors to test *HA6*.

3.6 Measuring Additional Outcomes

The survey items used to measure additional outcomes are specified in the hypothesis section.

4 Analysis

To test hypotheses that are specific to the voter-candidate dyad, I will create a dataset in which the unit of analysis is the participant-candidate dyad. The baseline specification is as follows:

$$Y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_1 * T_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

T_{ij} is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the participant is in any of the treatment groups, and 0 otherwise. γ_j are fixed effects for each enumeration area (the main sampling points). The enumeration area fixed effects should increase the efficiency of the estimates by controlling for differences across

districts and local communities that could impact the main outcomes. To further improve precision, I will also control for pre-treatment covariates (X): age, gender, education, a household asset index, whether or not the respondent has a full time job that pays a cash income, and pre-treatment exposure to one of the debates. Since participants enter into the data multiple times (for each candidate), standard errors will be clustered on participant to account for interdependence between responses.

To test hypotheses related to outcomes that are not candidate specific (cross-party voting, cross-ethnic/regional voting, voter turnout, knowledge, tolerance, efficacy, engagement, and so on), I create a dataset in which the unit of analysis is the individual survey respondent. As above, the models will include electoral area fixed effects, and the same individual-level pre-treatment controls.

To test $HA7$, I will estimate the following baseline model:

$$Y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_1 * AG_{ij} + \beta_1 * ED_{ij} + \beta_1 * HC_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (2)$$

In this model, individual dummy variables are introduced for each of the three debates treatment conditions (AG=Agriculture, ED=Education, and HC=Health/Corruption). Equation 2 is for analyses at the participant-candidate level. As above, a similar model can be written for analyses where the unit of analysis is the participant. I will create a dummy variable indicating whether or not agriculture, education, or health/corruption are important to the participant, which will be interacted with the treatment indicators.

For other hypotheses that predict heterogenous effects, interaction terms and subset analysis will be introduced.

5 Multiple Comparisons

The pre-analysis plan specifies 4 families of hypotheses (A-D). Within each family, I will calculate False Discovery Rate adjusted q-values (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

References

- Arias, Eric, Horacio Larreguy, John Marshall and Pablo Querubin. 2018. "Priors Rule: When do malfeasance revelation help or hurt incumbent parties?" *Working Paper* https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jmarshall/files/mexico_accountability_experiment_v11.pdf.
- Benjamini, Yoav and Yosef Hochberg. 1995. "Controlling the false discovery rate: A practical and powerful approach to multiple testing." *Journal of the royal statistical society* pp. 289–300.
- Bhandari, Abhit, Horacio Larreguy and John Marshall. 2018. "An Empirical Anatomy of Political Accountability: Experimental Evidence from a Pre-Election Information Dissemination Campaign in Senegal." *Working paper* <http://cess.nyu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Marshall.pdf>.
- Bidwell, Kelly, Katherine Casey and Rachel Glennerster. 2016. "Debates: Voting and Expenditure Responses to Political Communication." *Stanford Graduate School of Business Working Paper No. 3066* <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/gsb-cmis/gsb-cmis-download-auth/362906>.
- Bleck, Jaimie and Nicolas Van de Walle. 2013. "Valence issues in African elections: Navigating uncertainty and the weight of the past." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(11):1394–1421.
- Bowles, Jeremy and Horacio Larreguy. 2018. "Who Debates, Wins? Experimental Evidence on Debate Participation in a Liberian Election." Working Paper.
- Brierley, Sarah, Eric Kramon and George Oforu. 2018. "The Moderating Effect of Debates on Political Attitudes." Working Paper.
- Carlson, Elizabeth. 2015. "Ethnic voting and accountability in Africa: A choice experiment in Uganda." *World Politics* 67(2):353–385.
- Dionne, Kim Yi and Boniface Dulani. 2013. "Constitutional provisions and executive succession: Malawi's 2012 transition in comparative perspective." *African affairs* 112(446):111–137.
- Dionne, Kim Yi and Boniface Dulani. 2014. "On the eve of Malawi's election."
- Dulani, Boniface and Joseph Chunga. 2015. When is Incumbency No Longer an Advantage? Explaining President Joyce Banda's Defeat. In *The 2014 Malawi Tripartite Elections: Is Democracy Maturing?*, ed. Nandini Patel and Michael Wahman. Lilongwe, Malawi: National Initiative for Civic Education.
- Dulani, Boniface and Kim Yi Dionne. 2014. "Presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Electoral Studies* 36:218–225.
- Dunning, Thad, Guy Grossman, Macartan Humphreys, Susan D. Hyde and Craig McIntosh, eds. Forthcoming. *Metaketa I: The Limits of Electoral Accountability*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferree, Karen and Jeremy Horowitz. 2010. "Ties that bind? The rise and decline of ethno-regional partisanship in Malawi, 1994–2009." *Democratization* 17(3):534–563.
- Fridkin, Kim L., Patrick J. Kenney, Sarah Allen Gershon, Karen Shafer and Gina Serignese Woodall. 2004. "Capturing the Power of a Campaign Event: The 2004 Presidential Debate in Tempe." *Journal of Politics* 69(3):770–85.

- Fujiwara, Thomas and Leonard Wantchekon. 2013. "Can Informed Public Deliberation Overcome Clientelism? Experimental Evidence from Benin." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* .
- Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy Weinstein. 2013. "Policing Politicians." *Working Paper* <http://www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/papers1/scorecard2010.pdf>.
- Hyde, Susan D and Emily Lamb. 2015. The Micro-Level Consequences of Democracy Promotion: A Field Experiment in Rural Cambodia. Technical report Working paper.
- Kaspin, Deborah. 1995. "The politics of ethnicity in Malawi's democratic transition." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33(04):595–620.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A Way. 2010. "Why democracy needs a level playing field." *Journal of Democracy* 21(1):57–68.
- Lupu, Noam and Rachel Beatty Riedl. 2013. "Political parties and uncertainty in developing democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(11):1339–1365.
- National Democratic Institute. 2014. *Organizing and Producing Candidate Debates: An International Guide*. National Democratic Institute.
- Patel, Nandini and Michael Wahman. 2015. "The presidential, parliamentary and local elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Africa Spectrum* 50(1):79–92.
- Platas, Melina and Pia Raffler. 2018. "The Limits of Partisanship: How Information Can Encourage Crossing Party Lines." *Working Paper* http://piaraffler.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Platas_Raffler_MTC_aug5.pdf.
- Platas, Melina and Pia Raffler. Forthcoming. Meet the Candidates: Field Experimental Evidence on Learning from Politician Debates in Uganda. In *Metaketa I: The Limits of Electoral Accountability*, ed. Thad Dunning, Guy Grossman, Macartan Humphreys, Susan D. Hyde and Craig McIntosh. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Posner, Daniel N. 2005. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3):755–69.
- Wantchekon, Leonard, Gabriel Lopez-Moctezuma, Thomas Fujiwara, Cecilia Pe Lero and Daniel Rubenson. 2017. "Policy Deliberation and Voter Persuasion: Experimental Evidence from an Election in the Philippines." *Working paper* http://www.princeton.edu/~fujiwara/papers/phil_ajps.pdf.

Survey Instruments

Malawi Election 2019 Survey

Wave 1 Survey

Survey Part A

QA1 Read oral consent script. Did this subject provide informed oral consent to participate in the study?

- Yes [if yes, continue]
- No [if no, the interview is over]

QA2 District [create dropdown menu with options]

QA3 Parliamentary constituency [create dropdown menu with options]

QA4 Enumeration area [create dropdown menu with options. Or use polling station if that is the sampling area]

QA5 What is the respondent's gender?

- Male
- Female

QA6 Is this a rural or urban area?

- Urban
- Rural

QA7 Are you registered to vote in the upcoming election?

- Yes [if yes, continue]
- No [if no, the interview is over]

QA8 How old are you? [restrict answers to be between 18-100. If below 18, the interview is over].

QA9 What is your highest level of education? [Code from answer. Do not read options]

- No formal schooling
- Informal schooling only (including Koranic schooling)
- Some primary schooling
- Primary school completed (JHS)
- Some secondary school (SHS)
- Secondary school (SHS) completed
- Some diploma or degree from a polytechnic
- Diploma or degree from a polytechnic completed

- Some university
- University completed
- Post-graduate completed
- Don't know [Do not read]

QA10 Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes, ask:] Is it full-time or part-time? [If no, ask:] Are you presently looking for a job?

- No (not looking)
- No (looking)
- Yes, part time
- Yes, full time
- Don't know [Do not read]

QA11 Which of these things do you personally own? [select all that apply]

- Mobile phone
- Smart phone
- Radio
- Television
- Refrigerator
- Satellite TV
- Car

QA12 What is your ethnic community, cultural group, or tribe?

- Tumbuka
- Nkhonde
- Lambya
- Chewa
- Yao
- Ngoni
- Lomwe
- Mang'anja
- Sena
- Sukwa
- Senga
- Tonga
- Malawian only, or "doesn't think of self in those terms"
- Refused to answer

- Don't know [Don't read]
- Other

QA13 Do you feel close to a political party?

QA14 If yes, which party?

- Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- People's Party (PP)
- United Democratic Front (UDF)
- United Transformation Movement (UTM)
- Other: (specify)

QA15 If yes, do you feel very close or only a little bit close to the party?

- A little bit close
- Very close

QA16 What is your opinion of the following political parties? Remember, there is no right or wrong answer, we are interested in your honest opinion. [On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive opinion of the party, 1 signifies that you have a very negative opinion of the party, and 3 means that you are neutral] [randomize order of list] [The categories are generally: 5=Very positive, 4=Positive, 3=Neutral, 2=Negative, 1=Negative]

- Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- People's Party (PP)
- United Democratic Front (UDF)
- United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QA17 When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters:

- Frequently?
- Occasionally?
- Never?

QA18 How often do you get news from the following sources? [Every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, less than once a month, never]

- Radio
- Newspapers
- Television
- Social media such as Facebook or Twitter

QA19 Please think for a minute about the FIVE adults with whom you are most likely to discuss national politics. How many of them would you say support the following parties? [randomize order of list]

- Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) [answer between 0-5]
- Malawi Congress Party (MCP) [answer between 0-5]
- People's Party (PP) [answer between 0-5]
- United Democratic Front (UDF) [answer between 0-5]
- United Transformation Movement (UTM) [answer between 0-5]
- Independent / Do not support any party [answer between 0-5]
- Supporter of a minor/smaller party [answer between 0-5]

QA20 In your opinion, what is the most important issue that the government needs to address? [open ended, code from response; will use Afrobarometer codes for enumerator to code on the spot]

QA21 In your opinion, what is the second most important issue that the government needs to address? [open ended, code from response; will use Afrobarometer codes for enumerator to code on the spot]

QA22 In your opinion, what is the third most important issue that the government needs to address? [open ended, code from response; will use Afrobarometer codes for enumerator to code on the spot]

QA23 Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?

- Much worse
- Worse
- The Same
- Better
- Much Better

QA24 Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?

- Much worse
- Worse
- The Same
- Better
- Much Better

QA25 In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

- Increased a lot
- Increased somewhat
- The Same

- Decreased somewhat
- Decreased a lot

QA26 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how strong do you believe their policy positions are, or do you not know enough to say? [5 point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QA27 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how qualified would you say that they are? [5-point scale] [randomize order]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QA28 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how trustworthy would you say that they are? [5-point scale] [randomize order]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QA29 You might be aware that candidate debates have been organized so that the presidential candidates can debate policy issues and present their campaign platforms. Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how well do you think they would be able to perform in a debate with the other candidates? [randomize order of candidate list] [5-point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QA30 Did you listen to or watch any of the presidential candidate debates that have been held during the campaign?

QA31 If yes, which one? [choose all that apply]

- March 29 [major candidates only]
- April 2 [smaller party candidates only]

- April 5 [all candidates]

QA32 If yes, did you watch it on TV or listen to it on the radio?

QA33 If yes, did listen to or watch the entire debate, or just a portion of it?

- A small amount
- About half
- Most of it
- All

QA34 If no, why not? [could read options, or potentially make open ended and code on the spot]

- Not aware of the debates
- Had no way to watch or listen to them
- Was busy or unable to make time to watch while they were broadcast
- Content of the debates is not relevant for people like me
- Not interested in politics
- Other: [specify]

Debate Video

Randomly assign respondent into one of the experimental groups [this will be done with random number generator in the survey software].

Now we are going to watch a video. Afterward, we will have just a few more questions.

Survey Part B

NOTE: Following questions are for those who watched the debates only [will be coded into survey program]. Those in control group will skip straight to Wave 1 Part C.

QB1 Which candidate would you say won or performed best in the debate you just watched?

- Chakwera (MCP)
- Muluzi (UDF)
- Chilima (UTM)

QB2 Overall, how would you rate the performance of each of the following candidates in the debate? [5-point scale]

- Chakwera (MCP)
- Muluzi (UDF)
- Chilima (UTM)

QB3 Thinking about the debate you just watched, what would you say you learned the most about? [open ended]

QB4 Thinking about the debate you just watched, did anything surprise you in what you saw or heard? [open ended]

QB5 Do you think the debate you just watched will influence how you ultimately vote? [Yes, No, Not sure]

- (a) If Yes, why? [open ended]
- (b) If no, why not? [open ended]

QB6 Thinking about the debate you just watched, how much would you say that you learned about each of the the candidates' policy positions? A lot, a little bit, or nothing?

- A lot
- A little bit
- Nothing

QB7 Thinking about the debate you just watched, how much would you say that you learned about WHY each of the the candidates holds the policy positions and opinions that they have? A lot, a little bit, or nothing?

- A lot
- A little bit
- Nothing

QB8 Thinking about the debate you just watched, how much would you say that you learned about each of the the candidates' qualifications? A lot, a little bit, or nothing?

- A lot

- A little bit
- Nothing

QB9 Thinking about the debate you just watched, how much would you say that you learned about each of the the candidates' trustworthiness? A lot, a little bit, or nothing?

- A lot
- A little bit
- Nothing

Survey Part C

NOTE: This section is for everyone

Randomize the order of the following four questions.

QC1 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Peter Mutharika**, who is the **DPP's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Peter Mutharika**? [*use visual to help with response*]

QC2 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Lazarus Chakwera**, who is the **MCP's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Lazarus Chakwera**? [*use visual to help with response*]

QC3 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Atupele Muluzi**, who is the **UDF's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Atupele Muluzi**? [*use visual to help with response*]

QC4 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Saulos Chilima**, who is the **UTM's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Saulos Chilima**? [*use visual to help with response*]

QC5 I want to remind you that I do not work with any of the political parties and that the information you provide will not be shared with anyone. If the presidential elections were to be held tomorrow, which candidate and party would you vote for?

- Mutharika (DPP)
- Chakwera (MCP)
- Muluzi (UDF)
- Chilima (UTM)
- OTHERS [specify]

QC6 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *I feel like I understand politics*. [5-point scale]

QC7 With which statement do you agree? STATEMENT A: All political candidates are the same, so it does not matter how I vote in the upcoming presidential election. STATEMENT B: There are real differences between the 2019 presidential candidates, so it is important that I vote for the candidate I prefer.

- Strongly agree with A
- Agree with A

- Neither
- Agree with B
- Strongly Agree with B
- Don't know [dont read]
- Refused [dont read]

QC8 Thinking about the presidential candidates, how confident do you feel that you understand their policy positions? [5-point scale]

QC9 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how strong do you believe their policy positions are, or do you not know enough to say? [5 point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC10 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how qualified would you say that they are? [5-point scale] [randomize order]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC11 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how trustworthy would you say that they are? [5-point scale] [randomize order]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC12 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] has reasonable and well thought out justifications for their positions, even if I disagree with those positions.* [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC13 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] should not be allowed to campaign or make speeches in my community.* [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC14 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] has ideas that are dangerous for the country.* [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QC15 You may have heard or noticed that President Mutharika and the DPP did not participate in the presidential debates. Do you believe he should have participated? [Yes, No]

- If yes, why? [code from open ended]
- If no, why not? [code from open ended - we want to pick up whether they agree that the debates were politically biased]

QC16 Do you think that President Mutharika's decision not to participate in the debates will hurt his chances of winning the election? [Yes, No]

- If yes, why? [code from open ended]
- If no, why not? [code from open ended]

QC17 We would like to visit or call you to ask a few more questions in about a month. If you are willing, please let us know your phone number so that we can contact you.

Wave 2 Survey

Note: This survey will be conducted 4-6 weeks after Wave 1. Wave 2 will be conducted from May 22 (day after election) until the official results are announced (approximately 7 days).

QE1 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Peter Mutharika**, who is the **DPP's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Peter Mutharika**?

QE2 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Lazarus Chakwera**, who is the **MCP's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Lazarus Chakwera**?

QE3 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Atupele Muluzi**, who is the **UDF's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Atupele Muluzi**?

QE4 I'd like you to think about your **overall assessment** of **Saulos Chilima**, who is the **UTM's** candidate for president. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means that you have a very positive assessment, 1 signifies that you have a very negative assessment, and 3 means that you are neutral, what is your overall assessment of **Saulos Chilima**?

QE5 Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election on May 21, which of the following statements is true for you?

- You voted in the elections
- You could not find your polling station
- You decided not to vote
- You were prevented from voting
- You did not have time to vote
- You did not vote because you could not find your name in the voters' register
- Did not vote for some other reason

QE6 I want to remind you that I do not work with any of the political parties and that the information you provide will not be shared with anyone. Now I am going to ask you about which party's presidential candidate you voted for in the presidential elections on May 21.

- Mutharika (DPP)
- Chakwera (MCP)
- Muluzi (UDF)
- Chilima (UTM)
- Other: [specify]
- Did not vote

QE7 Some political parties have argued that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated.

- Do you agree with that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated? [Yes, No, Do not know]
- Does the DPP agree that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UTM agree that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the MCP agree that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UDF agree that the quota system in the education sector should be eliminated. ? [yes, no, don't know]

QE8 Some political parties have argued that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program?

- Do you agree that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program? [Yes, No, Do not know]
- Does the DPP agree that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UTM agree that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the MCP agree that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UDF agree that the Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program should be eliminated and replaced with a different program? [yes, no, don't know]

QE9 Some political parties have argued that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office.

- Do you agree that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office? [Yes, No, Do not know]
- Does the DPP agree that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UTM agree that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the MCP agree that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office? [yes, no, don't know]
- Does the UDF agree that the constitution should be amended to remove the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution while in office? [yes, no, don't know]

QE10 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how strong do you believe their policy positions are, or do you not know enough to say? [5 point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE11 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how trustworthy would you say that the candidates are? [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE12 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how qualified would you say that the candidates are? [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE13 When deciding who to vote for in the presidential elections, what was the most important reason you supported the candidate that you voted for?

QE14 When deciding who to vote for in the presidential elections, what was the second most important reason you supported the candidate that you voted for?

QE15 When deciding who to vote for in the presidential elections, what was the third most important reason you supported the candidate that you voted for?

QE16 Now I am going to read you a list of reasons that people vote for presidential candidates. For each one, please tell me whether the item was very important, somewhat important, a little bit important, or not at all important in helping to determine who you voted for: [randomize order]

- Whether the candidate is trustworthy
- The candidate's policy positions
- Whether you received a handout or gift from the candidate's party
- The candidate's experience
- The candidate's home region or district
- Whether or not the candidate attended the presidential debates
- The candidate's performance in the presidential debates
- People in your family encouraged you to vote for the candidate
- People in your community encouraged you to vote for the candidate

- The traditional authority encouraged you to vote for the candidate

QE17 During the campaign, how often, if ever, did you discuss politics or the campaign with your friends, family, or others you know? [use Afrobarometer scale, Frequently, Sometimes, Once or Twice, Never]

QE18 During the campaign, how often, if ever, did you listen to the radio or read a newspaper in order to learn news and information about the campaign? [use Afrobarometer scale, Frequently, Sometimes, Once or Twice, Never]

QE19 During the recent campaign, did you attend a campaign rally? [yes, no]

QE20 During the recent campaign, did you attend any meetings with candidates or political party workers? [yes, no]

QE21 During the recent campaign, did you work or volunteer for any party or candidate? [yes, no]

QE22 During the recent campaign, did you discuss the presidential debates with anyone that you know? [yes, no]

QE23 If yes to above, with whom? [choose all that apply]

- (a) Family members [yes/no]
- (b) Your close friends [yes/no]
- (c) Members of your community [yes/no]
- (d) Community leaders [yes/no]
- (e) Political party workers [yes/no]

QE24 If yes to above, what did you discuss? [open ended]

QE25 If yes to above, did those discussions influence your opinion of the presidential candidates after the debate? [yes/no]

- (a) How? [open ended]

QE26 If yes to above, did those discussions influence how you voted? [yes/no]

QE27 In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Malawi today?

- A full democracy
- A democracy with minor problems
- A democracy with major problems
- Not a democracy
- Don't know [dont read]
- Refused [dont read]

QE28 On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the recent national election? Was it: [Read out options]

- Completely free and fair?
- Free and fair, but with minor problems?
- Free and fair, with major problems?
- Not free and fair?
- Do not understand question [Do not read]
- Don't know [Do not read]

QE29 Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Malawi? Are you: [Read out options.]

- Very satisfied?
- Fairly satisfied?
- Not very satisfied?
- Not at all satisfied?
- Malawi is not a democracy [Do not read]
- Don't know [Do not read]

QE30 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *I feel like I understand politics.* [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

QE31 With which statement do you agree? STATEMENT A: All political candidates are the same, so it does not matter how I voted in the presidential election. STATEMENT B: There are real differences between the 2019 presidential candidates, so it was important that I vote for the candidate I prefer.

- Strongly agree with A
- Agree with A
- Neither
- Agree with B
- Strongly Agree with B
- Don't know [dont read]
- Refused [dont read]

QE32 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, how confident do you feel that you understand their policy positions? [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE33 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] has reasonable and well thought out justifications for their positions, even if I disagree with those positions.* [5-point scale] [randomize order of candidate list]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE34 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] should not be allowed to campaign or make speeches in my community.* [5-point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE35 Thinking about the following presidential candidates, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: *[CANDIDATE NAME] has ideas that are dangerous for the country.* [5-point scale]

- Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- Lazarua Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)
- Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF)
- Saulos Chilima United Transformation Movement (UTM)

QE36 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *Malawians should peacefully accept the results of the presidential elections, regardless of who wins.* [5-point scale]

QE37 You may have heard or noticed that President Mutharika and the DPP did not participate in the presidential debates. Do you think that President Mutharika's decision not to participate in the debates influenced how Malawians voted for him in the election? [Yes, No]

- If yes, why? [code from open ended]
- If no, why not? [code from open ended]