

Abstract

The main objective of this thesis was to disaggregate the dynamics of political corruption during periods of transformation. Using Malawi's transitional period from autocracy to liberal-democratic rule (1994-2004) as a case study, the thesis aimed to identify the reasons why public perceptions suggested a proliferation of corruption during the first few years of institutional transformation. The research sought to isolate the characteristics of corrupt transactions and the constraints on anti-corruption regimes in order to draw lessons for political systems in developing countries in general and Malawi in particular.

The dissertation applies leading theories on the conceptualisation, causes, consequences and the control of corruption to evaluate Malawi's experience. The findings illustrate that democratic reforms in themselves are not enough to instil positive values if the political will is absent. There is an association between the exploitation of institutional weaknesses by elites for political expediency for private gain and compromised anti-corruption measures. In addition to this, the wholesale importation of exogenous institutions into a context that lacks resources, political stability and context specific strategies contributes to the challenges that confront anti-corruption efforts.

The thesis finally presents a number of observations which include a call for the shift in the anti-corruption strategy that largely perceives corruption as acts of opportunism. It argues that in order for effective countermeasures to exist, conceptualisations of corruption should take into account public sentiments and opinions and not on "transplanted" legal frameworks. Corrective measures should be approached from a position where they are driven by input from a variety of sources inherent in the political system than merely as an institutional concern. At the macro level, an integrated approach that solidifies democratic institutions is more appropriate than the popular overreliance on criminal prosecutions. Further, there is need to have more coordination and communication amongst the management level of individual government departments and ministries to control it.