

**ELITES ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POOR AND
PRO-POOR POLICIES IN MALAWI**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the theory of 'social consciousness' to analyse elite perceptions of poverty in Malawi, and identify the circumstances under which elites are willing to mobilize resources for poverty reduction. 'Social consciousness theory' stipulates that pro-poor policies in European welfare states developed as a result of ideological and pragmatic concern about the negative impact of poverty on elite welfare. This study shows however that although elites in Malawi have a deep understanding and appreciation of the extent and severity of poverty and are linked with the poor through strong social networks and the extended family structure, they do not perceive the poor as a threat to their welfare. Therefore collective action to address the problem of poverty has not occurred. In circumstances where elites acknowledge some negative externalities of poverty requiring action, individual solutions are sought. However, elite perceptions still illuminate the following: first, there is a causal explanation between elites' perceptions of the causes of poverty and their support for particular policies. Second, elites' perceived causes of poverty include structural, behavioural and the perceived future actions of the poor, such as laziness, following implementation of redistributive policies. Third, elites' seem to support policies with wider benefits for society.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with much love and gratitude to my husband Alfred and children Adrian and Curtis; my sisters, Alice and Maureen and brothers Maziko and Chikumbutso, who spurred me on and encouraged me throughout my studies, and most importantly to my mother, Diana and father, Tedson Aubrey Kalebe, who taught me the meaning of perseverance, and hard-work.

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-22 says 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing'.

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To God is the glory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

| | |
|---------|---|
| ADMARC | Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation |
| AFORD | Alliance for Democracy Party |
| CONGOMA | Council for Non-Governmental Organisation in Malawi |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DEVPOL | Development Policy |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DPP | Democratic Progressive Party |
| HIPC | Highly Indebted Poor Countries |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| IHS | Integrated Household Survey |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| MASAF | Malawi Social Action Fund |
| MCP | Malawi Congress Party |
| MGDS | Malawi Growth and Development Strategy |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| MPRSP | Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| MYP | Malawi Young Pioneer |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NSO | National Statistical Office |
| ODI | Overseas Development Institute |
| PAP | Poverty Alleviation Programme |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| PS | Principal Secretary |
| PSIP | Public Sector Investment Policy |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Programmes |
| UDF | United Democratic Front |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| WDR | World Development Report |

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem and its Theoretical Basis

This thesis is a study of elite attitudes to poverty and pro-poor policies in Malawi. Specifically, the study utilizes De Swaan's theory of "social consciousness" to examine the conditions under which Malawian elites act in pursuance of pro-poor objectives and outcomes. In this thesis elites are defined in institutional terms as those in strategic positions of powerful organisations such as political, governmental, economic, military, professional, communications, cultural organisations and social movements. They control the key material, symbolic and political resources within a country (Reis and Moore, 2005)¹. Indeed, the concept of 'elite' is spongy and porous, whose membership is frequently changing as individuals rise and fall, creating ambiguity on who the elites are (Leftwich, 2009). However, Reis and Moore's (2005) definition of elites enables a recognition of the variety of elites in Malawian society and assists in identifying the small group of individuals, occupying commanding positions who have the highest potential to influence national policy-making (Reis and Moore, 2005).

Studying elites is important because it provides the basis for exploring the politics of poverty in Malawi, the discourses and ideologies concerning the nature of poverty, the solutions to poverty, and the challenges and concerns that may or may not motivate action towards poverty. However, an assumption borne out in most of the social sciences literature on public policy in developing countries tends to discuss elites in predominantly negative terms. In particular, the literature on poverty has tended to view the role of elites negatively, assuming that elites are unable to act in a developmental manner (Fritzen, 2007; Platteau, 2004; Dasgupta and Beard, 2007; see also Moore, 1999; Toye, 1999). Yet many developing countries like Malawi are dominated by elites who have control over productive

¹ In Chapter 3, various definitions of elites are discussed and a case made for adopting the definition here-in. According to Reis and Moore (2005) elites are: ministers and legislators; owners and controllers of TV and radio stations and major business enterprises and activities; large property owners; upper-level public servants; senior members of the armed forces, police and intelligence services; editors of major newspapers; publicly prominent individuals, lawyers and doctors; and influential socialites and heads of large trade unions, religious establishments and movements, universities and NGOs.

assets and institutions that enable them to influence, positively or negatively, the allocation of resources and authority (see Booth et al, 2006; Amsden et al, 2009, Rustow, 1966).

Attempts at poverty reduction, by the international development community, have been based on the assumption that having the right institutions or policies will lead to more effective, accountable and responsive governments, and that redistributive powers will emerge. However, evidence from successful economies like Botswana and Mauritius show that success in those countries was the result of the elite's ability and willingness to redistribute resources efficiently, not merely the result of having the right institutions and policies (Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009; Brautigam and Diolle, 2009). Therefore, an emerging argument is that the extent to which policies can be said to determine development, growth and poverty reduction is dependent on the manner in which elites choose to implement them in the interests of the poor (Leftwich, 2008). If this is the case, it is essential to understand how and why elites make decisions and, specifically, what induces elites to be developmental and ultimately to reduce poverty.

The conception of elites as those who make choices and take decisions has been an important aspect of the study of policy-making. Therefore, policy studies have explored those ideas that policy actors hold that have a significant effect on their decision-making. In many studies, these ideas have been reduced to self-interest (Hill, 2009; Booth et al, 2006); and a review of the literature shows that the capacity of elites to act in a developmental manner has often been ignored. Instead, many studies are based on the assumption that institutions are the sole explanatory variable of socio-economic and political behaviour or action, as will be seen in Chapter 2.

This raises an important question: if developing countries like Malawi are dominated by elites, but elites are believed to pursue non-developmental aims, should pro-poor policy-making be seen as a zero-sum

game that leads to the capture of resources, with well defined winners and losers (Pasha, 2002; Bird, 2008; Afsar, 2010)? What follows from this view is a pessimism that suggests that it is “difficult to do anything for the poor because this means depriving the rich and powerful” (Moore and Putzel, 2001: 5); or it becomes “a case either for giving up hope, for by-passing elites in assistance policy or for designing ways of strong-arming them into submission in relation to anti-poverty policy” (Hossain and Moore, 2002: 3). This postulation about elite behaviour is not unique to development and policy studies but it has been challenged in the broader literature of political sociology:

.... to leap from some knowledge of the social backgrounds of national politicians to inferences about the power structure of the society is quite dangerous. Even to proceed from such knowledge to judgements about political behaviour of these same political elites can be treacherous... (Frey, 1965:157)

The social status of individuals or groups does not determine their political behaviour.... nevertheless this assumption of determinism is implicit in the many studies which have analysed the political process in terms of who the leading contenders are, rather than in terms of what they do. To know who these power-wielding individuals are is thought to be sufficient; it is a secondary matter to enquire into how they use their power. That they will do so in their own interest is considered self-evident, and the nature of that interest is inferred from the status which they occupy (Bendix and Lipset, 1957:84-85).

However, there is acknowledgement in development studies that pro-poor policy-making is not just about self-interest, conflict and contestation, but is also about bargaining, political settlements, accommodation, compromise and joint gains (Moore and Putzel, 2001). Other studies (Olson, 1965; Hill, 2009; North 1993) argue that assumptions about self-interest ignore the logic of collective action, because when individuals act within groups or organizations, they face collective action problems that make self-interest problematical, especially under conditions of uncertainty. Conversely, it is argued

that, “because all of the individuals in a group would gain if they achieved their group objective ... they would act to achieve that objective, even if they were all rational and self-interested” (Olson, 1965: 2).

Therefore, even if elites are motivated by self-interest, this does not automatically translate into an aversion to pro-poor policy activities. There might be mutual dependencies, for example between elites and the poor, that lead elites to act positively in enacting pro-poor policies (Kalebe-Nyamongo, 2010). Various studies have shown how elites in developed countries enact welfare policies because they believe that action is in their own interests. Some important studies in this area are those of Reis and Moore (2005), Hossain (1999), De Swaan (1988), Squires (1990), and Slack (1988), all of whom conclude that elite perceptions and interests coincide, at times, with those of the poor, which leads them to implement pro-poor policy. In addition, in economies like Botswana and Mauritius, success came about through the formation of “developmental, growth or reform coalitions [amongst elites], capable of devising and reforming institutions which promoted economic growth and social developments across a range of sectors and challenges” (Leftwich and Hogg, 2007:5; see also Leftwich, 2008). With few exceptions³, very little is known about the perception of poverty held by elites in developing countries like Malawi, let alone how these perceptions may or may not impact on pro-poor policy-making.

The reasons for this oversight are multiple: first, policy-making studies have emphasised the analysis of social, economic and political institutions (rules of the game) in explaining policy outputs or outcomes. Oyen (1999) considers this to be a shortcoming resulting from an overemphasis on the technical aspects of poverty. Hence there is more emphasis on measurement and definition, as well as a tendency to study the poor in isolation from society and a neglect of the motivations of the non-poor in enacting or blocking effective anti-poverty policy. Consequently, the individuals or organizations

³ See these authors - De Swaan, 1988; Slack, 1988; Kreidl, 2000; Briggs, 1961; Geremek, 1994; Himmelfarb, 1984; Squires, 1990 and 2008 - for accounts of poverty, elite attitudes, perceptions, the deserving and undeserving poor, the impact of disease, crime and social unrest and pro-poor policy.

(players/actors) that generate or sustain institutions have been ignored, thereby ruling out an understanding of individual or shared interests or ideas that are promoted through organizations (Leftwich and Sen, 2010: 12). As argued by Parry (1969), elite control depends upon organization, for instance through political parties, bureaucracies, unions and so on. In studying organizations, we begin to understand human agency, particularly individual cognition and preferences that affect behaviour, because organizations act and make choices (North et al, 2006; March and Olsen, 1976). Second, other authors (Reis, 1999; Reis, 2010; Reis and Moore, 2005; de Swaan et al, 2000) have noted that an examination of elite perceptions is equated by some with a disregard for the perceptions that poor people themselves have about their poverty and its solution, because it focuses on the perceptions of those who have never experienced poverty. The third argument is that the very recognition that elites exist is contrary to a belief in democracy and in majority rule. As argued by Michels (1962), the existence of elites means that the majority will never rule, despite the formal apparatus of universal suffrage and myths of majority will. Hence, democracy in the sense of the rule of the whole people or the majority is impossible: “the mass will never rule except in abstracto” (Michels, 1962:366). Parry (1969) notes that the very belief that majority rule is the best means of political decision-making blinds people to the fact that there are those who rule and those who are ruled. Recognising this fact makes the study of elites, their ideas, interests and decisions, essential to understanding developmental outcomes.

Some authors (Reis and Moore, 2005; De Swaan et al, 2000; Hossain and Martin, 2007) argue that studying elites results in a better understanding of their perceptions of the condition of the poor and the context in which anti-poverty policies are implemented. This thesis adopts a similar position to that taken by Reis: “the ways elites conceive of poverty are important elements to be taken into account because major policy decisions as well as non-decisions are formed by those who control power resources” (1999:1). The thesis thus contributes to the literature regarding the identification of elite

perceptions that shape pro-poor policy and draws lessons that may prove useful to the understanding of the policy process and the politics of poverty in developing countries.

A study of elites and poverty requires an understanding of the politics within countries, mainly because the study of the policy process focuses on how policy decisions are made and how policies are shaped in action. Making decisions and shaping policy is political, and politics is the art and science of who gets what in society, when, how and why (Lasswell, 1958). In this process of allocating resources disputes ensue amongst individuals and groups in society as to who wins or loses (Leftwich, 2000). In these disputes it is the more dominant groups or individuals that are able to push their agenda onto the policy process, while the poor are inadequately placed to influence the ways in which the state allocates rights and resources (Johnson and Start, 2001). Those dominant groups are elites and they are able to exert influence on how resources are mobilized and distributed in society. This makes politics a study of how power is used; and studies of the policy process should be grounded in an extensive consideration of the nature of power in the state and should involve propositions about who dominates. Unlike pluralist perspectives that consider power in society to be evenly spread and openly contested, the incorporation into the analysis of policy of the question of who dominates draws on elite theories that see power as very distinctively structured, or that suggest that dominance is very much embedded in the nature of the machinery of the state itself (Hill, 2009: 8). This point is further addressed in Chapter 3.

Focusing on elite perceptions can therefore help define which issues are to be taken up as political and policy problems and which are to be ignored or sidelined; how these issues are to be tackled; and what policy options count as legitimate or feasible. In most developing countries, elites tend to be very powerful. They often command a particularly large slice of the national income and the influence that goes with it (Hossain and Moore, 2002:7). Less directly, elites exercise great influence over how their

fellow citizens understand their own country. Focusing attention on elites enables an analysis of their power, their control over resources and their influence over political, social and economic decisions as well as over institutions and practices.

There are, however, differing views on how elites use their power and influence. Authors like Mbeki (2005) view the power held by elites as the cause of the development crisis and increased poverty in Southern Africa, arguing that Africa's history shows that the political elites that took over from the colonizers sought to enrich themselves at the expense of the non-elite. For instance, despite the *Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi* (Booth et al, 2006) report produced for DFID, which recognizes that elites are central to pro-poor development policy success, their role is considered to be anti-developmental. The *Drivers of Change* report argues that an extremely small elite generally controls both the economic and the political spheres in Malawi, as well as taking formal political processes and decision-making away from formal/public spaces to informal spaces from which the poor are excluded. In its most simplistic form, "real" political deals (the selection of candidates, lobbying for allocation of funds, and so on) are made in bars, football/golf clubs and so on – spaces that tend to exclude the poor and where exclusion is subject to less scrutiny by equal opportunity measures and the protection offered by formal laws and policies (Booth et al, 2006).

Consequently, elites in Malawi are seen as having greatly influenced the success and/or failure of pro-poor policies, and Malawi's neopatrimonial nature is such that control over state resources, bureaucratic positions and the power to allocate rents, provide services and determine policies and their beneficiaries are effectively in the hands of personal or private networks controlled by a small group of elites. Thus it has been argued that the state has become an apparatus serving the interests of the few (Booth et al, 2006).

In contrast, Grant et al (2006) state that the power that elites have makes them an important group in the reduction of poverty because it allows them to influence decision-making in society. Elites are also central to state formation, stable democratic processes, good governance and empowerment. It can be argued that institutions that are intended to promote economic growth, accountability and responsiveness produce nothing without elites – that the rules of the game established by these institutions are meaningless without the elites needed to operate, maintain, undermine or change them (Leftwich, 2009: 4). This view on the essential role of elites in ensuring developmental outcomes through institutions is a response to the limited attention paid to this process in the literature on public policy, which fails to distinguish institutions from organizations, and especially fails to engage with the interaction between the two, which is the main determinant of developmental outcomes. This omission results in a failure to account for the role played by human agency in shaping, maintaining, undermining, avoiding or changing the institutional arrangements (Leftwich and Sen, 2010: 18) that lead to development and poverty reduction.

Those authors who have analyzed elite behaviour often make the following assumptions: that elite behaviour is constrained by values, attitudes and cognitive limitations; that elites are constrained externally by environmental forces, such as intra-elite conflict, institutional factors and public expectations (Bunce, 1984); that ideas and interests can constrain policy-making, as well as how elites deliberately package and frame policy ideas to ensure acceptability and implementation; and that these ideas or interests can be normative or cognitive, whilst some ideas are taken for granted as they reside in the background of policy debates and others are explicitly articulated by the policy-making elites (Campbell, 1998: 380). Although these views help us to understand a range of assumptions concerning the constraints on elite action and the impact of these on broader policy processes, they do not assist us to understand what these ideas, interests, motivations and perceptions are and, particularly, how these ideas, attitudes and perceptions determine elite behaviour in relation to pro-poor policy.

In studying elite perceptions this thesis will contribute to debates regarding the resurgence of the role of ideas in political science in the last fifteen years (Lieberman, 2002). Ideas are important in explaining how beliefs and understandings lead actors to connect demands with particular policy solutions. These beliefs and understandings create the goals and desires that people bring to the political world. Hence the ways in which actors define and express their interests, the meanings, interpretations and judgments they attach to events and conditions, suggest that human agency can defy the constraints of political and social structures and create new political possibilities (Lieberman, 2002: 698; see also Smith, 1992).

This chapter is divided into four sections: the section that follows this introduction sets out the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, and scope of the study; the sections following that discuss the context and the framework of the study; and the chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This section discusses the aims and objectives of the thesis. This thesis aims to employ De Swaan's theory of social consciousness to examine elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in Malawi, and to further determine their influence on poverty policies. Based on semi-structured interviews, questionnaire responses, and textual analysis of speeches, parliamentary hearings, newspaper accounts, academic literature, and policy documents, the objectives of this thesis are:

(i) To investigate elites' explanations of the causes of poverty in Malawi and how these perceived causal explanations influence policy choices.

This objective is achieved first by examining the perceptions elites have of poor people and poverty in Malawi in a manner that leads to an understanding of their assessments of the extent, nature, character and location of poverty in Malawi. This examination should demonstrate how such perceptions lead to action or inaction in the face of poverty, as well as capturing attitudes towards issues of inequality and the categorisation of the poor. The second strategy employed is an exploration of elite views of the causes of, and solutions to, poverty, and this facilitates an analysis of the elite's moral evaluation of their role in the reduction or perpetuation of poverty in Malawi.

(ii) To explore elements of 'social consciousness' among Malawian elites and how these influence pro-poor policies.

Drawing on the elites' assessment of poverty, the poor, and the causes of and solutions to poverty, this objective is achieved in three ways. First, the thesis examines the extent to which elites feel that their welfare is interdependent with that of the poor. Here, the aim is to understand elite perceptions of the threat or challenge they face from the presence of poverty. Second, is an examination of the elites' beliefs as to whether poverty in Malawi results from perceived characteristics of the poor, such as a reluctance to work hard, or whether the elites acknowledge failures of the economic system or unequal opportunities that have led to poverty. Here, the aim is to explore the elites' sense of responsibility towards the poor and poverty, thereby determining whether poverty reduction is a priority for elites in Malawi. Third, in terms of the elites' perceptions of interdependence and their sense of responsibility, this thesis examines the extent to which collective action among the elites in implementing pro-poor policy has emerged.

1.1.2 Research Questions

The central question of this study is: *How do elites' perceptions of the poor, and of the extent and causes of poverty, relate to their preferred policy tools for reducing poverty in Malawi?* In order to deal with this central question effectively, the following key research questions are asked:

1. What are elites' explanations for the causes of poverty in Malawi and how do these perceived causal explanations influence policy choices?

This research question is answered by asking the following sub-research questions: How do Malawian elites perceive poverty and poor people in their society? What does poverty mean to elites? What do elites believe causes poverty? What reasons do elites give for the presence of poor and wealthy people in Malawi? What do Malawian elites see as the main means of reducing poverty? Which policies do the elites consider a viable and desirable means of tackling poverty?

2. What elements of 'social consciousness' are present among Malawian elites and how do these influence action or inaction in the face of poverty in Malawi?

This research question is answered by asking the following sub-questions: Why and how does poverty represent a problem to elites in Malawi, if at all? What do elites believe the consequences of the prevalence of poverty are in Malawi? Do Malawian elites fear the impact of the prevalence of poverty on their own welfare? Do Malawian elites see opportunities arising from the eradication of poverty? Why and how do the threats, challenges and opportunities posed by the presence of poverty lead to collective action towards poverty reduction amongst elites, if at all? Do elites believe that feasible means for reducing poverty exist? Do elites believe that poverty reduction is or should be a priority in Malawi? What kinds of arguments about the causes and character of, and the solutions to, poverty are likely to engage the interest of Malawian elites?

1.1.3 Scope of the Study

The conceptualisation of elites has varied, and there has been equally varied research into elite backgrounds, attitudes and behaviour. In addition, different disciplines have studied elites at different

levels and within different contexts: national, local, and global; or within institutions. Thus, elites have been considered as a 'power elite', which includes an 'inner core' that makes decisions and an 'outer core' who count even if they do not directly make decisions (Mills, 1956: 288 - 290); a 'social elite', which is divided between a governing and a non-governing elite (Pareto, 1935); an 'oligarchy', which is made up of those who control a society or an organization at the top (Michels, 1915; 1962); and a 'ruling class', which includes those who influence government decisions and those who formally decide policies (Mosca, 1939). Although these types show some of the differences between the theorists who consider elites, particularly at the level of, and in the context of, analysis, there is agreement that elites are those with power⁴ or influence or the capacity to make decisions. Thus power or influence is dependent on an elite's position or location within institutional structures – an idea that is useful in the study of social policy. In analysing elite perceptions of poverty in Malawi, Mills' (1956) conceptualisation of elites as those whose positions enable them to make decisions that have major consequences was used to focus this thesis (this is discussed further in Chapter 4). This also assisted the thesis in widening the scope for analysing elites, taking into account the view of Hill that, "In modern states the position of elites is related to the development of large-scale organisations in many areas of life with the result that there are different kinds of elites, not just those holding formal power" (Hill, 2009:38). This also enabled a focus on non-Malawian elites, particularly those working within donor agencies. This is important because donors have an influence on the domestic activities of elites, for instance on the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Amsden et al, 2009).

The policy process is seen as occurring in organised contexts where there are established norms, values, relationships, power structures and standard operating procedures (Hill, 2009). This brings to

⁴ The concept of power, its use and its pattern of distribution in society is of course highly contested: for instance, power as determined by organizational ability, psychological make-up, economic resources and positions of power (Mosca, 1939; Michels, 1959, Pareto, 1935; Burnham, 1941; and Mills, 1956). This is also compounded by the fact that there are different structures of power within different political systems. Despite this lack of agreement on the nature of power, the different representations of elites' powers are useful in identifying elites.

the fore the importance of those who dominate, hence the importance of agency, ideas and interests. Therefore the focus of this study is on those elites who influence, or have the capacity to act in relation to, pro-poor policy processes: not informal opinion leaders, but individuals occupying significant positions at the head of organizations. Given this definition of elites, the variables of wealth and status become less important for this study, although they are at times intertwined with that of power. In this context, Chapter 4 will discuss the thesis' sampling methods in detail.

1.2 Socio-political and Economic Context of Malawi

Malawi offers an interesting case study for understanding the importance of elites in the politics of pro-poor policy, given its unsuccessful attempts at reducing poverty over the past eighteen years, following the transition to democracy. In Malawi, democracy has had minimal impact on poverty and has not empowered the poor; nor is it believed to have resulted in accountable or responsive government. Instead, the neopatrimonial practices of the one-party system have continued into multiparty democracy, and democracy has not changed the nature of Malawi's traditional society. Thus social relationships are still characterized by inequality and a large power distance. Citizens gladly defer to authority, which makes it difficult or impossible for the poor to hold elites to account. This explains why abuses by 'big men' are tolerated even when few benefits trickle down to poor people (Booth et al., 2006).

Malawi's transition from an authoritarian one-party state to a democratic form of government in 1994 has been considered a 'transition without transformation', because many structures, systems and personalities have remained the same (Cammack 2004). Most importantly, the expected impact of democracy on poverty reduction has been minimal at best. Since 1994, despite the implementation of various pro-poor policies, the level of poverty has continued to be high, with 52.4% of the population poor and 22.3% ultra-poor (National Statistics Office, 2005), whilst inequality is even higher, with a gini-

coefficient of 0.39 (Human Development Report, 2009). Three years into democratic rule, Malawi faced two food crises, fiscal instability and political intimidation similar to that of the one-party era, resulting in the withdrawal of aid by donors. The rhetoric that democracy will result in development, equitable distribution of resources and good governance is not consistent with the reality in Malawi. This is typical of many African countries; despite political changes and the adoption of better governance institutions, there is little evidence that these changes have resulted in more effective, accountable and responsive governments (Chabal 2002).

These shortcomings show that developmental outcomes are not only dependent on the right institutions. These institutions might be formal institutions (statute law, common law or regulations) or informal institutions (conventions, norms or behaviour) (North, 1990:8). The welfare impact of these institutions is a result of how elites choose to exercise their influence or power. Therefore, the experience in Malawi indicates that 'understanding of institutions is not sufficient if it ignores well-organised and influential vested interests, which may or may not support pro-poor initiatives' (Leftwich, 2010:44).

The persistence of poverty may reflect its institutionalization within social and political norms and its acceptance within political discourse and by political elites (Hickey and Bracking, 2005:851). Therefore, the answer lies in the reallocation of resources and a shifting of the power relations within which poverty is embedded and tolerated. 'The inclusion of the poor in participatory poverty assessments may have little weight compared to the ways in which poverty and the poor are represented within elite political discourse' (Hickey and Bracking 2005: 854). Nevertheless, there are many studies on the perceptions of poverty held by the poor (Narayan et al, 2000; Murkhujee, 1992; Poole et al, 2007) that have had a significant influence on developing solutions to poverty. In contrast, very little is known

about the perceptions of poverty held by elites, “as if the poor and non-poor belonged to different worlds” (Reis, 2010: 1).

A cursory look at some literature on Malawi shows that the manner in which various institutions, both formal (a constitution that enabled multiparty democracy) and informal (patronage or clientelism), were adopted was dependent on the choices and decisions of elites. For instance, leaders in Malawi have continued to use patronage and clientelism to retain power and legitimacy, despite the transition to democracy (Cammack et al. 2007; O’Neil 2007). The only difference was that the one-party state led by Kamuzu Banda (1964 – 1994) did not practice a “free for all” patronage. Banda retained tight control over the allocation of power and wealth, which had a positive impact on socio-economic development. For instance, “infant mortality declined from 200 per 1000 in 1964 to 130, and per capita daily calorie intake increased from 2,250 in 1964 to 2,400 in 1975” (AFRODAD 2007a:18; also see Booth et al, 2006). Malawi’s economic performance was impressive, with GDP growing by an average of eight percent between 1965 and 1973 (World Bank, 1975). In contrast, the democratic rule of Bakili Muluzi (1994 – 2004) lost control of the patronage system, leading to an increase in corruption at all levels within the civil service. As a result, at least in part, of this change, growth declined and poverty grew. Muluzi’s two terms in office were described as “the lost decade”, where no real economic growth took place. Between 1995 and 1998 Malawi’s growth rate averaged 4.6 percent per annum; this dropped to 1.4 percent per annum between 1998 and 2001; and the percentage became negative between 2001 and 2002 (Conroy, 2006). The second democratic president, Bingu Wa Mutharika (2004 to the present), also employed a neopatrimonial style of leadership akin to that of both Muluzi and Banda. Bingu reached out to civil society and the media and took a zero-tolerance stand on corruption; but at the same time he adopted populist policies such as input subsidies and road building to gain support. He has also used patronage, especially the promise of public office appointments, to encourage opposition politicians to join his party (Cammack et al. 2007). However, under his rule there have been

more positive development outcomes as growth has averaged 7.5 percent since 2006 (Government of Malawi, 2008).

What this may suggest is that institutions may matter less than the particular choices and decisions elites in Malawi have made. Some recent studies (Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009; Leftwich, 2009; Leftwich and Hogg, 2007 and 2008; Laws, 2010) have illustrated this possibility by going beyond the analysis of institutions and policy and identifying elite and coalitional strategies, behaviours and decisions that have impacted on development policy in different contexts. Understanding how and why elites make choices and decisions regarding the reduction of poverty is an important focus of this thesis. What explains the persistence of poverty in Malawi? What role do elites play in reducing or perpetuating poverty in Malawi? How do elites perceive poverty and the poor, and how do these perceptions impact on their policy choices? As argued by Selee (2005), perceptions dictate behaviour, therefore elite perceptions should be reflected in pro-poor policies. Perceptions provide the fabric into which public initiatives can be sewn and in which they can become entangled. They shape or constrain leaders' decisions by creating the space for addressing issues, the nature of the approach used to deal with them and a set of solutions to be considered (Selee, 2005:7).

It is important to note that such perceptions have not yet been studied in many developing countries, including Malawi. In the course of my research, I did not come across any specific studies that tried to understand elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in Malawi. Apart from an article by Schou (2007) on 'Demand-driven Poverty Programmes and Elite Capture in Malawi: Between Prebendalism and Benevolence', elites have barely featured in studies of the country. Hence this thesis is significant and timely, filling an important gap in the field of elite perceptions and policy-making. During the fieldwork for this study, a prominent MP expressed himself thus: *"Poverty is a serious concern for me and that is why I could not wait to see you. I do place important value on your research, otherwise I would have*

made you go through rigid formalities to get an interview. That is why I have invited other people to sit in on this interview, because I want them to start worrying about poverty” (Interview, 8/4/08).

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was devised by drawing on De Swaan’s (1988) theory of “social consciousness”, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. De Swaan (1988) argues that the evolution of welfare systems in Europe and the USA occurred following elites’ development of “social consciousness” – a set of perceptions that paved the way for collective action and were conducive to the adoption of measures to reduce poverty (Reis, 2010; Hossain, 1999). Firstly, these perceptions include recognition by elites of the interdependence of social groups in society and the potential impact poverty might have on elite welfare – an impact from which they might be unable to insulate themselves. Secondly, there is a moral dimension that involves elites feeling a sense of responsibility for the existence of poverty and for tackling poverty. Lastly, there may be a belief that effective means are available to tackle the problems of poverty (De Swaan 2005; Hossain, 1999; Toye, 1999). For example, European elites were seen to develop a greater sense of their interdependence with the poor when they began to consider the causes of threats such as crime, disease and insurrection, and also when they perceived the mutual or collective benefits that the reduction of poverty represented for the community as a whole, such as an improved competitive economic and military capacity (Reis, 2010; Searle 1971; Hossain and Moore, 2002). Elite responses to these threats and opportunities ranged from repression of the “dangerous poor” to charity and public provision for the “deserving” or “respectable poor” (Woolf, 1986; Slack, 1988; Himmelfarb, 1984; Daunton, 1986).

Hossain (1999) notes that by using the framework of “the logic of collective action”⁵, De Swaan is able

⁵ According to Sandler (1992), collective action occurs when the efforts of two or more individuals are needed to accomplish an outcome. Collective action is required where individual rationality is not sufficient to produce collective rationality (Olson, 1965). For example, where “individual members of the elite are unable on their own to ward off the threats, or to exploit the opportunities, that the presence of the poor holds for them, and since they are incapable of alleviating poverty individually, the presence of the poor in their midst confronts the elites with a problem of collective action: to coordinate their efforts,

to show how charitable assistance developed into broader municipal systems of assistance. Gradually elites came to believe that in order to reduce poverty and address the “free rider” problem, welfare provision should be state sponsored and administered, rather than the result of private charity.

De Swaan (1988) argues that individuals came to develop collective, nation-wide and compulsory arrangements to cope with poverty by possessing a “social consciousness”. Through the use of negative drivers (i.e., narrow appeals to the self-interest of elites, for instance, a fear of disease) and positive drivers (i.e., an appeal to common interest and common gain from the reduction of poverty, or altruistic national arguments), elites can be usefully engaged in defining and supporting national anti-poverty strategies (Hossain and Moore, 2002).

These arguments show that motives for supporting the poor vary. For instance, Cavallo (1995) notes that the motivation of the elite to implement pro-poor policy in early modern Turin was not driven by the presence of poverty or the actual situation of the poor. Rather, intra-elite conflict and discourse about the plight of widows played a crucial role in shaping responses to poverty on the part of the municipality and individual donors. A focus on the situation of poor widows emerged out of intra-elite debates about patterns of inheritance that adversely affected aristocratic women, rather than any direct concern over poor women. But this focus subsequently had a positive impact on the poor (Cavallo, 1995). On the other hand, Himmelfarb (1984) explains that ideas about what poverty was in Britain – which groups deserved support or were worthy, and which ones were “undeserving” – played a role in the provision of public goods to the poor. As we will see in Chapter 2, the works of individuals such as Charles Booth in Victorian Britain are considered to have highlighted the scandalous and immoral conditions in which the poor were living and successfully attracted the attention of reform-minded elites (Himmelfarb, 1984).

What are considered important are not the facts of poverty but the ideas brought to bear on these facts:

either through voluntary agreement or by seeking a compulsory arrangement, namely public action” (De Swaan et al, 2000: 2).

re-moralising the poor by relieving their pauperised situation – psychologically, morally and culturally (Himmelfarb, 1984: 530). This shows that policy on poverty may not necessarily be driven by the actual extent of the poverty in question, but by the ideas regarding poverty that determine the role that elites play (Hossain, 1999).

In developing De Swaan's (1988) theory of "social consciousness" for this study, there was recognition that the context of contemporary Malawi is different to that of Victorian Britain; therefore the perceptions that existed amongst elites in Britain and influenced their policy choices might not exist in Malawi. However, the theory of "social consciousness" is useful in examining Malawian elites' motivations and the debates around poverty – for example whether elite perceptions affected pro-poor policy choices, and whether similar assumptions to those of 19th Century European elites, held. Therefore, this study not only focused its attention on studying whether Malawian elites possess signs of the elements of "social consciousness", but also on these elites' own discourses on poverty. This enabled an examination of alternative perceptions, fears and opportunities that might motivate action towards poverty reduction, and that might have been missed if similar perceptions to those that triggered action in Europe and USA were not present in Malawi.

This thesis adopted a mixed-methods research approach to data collection. This involved, for example, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and observations. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

This first chapter has presented the context of the problem under investigation, and has briefly reviewed recent studies on the problem. The main aims, questions and significance of the study have been presented, culminating in this section on the organisation of the chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses the main theoretical and conceptual ideas relevant to the study. Clarification of these concepts will show that the problem of poverty is multifaceted. The chapter establishes that poverty should be understood as a political as well as a social and economic problem, with differing definitions and no single agreed cause or solution. The chapter asserts that the political dimension of poverty makes the exploration of elite views an indispensable undertaking in establishing why particular solutions to poverty are preferred to others.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the theory of “social consciousness”, which is used to analyse elite perceptions of poverty in a way that offers a fuller picture of what drives elites to act than can be offered by general public choice theory arguments about elite behaviour. The chapter also considers how explanations of elite perceptions have been developed to explain the evolution of welfare in developed countries, while there is only one major study situated in a developing country that uses these (Reis and Moore, 2005). The study of elite perceptions is important, especially in a country like Malawi, where widespread poverty persists despite the transition to democracy, the adoption of good governance institutions, and the implementation of specific pro-poor policies.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology and data-collection techniques adopted for this study. The design of the research is primarily based on qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and observations, and these are complemented by a limited use of quantitative data. The chapter explains the links between key research questions, the framework of analysis, and the techniques for data analysis. The chapter also discusses the ethics and values underpinning the research.

Chapter 5 explains the contextual background of the research. It examines the political and socio-economic background of Malawi and describes the various pro-poor policies that have been implemented, as well as the success or failure of their impact on poverty levels. It also describes the political development of Malawi, dwelling on its transition to democracy and the various good governance institutions adopted. The chapter argues that these structures have not had the desired impact on poverty in Malawi; instead of decreasing, poverty is seen to have deepened and more people have become vulnerable to it. The chapter also discusses the features of Malawi's social structure and the rise and transformation of elites in relation to social, economic and political changes from the colonial period to the present.

Chapters 6 to 8 are the analysis chapters of this study, and they present the evidence in relation to the analytical framework outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 6 examines elite assessments of poverty in Malawi. The aim is to understand elites' views on the level, extent and experience of poverty in Malawi. These provide the foundation for understanding elites' links with the poor and the causal chain that leads to their inaction or action in relation to poverty reduction. This analysis is carried out in Chapter 7 and examines the extent to which elites attribute poverty to their own inaction and to the inaction of the poor. This is followed by Chapter 8, which discusses elites' preferred solutions, linking these back to their perception of the causes of poverty. These three chapters bring into focus the three variables of the analytical framework: interdependence, responsibility and feasibility. These are essential for the development of the social consciousness that is necessary for reducing poverty.

Finally, Chapter 9 outlines the conclusions drawn from this research and highlights their implications. This enables an identification of the thesis with existing knowledge on poverty and its solutions in Malawi. This chapter also outlines some limitations of the study and areas for further study.

CHAPTER TWO POVERTY, POLITICS AND PRO-POOR POLICY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on poverty, politics and pro-poor policy in order to identify the gap in previous research on public policy in this area. The review observes that the various policies aimed at rapid development pursued by developing countries since independence have had varying degrees of success. Whilst countries like Botswana, Malaysia and Sri Lanka have managed to translate economic growth into poverty reduction, others, like Malawi, have failed and poverty has grown. The review shows that academics and practitioners agree that policy failures, particularly the failure of policy devised to be pro-poor, can be attributed to a country's politics. It recognizes that policies are not the product of rational decision-makers; rather they are a product of interactions and bargaining between various actors in the policy process, who bring to the process different ideas and interests (Mooij, 2003). For instance, the nature of pro-poor policies, as a tool aimed at providing support to under-represented individuals or regions and redressing imbalances by redistributing resources from one group to another, makes them fundamentally political.

Pro-poor policies are political because their implementation involves disputes amongst individuals and groups in society as to who wins or loses in the process of organization, mobilization, combination, and distribution of these resources, whether they be capital, land, human beings or any combination of these. Unfortunately, in this dispute poor people are mostly disadvantaged when it comes to influencing policy and are poorly placed to influence the way states allocate resources and distribute rights (Leftwich, 2005a:5). Academics (Leftwich, 2009; Reis and Moore, 2005, Booth et al, 2006, for example) and practitioners (DFID in their Drivers of Change Studies) argue that dominant individuals or groups within society, mainly the elite, are able to push their concerns onto the agenda for policy discussions and then have the power to influence policy outcomes. These elites, normally a very small number of

people (usually three percent of the population), control the key material, symbolic and political resources within a country (Reis and Moore, 2005).

Although the literature offers valuable insights into the engagement of politics with poverty, this is limited to discussions of good governance or institutions that are associated with empowerment, accountability and responsiveness (Hickey, 2004; Leftwich, 2010). This is because elites are seen as self-interested individuals who respond to incentives and disincentives, and who therefore do not make policies that would reduce their power and influence (Mooij, 2003). In relation to pro-poor policies, social scientists argue that elites are beneficiaries (materially, culturally and psychologically) of poverty and inequality, and will therefore resist attempts to overcome them (Hossain and Moore, 2002). However, I argue that these analyses do not accord a big enough role to elite discourses on poverty, their values, attitudes and norms, resulting in a lack of understanding on how these shape elites' policy decisions or motivate them to act.

This chapter is divided into four main sections: the first section of the review looks at the poverty agenda, tracing the emerging poverty discourse in development policy and the influence of this discourse on strategies for poverty reduction. This also involves a discussion of how development discourse has depoliticised poverty and pro-poor policy by ignoring issues of power and its impact on policy processes and outcomes. This will be important for Chapter 5, in which the Malawian sequence of pro-poor policy initiatives and the adoption of various strategies are contextualized, as well as for Chapters 6 and 7, in which elite views of poverty are analyzed. The second section reviews the literature on models of policy-making, including a discussion of the ideal nature of these models vis-à-vis the interactive reality of policy-making. The third section relates these models to regime type and the neopatrimonial reality of developing countries, further highlighting the politics of policy-making. This section observes that models of policy-making deal with the abstract and the ideal, but in the 'real

world' of Malawian politics and policy-making, where neopatrimonial practices cut across the social, economic and political spheres, ideal models fail to explain development outcomes. Thus this review looks at the development community's thinking on how pro-poor policies emerge and are implemented in the context of an environment where ideal models do not make sense. A glaring gap in this thinking is the exclusion, or near exclusion, of elites from these models, and the assumption that neopatrimonialism and regime type fully explain elites' decision-making and outcomes. This is taken up in the last section, which offers an alternative view of pro-poor policy-making that incorporates the role of elites and their impact on policy decisions and outcomes.

2.2 Discourses on Poverty and their Impact on Policy-Making

Current (see UNDP, 2010; Ravallion, 2011) discussions on poverty have come to accept its multidimensional nature, which includes economic, social and political dimensions, and goes beyond an earlier 'income and consumption' conceptualization of poverty. According to Bartelink (2004), in economic terms, poverty refers to the effects of unequal distribution of resources, such as capital and land, and the inadequate exploitation of these resources. In social terms, it refers to inadequate access to the amenities that determine people's living conditions, such as drinking water, education and health facilities. And in political terms, it refers to the restriction of the poor's involvement in decision-making to the policy spaces created by powerful institutions and actors. Although these dimensions are inter-related and mutually reinforcing (Bartelink, 2004:27), policies for poverty reduction have concentrated on the economic and social dimensions, overlooking the political dimension. In the 1960s, poverty was seen as resulting from a situation of underdevelopment: individuals were not poor; whole countries were poor. The solution was economic growth, facilitated by capital transfers that underpinned the aid infrastructure that came to dominate development (Bartelink, 2004; Brock et al, 2001). Thus, if politics entered into poverty discourse, it was in terms of its destructive nature, and the ruling elites responsible for planning and implementing policy were characterised as 'rational, calculating and Machiavellian'

(Robinson, 2003:4) individuals bent on blocking pro-poor policy or using available resources for personal gain. Generally, the interests of elites in developing countries were seen to differ from those of donors in relation to economic development and poverty reduction.

Therefore, many of the solutions advocated by the donor community, particularly the World Bank, have been meant to be 'politician proof', thus, limiting the role of elites in policy-making so as to reduce the scope for inefficiencies and patronage (WDR, 2004; Robinson, 2003). Attempts have been made to bypass ruling elites by using nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to deliver services directly to the poor; and policies have been implemented by donors in ways that ensure poor people have the power to influence them. However, Robinson (2003) argues that instead of aiming to 'politician-proof' pro-poor policies, a better approach is to change the incentives of ruling elites so as to change the qualitative nature of the political equilibrium that delivers pro-poor services' (p.4). As Toye (1999) argues, international agendas on poverty reduction can be made effective only by influencing internal political agendas (p.6).

However, before discussing how politics has emerged on the agendas of international organisations and scholars, it is important to understand what has driven concern with pro-poor policies. Pasha (2002) observes that the international development community's concern with pro-poor policies is a consequence of a deep-rooted disillusionment with a development paradigm that understood development as economic growth without direct consideration for poverty reduction. The notion that development has to be pro-poor was not considered in development thinking, especially among donors, pre-1980⁶: pro-poor growth was to be a trickle down process of economic growth (Remenyi, 2004:33).

Therefore, the promotion of economic growth was paramount: its effects would trickle down to all

⁶ However, the framing of development in terms of poverty has roots in the socio-political challenges of governing the poor in 19th and 20th century Europe (Brock et al, 2001:9). The conceptual roots of poverty lines can be traced to the work of Rowntree and Booth in the 1880s (Slack, 1988; Kanbur and Squires, 1999; Hossain and Moore, 1999; and Holman, 1978). Then again, in the 1970s, there was a brief concern with poverty by the World Bank, but this was eclipsed by the rise of neoliberal orthodoxy in the 1980s (Brock et al, 2001).

segments of the population and poverty would gradually disappear (Bartelink, 2004:27; see also Wharton, 1990).

Consequently, poverty was defined by early development thinkers (Rostow, 1960; Parsons, 1937) in material terms and framed as an economic problem of private consumption. The material definition of poverty was bolstered by the idea that poverty can be measured in monetary terms. Thus, income-based measures such as the poverty line became key indicators of poverty, and pro-poor solutions were to be facilitated by capital investments in the form of development aid. Development aid supported economic growth and the implementation of policies that emphasised the construction of physical infrastructure, such as hospitals, universities and state-owned companies. As a result, although development aid might have been concerned with poverty reduction, modernisation became the route through which poverty would be overcome (Brock et al, 2001, Toyé, 1999, Pasha, 2002; Kanbur and Squires, 1999).

However, by the 1970s, it was evident that the impressive aggregate growth⁷ in developing countries had not reached the poor, even in countries that had experienced higher than average growth, such as Botswana, Mauritius (see Robinson, 2003; Good, 1999); the Asian Tigers (see Craig and Potter, 2003), and Nigeria (see Nafziger, 1988). In 1978, the World Bank observed that 800 million people in developing countries were still poor, with inadequate shelter, food, education and health care, especially in rural areas (WDR, 1978:1). Clearly, the benefits of growth had not trickled down to the poor; hence the 1970s saw development strategy shift towards advocating economic growth which was pro-poor. Accordingly, the WB and the UN began to angle their lending and support towards rural development for small farmers, urban infrastructure and service provision in the health and education sectors. The 1970s emphasised a basic needs and participatory approach to development, with aid

⁷ GNP grew by 3% annually from the 1950s and GDP grew from 2% in 1950 to 3.4% in 1960. Economic growth was accompanied by rapid expansion in education systems, growing literacy, improvements in health and nutrition, increasing technological sophistication, and industrialisation (WDR, 1978; HDR, 1990).

shifting from capital investments to human resource development (Brock et al, 2001; WDR, 1978). The interest in poverty and inequality was brief, as it was overshadowed by the resurgence of a neoliberal orthodoxy that grew in response to the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 as well as the ensuing debt crisis. Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that this shift in strategy gave substantive powers to the World Bank and IMF to resurrect technical and economic policy solutions to underdevelopment through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The conditions⁸ imposed through SAPs affected the provision of services to the poor, agriculture production and food security in many developing countries (AFRODAD, 2007a, Riddell, 1992).

These negative effects of SAPs on the most vulnerable members of society were criticised (Cornia et al, 1987 and 1988; Anyinam, 1989; Longhurst et al, 1988) and, by the late 1980s, 'adjustment with a human face' (UNICEF, 1987) was being advocated by UNICEF, leading to the implementation of various social safety nets and social funds to reach groups excluded or marginalized in the process of growth (Pasha, 2002; Cornia et al, 1987; Brock et al, 2001). The views of UNICEF appear to have influenced the World Bank, as issues of safety nets appear in the 1990 World Development Report (WDR), which advocated a pattern of development whose policies would successfully reduce poverty, provide opportunities for the poor and enable them to participate in growth (WDR, 1990: 103; see also Bartelink, 2004; Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

Thus to ensure that development reached the poor and provided opportunities that would enable them to participate in growth, the 1990 WDR supported policies that: encouraged rural development and urban employment through lower taxation of agriculture, market liberalisation and public provision of infrastructure; increased access of the poor to land, credit and public infrastructure and services; and targeted resource-poor regions by facilitating out-migration to reduce population pressure and

⁸ The basic elements of SAPs have differed across the various countries, but four basic elements are always present: currency devaluation, the removal/reduction of the state from the workings of the economy, the elimination of subsidies in an attempt to reduce expenditures, and trade liberalisation (Riddell, 1992:53).

additional investments to meet basic needs and maintain or increase yield levels (Bartelink, 2004:28). The 1990 WDR included references to poverty also being caused by poor economic governance, corrupt officials and institutions, and a policy environment that was not favourable to economic growth. This made it possible for questions to be raised concerning governance, the role of the state, the empowerment of the poor, and the role of institutions (Brock et al, 2001).

Consequently, during the 1990s, the poverty agenda broadened to encompass gender inequality (see Dollar and Gatti, 1999; World Bank, 2003b); good governance and institutions (see World Bank, 1998; Grindle, 2007); decentralised governance (Manor, 2004; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001a; 2001b); and freedom or capabilities (Sen, 1999) as pre-conditions for successful poverty reduction. The view of poverty as freedom equated poverty eradication with the removal of systems in which individuals were deprived of basic capabilities. According to Hickey (2009), a capabilities approach (the ability or potential to do or to be, for example, having the social opportunities to participate in development) to poverty reduction offers a superior way of thinking about strategies for promoting political inclusiveness (p.144). By 2000-2001, the discourse of the WDR had acquired a moral tone with 'the voices of the poor'⁹ incorporated into the report; it presented poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, situating the issue of poverty within social and political processes; and it emphasised issues of power, ownership and participation (Cornwall and Brock, 2005:16). Therefore, the policy focus was on building up assets for the poor and improving marketing mechanisms, making institutions more accountable and responsive to the poor, ensuring participation, and reducing the vulnerability of the poor to ill health, economic shocks and dislocations (Bartelink, 2004).

Looking forward two decades from the 1990 WDR, discourses on development and poverty during this period have centred on different aspects of good governance, particularly its impact on the poverty

⁹ These were studies carried out under the World Bank in forty-seven countries. They aimed to understand the poor's perceptions of poverty: their problems, concerns and priorities (Narayan, 2000).

agenda in terms of achieving opportunity, security and empowerment for all, and on accompanying policies as embodied in the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and millennium development goals (MGDs) (Hickey, 2008; Cornwall and Brock, 2005). In relation to governance, debates have ensued on two main issues. First, there is the definition of good governance¹⁰, especially on whether good governance implies specific policies or policy outcomes, such as macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction, and openness of trade or decentralisation or participatory politics and development (Grindle, 2007: 555; see also IMF, 2005; DFID, 2001; Hyden et al, 2004; USAID, 2005; Kaufmann, 2003; UNDP, 1997; World Bank, 1989 and 2000). Second, there have been debates on measurement, indicators and inferences of good governance, for instance on determining how characteristics such as transparency, accountability, or rule of law, can be operationalised (Hyden et al, 2004; Knack et al, 2003; Van de Walle, 2006; Andrews, 2008; Grindle, 2002).

This period also saw a growing number of studies aimed at analysing countries' specific historical and political contexts and how they relate to poverty reduction – studies such as DFID's Drivers of Change studies; SIDA's power analysis; Grindle's (2007) suggestion for 'good enough' governance, and Moore's (2001) typology of political systems. According to Hickey (2005), the good governance agenda was one way in which the international development community attempted to engage with the politics of poverty and its reduction. However, the good governance agenda failed to show how politics relates to poverty specifically and was more concerned with modifying or disciplining politics. Thus the good governance agenda is technocratic in its approach, believing that an administrative or managerial solution exists for development problems such as poverty (Leftwich, 2008). For instance, in discussing institution-building, the good governance agenda 'remained couched in a highly technocratic, managerial and administrative language and was profoundly and almost determinedly non-political or even anti-political in its implications and tone' (Leftwich, 2005a:584). As a result, development policies

¹⁰ For example: institutional forms and processes, democracy, widespread participation in development, decision-making and strong legislature (Grindle, 2007).

such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been intent on measuring and meeting targets rather than understanding the forces that produce or reduce poverty (Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

The discourses on poverty discussed above illuminate how poverty research has neglected the underlying problems of the distribution of resources in society, and the issues of unequal power relations, through its 'failure to rigorously study and understand how politics relates to poverty and poverty reduction' (Hickey, 2008: 353; see also Hickey 2005), and in particular to understand 'the political character and class basis¹¹ of the state, the uses of official positions and state power by bureaucratic elites as well as other individuals' (Ferguson, 1994:178). Thus, studies (Grootaert et al, 1995; Chambers, 1988; Narayan et al, 2000) on poverty have established a link between the existence of poverty and factors such as assets, education, occupation, ethnicity and geography, but fail to explain how and why these factors are reflected in poverty, as these studies ignore the processes of accumulation, economic distribution and political power. As a result, donor solutions to Africa's problems have ignored politics, the power of elites, and asset distribution; and when the poverty problem is extracted from power-relation issues, this has the effect of depoliticising it (Harris, 2007; Riddell, 1999).

Commenting on the non-political nature the discourse on poverty has taken, Riddell (1999) notes that the poverty-reducing effects of aid seem to be based on the assumption that development is conflict free. This assumption relates to the linear view of development held in the 1950s, which believed that a massive injection of funds would lead to an economy of high mass consumption (Rostow, 1960). As Riddell (1999) points out, many of the donor strategies and policies (i.e. SAPs, DFID's 1997 White

¹¹ The state is considered class-based because the ruling classes are seen to control the state and use it as a political and material apparatus to further their narrow interests, especially in Africa. Therefore, to be absent from the state is to be condemned to a subordinate and inferior status. Consequently, class power is state power: the two are fused and inseparable (Fatton, 1988; see also Miliband, 1983).

Paper on aid; OECD, 1996) seem to suggest that all that appears to be necessary is for countries to subscribe to the worthy objectives of donor agencies. Donors will then provide funds to meet these objectives and growth will occur, eliminating poverty in the process (Riddell, 1999: 327). Therefore, the state is seen as an 'impartial instrument for implementing plans and the government as a machine for providing social services and economic growth' (Ferguson, 1994:178).

Fergusson (1994) argues that such apparent donor naivety is not a ruse but a refusal to face local politics. For some donors, like the World Bank, engagement with political situations is prohibited by their articles of agreement: they are not allowed to become involved in the politics of aid recipient countries (Marquette, 2003: 413). In other aid and development agencies, politics is ignored in development planning because it is considered messy, and a reason why desirable things do not happen (Moore and Putzel, 2001). An important aspect of the present study is the recognition that a better understanding of politics helps to create and nurture opportunities for pro-poor change, and that an understanding of political actors and policy processes is vital for pro-poor outcomes. As DFID (2010) has noted in its paper *The Politics of Poverty: Elites, Citizens and States*, politics, decision-making and political settlements are central to poverty reduction. This highlights the role of contestation and bargaining between the state, elites and citizens in building public institutions that deliver growth and ensure poverty reduction (p. 4).

In understanding the politics of development, we begin to identify: coalitions and alliances that benefit the poor, or areas where there are common interests between the poor and the non-poor (Moore and Putzel, 2001:5); a social compact between elites and the poor that motivates elites to act (Toye, 1999); and a conceptualisation of poverty and the poor by policymaking elites which may be linked to poverty reduction policies that are aimed at disciplining the poor or at supporting only the deserving poor (Hickey, 2008). For instance, poverty may be seen as an outcome of the behaviour of those affected by

it and a kind of social aberration which has to be eliminated to maintain social functionality (Harris, 2007: 3; see also Gooptu, 1996), thus 'elites might use poverty reduction programmes to discipline and govern the poor into particular types of subjects, as witnessed in the current popularity of conditional cash transfers, or food/cash-for-work programmes, involving efforts to transform poor people into better, more productive members of society' (Hickey, 2008:353).

The key question is no longer whether elites are important, but a determination of the conditions under which elites' interests are aligned with their countries' development objectives, or how they coincide with the interests of the poor. The answer lies in understanding elites' capability, interest and commitment to propose and implement policies that are consistent with a pro-poor agenda (Rakner et al, 2004: 2-3). In the context of Malawi, this involves the will and commitment of the elite to execute and follow through a range of policies needed to assist the poor – policies that reduce the benefits elites have derived and continue to derive from prevailing social-economic processes, and challenge their power and power base, or are perceived by these elites to have these effects (Riddell, 1999:327).

2.2.1 Situating Elites in the Discourse on Poverty

The discourse on the importance and influence of elites in development has undergone several changes in the past 60 years. During the 1950s and 1960s, the state-led model of development believed that developing countries' elites would deliver economic growth and social progress (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). The postcolonial elite's ability to plan and implement development policies was seen as limitless: they were 'entrusted not only with economic growth, but also poverty reduction and democracy. The focused and deliberate promotion of national development became a distinctive and pervasive feature, with most elites promising a new dawn of progressive development on the eve of independence' (Leftwich, 2005a: 576).

However, there were no explicit theories on the role of elites in development. Shapiro and Taylor (1990) observe that this omission was flawed, as state actors were relied on as agents of change to allocate resources effectively and efficiently. Surprisingly, explanations for poor economic performance and growing poverty in developing countries in the 1970s came from non-economic factors: primarily from politics, which questioned the centrality of elites in development (Shapiro and Taylor, 1990; Leftwich, 2005a). These political explanations indicated recognition of the importance of power and elites in development and poverty reduction (Riddell, 1999). An example of this recognition is the 1974 World Bank paper, *Redistribution with Growth* (Chenery et al, 1974), which recognized that increasing inequality in developing countries, despite considerable growth during the modernization period, could be attributed to elites and their failure to use their power to redistribute assets to the poor. *Redistribution with Growth* argued that political resistance to policies of asset redistribution (i.e. land, capital, access to public goods, human capital) would make them unlikely to succeed, because elites would not execute policies and reforms which assisted the poor when their own interests were challenged, thus, elites would act first and foremost to further their own interests:

Redistribution is only possible in some regimes but not under regimes dominated by entrenched elites who will relinquish nothing to the underprivileged' (p.71).

Governments are not 'above' the political process, in the sense of needing merely to muster the 'will' to do what is just or desirable. Irrespective of political system, they have to further the interests of those groups on which they are dependent for support, interests that may well require the maintenance of the status quo (p.52).

A key to ensuring that economic growth in developing countries leads to a distribution of assets to the poor is 'the emergence of a coalition of interests able to grasp power which sees some advantage in implementing a redistributive strategy, despite the fact that some sections of it stand to lose. Thereby, to survive in the long run, in a changing society, elites must make occasional well-timed concessions and some of them are aware of the fact' (Chenery et al, 1974).

However, this recognition that something needed to be done about the political aspect of development was eclipsed by the rise and hegemony of the neoclassical orthodoxy, which denounced the role of ruling elites in development (Leftwich, 2005a). At the core of neoclassical thinking was the call to abandon state-led development and instead rely on markets as the effective mechanism for allocating resources and promoting economic growth (Fritz and Menocal, 2006; Leftwich, 2005a). Experience in many developing countries shows that market-led development impacted negatively on the state's capacity to provide and deliver basic services, leading to an impact on the welfare of the poor in particular (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). Measures such as the reduction in the size of public services, withdrawal of subsidies, and the establishment of open markets meant that the poor lost the most (Leftwich, 1993).

This led to a reconsideration of the centrality of ruling elites in development in the 1990s, which was underscored by a growing awareness amongst development practitioners and academics that this was the critical variable in explaining why some countries succeeded whilst others failed in meeting development goals (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). A major rethink on the role of ruling elites occurred around the concept of developmental states (Wade, 1990; Haggard, 1990; Evans, 1995; Leftwich, 1995; Doner et al, 2005; Fritz and Menocal, 2006), which suggested that one of the factors of economic success in East Asia was a developmental elite that was able to form broad coalitions for the provision of collective goods. One of the motivations for the emergence of developmental states and elites was the presence of internal and external threats, that 'provided very powerful incentives for concerted policy, elite unity and commonly the encouragement of a nationalistic ideology' (Leftwich, 2007:20).¹² This thinking on elites suggests that patterns of development, whether economic, social or political, are

¹² For example: Japan in the late 1860s was threatened by the intrusion of western powers in eastern waters, and later by the danger of sinking economically after the second world war; South Korea was not only under constant threat, but was attacked by its northern neighbour; Singapore saw itself as sandwiched between Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia; and Taiwan had the people's Republic of China across the straits (Leftwich, 2007:20). Internally there was, 'the credible threat that any deterioration in the living standards of popular sectors could trigger unmanageable mass unrest' (Doner et al, 2005: 328).

shaped by the character of elites and their ability to 'steer, push, cajole, persuade, entice, coordinate and at times instruct the wide range of economic agents and their groupings to go this way instead of that, to do this and not that' (Weiss and Hobson, 1995:2). Thus, realisation emerged that what mattered less was regime type (democratic or autocratic) or institutional form (union or federation), but rather the character and capacity of the regime, its political will, developmental determination and bureaucratic capacity (Leftwich, 2005b).

Since the 1950s there have been some studies¹³ that have identified the importance of politics and elites; but the discussion in this section shows that the implication of these studies on emerging social, economic and political patterns were sidelined, or at times missed the point entirely, focusing more on the nature of elites and less on the implication of this for development in various states (Leftwich, 2005a). For instance, discussions of the comprador states have noted that developing countries' elites' interests were intertwined with those of developed countries' elites, to the detriment of the needs of their citizens, and were characterised by waste and corruption in their quest to retain power. Conversely, developing countries were also considered to be in a dependent relationship with developed countries, whose own development led to underdevelopment in developing countries (Baran, 1957; Gunder Frank, 1969; see also Leftwich, 2005a; Foster, 2007; Bowles, 1989). Then again, the World Bank (1989) noted that in many developing countries, state officials had served their own interests and built up personal networks of influence; therefore, politics had become personalized, and patronage had become essential to maintain power (pp.60-61). But as earlier indicated (see Section 2.2), the way these issues were included in development theory and policy tended to be in narrow terms that emphasised technocratic solutions to building institutions, governance and democratisation,

¹³ For example: Baran (1957) on the comprador states run by ruling elites installed and supported by imperialist countries; Gunder Frank (1969) on the development of underdevelopment; Huntington (1968) on political development; Johnson (1987) on the developmental state; Grindle (1980) on the politics of policy implementation and various other contributions on politics, ruling elites, good governance and development (World Bank 1997; Hyden and Bratton, 1992; Sandbrook, 1993; Grindle, 1999; Lewis, 1996; Ferguson, 1990, Haggard and Kaufman, 1992)

with no real understanding of why elites in one country were able to ensure growth and poverty reduction and those in another country were not able to do this (see Hickey, 2008; Leftwich, 2005a).

The various discourses on poverty, development and politics suggest that social and economic development are shaped by 'the political process underlying the formation, endurance and change of developmental institutions, or the structures of power, patterns of culture and the kinds of coalition of interests which might resist or promote change in existing institutional configurations, or establish new ones, whether for good or for bad' (Leftwich, 2005a: 584). Thus, issues like poverty 'cannot be understood or studied separately from affluence, nor is it likely that poverty can be combated without affecting those holding higher positions in a stratified society' (Holman, 1978:203). Consequently, poverty reduction policies need to address those sections of the population that have strong interests vested in both sustaining certain kinds of poverty and in not paying the price in economic and symbolic terms that an efficient poverty-reducing strategy demands (Brock et al, 2001). This makes the link between policy and politics important for understanding elite views of poverty. This is the focus of Section 2.4 below.

2.3 The Politics of Policy-Making

Thus far, attention in this literature review has been on the various discourses of poverty and development policy, and how they have changed over time amongst the development community to accommodate a political focus. This section briefly examines models of policy-making, leading to an understanding that decisions involving the mobilization, allocation, distribution and redistribution of resources make policy-making inherently political. Of relevance to this study is the role of elites in shaping policy and its outcomes.

Policies are the expressions of a political system's goal and the means with which it pursues them (Kolb, 1978). These goals, such as the provision of health, education, job opportunities, economic growth and personal safety, are the main tasks of government (Turner and Hulme, 1997:44). Lowi (1964: 690–691; see also Kjellberg, 1977) distinguishes between the following three major types of policy, which he argues determine politics: *distributive*, *regulatory* and *redistributive*¹⁴. First, *distributive* policies are considered synonymous with patronage, as they are highly individualised decisions that only by accumulation come to be called policy. In essence, they involve piecemeal allocations to particular groups or individuals with unrelated interests. Second, *regulatory* policies involve the establishment of rules and standards under which future individual allocations would be contemplated. In the short run, they involve a direct choice between who is provided with goods and services and who is deprived of these. Regulatory policies are identified with more pluralist politics, as the regulatory arena is composed of a multiplicity of groups organised around particular interests or shared attitudes. Therefore, policy tends to be the residue of the interplay of conflict amongst different groups in society. Finally, *redistributive* policies are similar to regulatory policies, in that groups are organised around shared interests; but different, because in the redistributive arena, these interests are activated along class lines and 'shared interests are sufficiently stable and clear and consistent to provide the foundation for ideologies' (Lowi, 1964: 707). Redistributive policies raise issues of resource mobilization and allocation and are identified with an elitist view of policy-making and the political process.

However, Kjellberg (1977) considers Lowi's policy distinction too general, and suggests that a distinction be made between policies that deal with individual and those that deal with collective goods. Therefore an important characterisation of these goods concerns their indivisibility (equal potential availability of goods) and their non-excludability from consumption, which brings to the fore the free-rider problem (the fact that an individual can benefit from a public good without necessarily having to

¹⁴ Examples of these policies are: distributive (i.e. subsidies, land policies); regulatory (i.e. elimination of substandard goods, unfair competition); and redistributive (i.e. progressive income tax and social protection) (Lowi, 1972: 300).

share in its costs) that has political consequences (Kjellberg, 1977: 560; see also Olson, 1965; 1969 on the free-rider problem).

However, what is common to both Lowi (1964) and Kjellberg (1977) is their agreement that these policies are distinguishable as 'arenas of power', and each arena develops 'its own characteristic political structure, political process, elites and group relations', (Lowi, 1964: 689). Accordingly, policy characteristics (such as the distribution of costs and benefits, technical complexity, short and long-term impacts and resource requirements) determine the type of conflict, opposition, bargaining, settlement, coalitions or agreements that surround policy choices and implementation (Grindle and Thomas, 1989). Tornquist (1999) adds that the scope, forms and context of politics constitute, as well as limit, the arena where politics occurs and the political processes that might take place. Scope, form and context refer to the issues that have been politicized, the political structures, institutions, and organizations, and the predominant ideas and strategies (Tornquist, 1999:19). Therefore, the politics that affect policy differ, depending on the type of policy being pursued, whether the policy is for individual or collective benefits or burdens, and the manner in which these policies contribute to socializing conflict that is built into various issues (Kjellberg, 1977). For instance, the nature of pro-poor policies as tools aimed at transferring resources to under-represented individuals or regions and redressing imbalances by transferring resources from one group to another makes them fundamentally political. This is because there are always disputes amongst individuals and groups in society as to who wins or loses in the organization, mobilization, combination, use and distribution of these resources, whether they be capital, land, human beings or a combination of these (Leftwich, 2000:5). The process always involves change, and change must inevitably challenge established interests and prevailing structures of power, and hence the dominant institutional arrangements (or rules of the game) (Leftwich, 2006:2).

Consequently, policy-making becomes more than a concern with mobilization and the allocation of resources, and includes choices, decision-making and – particularly on who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 1958) – and the politics that sustain, implement and extend these decisions (Leftwich, 2006:13). Therefore, the study of policy-making may involve an analysis of who makes the decisions; the processes of choice and interaction; the issues or aims of policies; and policy innovation and the consequences of policy efforts (Mitchell and Mitchell, 1969). This highlights issues of influence, power and the influential who, according to Lasswell (1958) get the most of what there is to be got in society.

The stages, or linear, model of the policy-making process as articulated by Lasswell (1951) Easton (1957) and Kolb (1978), fails to account for this complex interplay of power, knowledge and agency in policy-making. This model attempts to manage the interplay of social, economic and political factors by stating that the policy process follows a logical sequence, from identification, through formulation and implementation, to evaluation (Brock et al, 2001:2; see also Shore and Wright, 1997). Hence, policy-making is characterised as an objective analysis of options that involves the selection of goals, priority ordering among several goals, the extracting and mobilization of resources so that goals may be pursued, and, finally, the implementation of goals (Kolb, 1978:286). Johnson and Start (2001) simplify this by identifying two core components of policy-making: planning, which involves information-gathering, analysis and decision-making; and implementation, where individuals and organizations act on these variables to achieve a particular set of goals (p.7). The stages, or linear, model of policy-making takes decision to be key, whilst implementation is ignored or sidelined. Thus unsuccessful implementation is blamed on lack of capacity, political will, bottlenecks, or interference in the policy process, rather than on the policy itself (Grindle and Thomas, 1990; Mooij, 2003b). Conversely, Lindlom (1980; 1959) suggests that the policy-making process should be understood as consisting of incremental decisions that are based on existing policies. Thus policy-making involves small adjustments that differ slightly from existing options – or simply muddling through.

Critics (Mooij, 2003; Gordon et al, 1993; Sabatier 1991; Thomas and Grindle, 1990) of the stages or linear model of policy-making argue that the importance of this model to actual policy processes should not be underestimated as it continues to survive despite being undermined by empirical studies of the policy process. Thomas and Grindle (1990) note that donor agencies provide technical assistance to build capacity in planning and policy analysis in developing countries, in the belief that good analysis will lead to good decision-making and finally result in good policies (p.1164). Therefore, donors believe that 'once a decision to change policy is made by the recipient government, donors tend to consider that their job is largely accomplished. They may check on compliance at intervals, but in general, decision is expected to lead to implementation' (Thomas and Grindle, 1990:1165). The main explanation for the continuing power and survival of the stages or linear model lies in its status as an ideal/normative model of policy-making and a 'dignified myth' which is often shared by the policy-makers themselves (Gordon et al, 1993:7). Thus, 'as a normative representation of how things ought to be, a stages or linear model of policy-making works to mask the management of uncertainty and the politics of interactions between different agents, positions and interests in the shaping of policy in practice' (Brock et al, 2001:9). Conversely, the separation of decision-making from implementation enables policy-making elites to escape responsibility for policy failure (Clay and Schaffer, 1984; see also Sutton, 1999; Mooij, 2003).

Referring specifically to pro-poor policy, Brock et al argue that, 'Policy is not shaped simply on the basis of good research or information, nor does it emerge simply from bargaining amongst actors on clearly defined options and choices. Rather, it is a more complex process through which particular versions of poverty come to frame what counts as knowledge and whose voices count in policy deliberations, in particular political and institutional contexts' (Brock et al, 2001:1). Even when policies are being implemented, political intervention should be expected and we should not assume that policy-making is

a rational process with a beginning, a middle and an end. Put simply, policy-making should be understood as 'chaos of purposes and accidents' (Sutton, 1999:5; see also Clay and Schaffer, 1984).

An alternative to the stages or linear model of policy-making is the interactive model. This model is proposed by Grindle and Thomas (1990), who view policy as a process in which actors interact and bargain with each other, in order to reach a particular policy outcome. A major assumption of this model is that policy may be altered or reversed at any stage in the policy-process by those who oppose the policy. When policy-making is viewed in this way, policy outcomes cease to be a product of rational decision-makers, but are shaped through the interactions of a variety of actors, who may pursue individual or collective interests. However, the common conceptualisation of interests has been influenced by public-choice approaches to policy analysis, which convey negative messages about the political feasibility of redistributive policies, thus seeing redistribution policies as imbued with conflict and having clear winners and losers (Moore, 1999, see also Dunleavy; 1991). Consequently, policy actors are considered to pursue their own short-term self-interest, and they may either: 'make deals that keep them in power and maintain revenue, votes or whatever underlies their power' (Levi, 1988:201); or 'they may not undertake policies that are generally unpopular or will lose them power' (Mooij, 2003:15). However, Moore (1999) views this as pessimistic 'interest group economism' that exaggerates the possibility of a pro-poor-policy propensity to opposition and underestimates elites' inclination towards distribution. He argues that there is scope for elites to gain, or believe they gain, from making the poor better off (p.38). These views are discussed further, in Chapter 3.

What the interactive model shows is that policy results from conflict, bargaining and coalition-formation amongst groups in society. The policy-making process is therefore a highly political process, 'an arena where those with interests in a policy engage in negotiations over the goals of the policy and conflict over the allocation of resources' (Turner and Hulme, 1997: 77; see also Wallis, 1987:21). For instance,

embarking on an agricultural development program is political. Politicians know that such programs can favour some groups or regions within the country more than others, and will therefore bring pressure on the policy process to ensure that their own political supporters benefit as much as possible' (Wallis, 1987:21). Therefore, in analysing pro-poor policy, an interactive model that highlights cause and effect relationships within and across policy stages (Sabatier, 2007) and the actors and processes of negotiation, contestation, alliance and coalition, provides a better explanation of poverty processes (Brock et al, 2001), especially when considering the poverty paradox which is the failure to alleviate poverty (Appelbaum, 2001).

There are different views of what politics is and these determine its analysis. Politics has been conceptualised as: governing by involving rule-making and its application (Moodie, 1984); wielding influence, power and authority (Lasswell, 1958); entering into class struggle that arises out of social relations in the course of production (Callinicos, 1984); and 'interest group economism' that generates opposition, conflict and polarisation (Moore, 1999). According to Leftwich (1984) these views of politics limit their focus to the official or public realm, which in turn excludes an understanding of non-public realms such as churches, businesses or any other organizations. Therefore, in this thesis, politics is conceptualised, in terms prescribed by Leftwich (2006), as an essential and unavoidable *process* (or set of processes) in all human collectivities, formal and informal, public and private, concerned with decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources. This broad view of politics enables an analysis of political processes at the national, sub-national and local levels as well as across sectors (education, agriculture or health) or in organizations (firms, factories, or colleges) (Leftwich, 2006:.9).

Leftwich (2006) identifies two levels of politics that are significant in understanding development and that are also essential for policy-making. The first level consists of the 'rules of the game' – the procedures and processes that underpin and structure political life, that distribute power and authorise

its use in particular ways. These are either formal (statute law, common law or regulations) or informal (conventions, norms or behaviour) (North, 1990: 8). The second level consists of the 'games within the rules' – the normal contestations over policy and power that occur where the rules of the game are established and consolidated (Leftwich, 2006: 3). In stable polities there is consensus on the 'rules of the game', and this is not easily altered, even when the rules change, which makes the predictability of behaviour relatively high. In developing countries, however, the rules are not well established, and at times they induce unpredictable, incoherent and inconsistent policy (Leftwich, 2006; Mitchell and Mitchell, 1969). Regardless of the setting, the rules of the game are key to the 'formation, maintenance and enforcement of the institutions and standard procedures for conducting politics, for setting socio-economic goals, and for establishing the economic, administrative and judicial institutions which facilitate growth and development' (Leftwich, 2006: 12).

This has important implications for the politics of policy-making, particularly pro-poor policy. As observed by Mitchell and Mitchell (1969), policies are made because policy actors expect to alter the human situation in predictable and desirable ways. To borrow Leftwich's (2006:2) notion of 'transformative process', policy-making concerns the mobilisation and distribution of resources in new ways that also change structures, use of wealth and power. It is also about deliberate choice of collective goals and decision-making, which involves interaction between different actors and competing interests. These policy interactions also involve bargaining, compromises, negotiations, losers and winners, and this is what makes policy a political activity. Therefore, policy outcomes depend on the interactions and strengths of groups (Mooij, 2003).

2.4 Regimes, Institutions and Pro-Poor Policy

This section seeks to explore the nature of regimes and institutions prevailing in developing countries in order to understand the distinct character to policy-making in developing countries (Horowitz, 1989: 197). This is of relevance for this thesis because these are areas which have been identified in the literature as undermining policy, in particular pro-poor policy, and which have been argued as important for identifying instances where pro-poor coalitions or alliances have been formed, thus becoming part of the solution (Moore and Putzel, 2001; Moore, 2010). According to Potter (2000) regimes refer to the institutional relationships between and within the state that specify forms of political accountability and the manner by which political leaders come to occupy the positions of political authority (p. 365). Therefore, differences in institutions or 'rules of the game', norms and patterns of behaviour amongst different regimes will determine not only the states relationship with citizens, interactions between social groups and state organs, the exercise of power including its legitimation, but also whether a particular regime will support or not support pro-poor policy (Potter, 2000).

According to Horowitz (1989) policy-making in developing countries contains eight foundational elements: lack of legitimacy, which means that policies are meant to enhance state or regime legitimacy; policy concerns, which are different from those in the West; state structures which, whatever their weaknesses, are relatively powerful in relation to society; low capacity to make or implement policy; fewer participants in the policy process; channels for participation that are neither established nor clearly prescribed; policy elites that rarely rely on information or research for policy-making; and policy elites that rely on foreign models of policy-making (see also Mooij, 2003).

In 1958, Pye noted that the political sphere in developing countries is not sharply differentiated from the spheres of social and personal relations; thus the fundamental framework of their politics is based on communal identification along regional, ethnic and religious lines. Hence, the structure of decision-

making tends to be based on personal relationships and, 'Policy is limited to providing minimum social and economic functions and maintaining the way of life of the elite' (p.484)¹⁵.

2.4.1 Political Regimes and their Impact on Pro-Poor Policy

Generally, regimes are distinguished as liberal democracies, partial democracies or authoritarian. A liberal democracy has an accountable government and free and fair elections. These attributes are limited in a partial democracy; and they are absent in an authoritarian state. The assumption has been that these attributes determine the extent to which states are pro-poor and elites respond to the needs of the poor (Allen and Thomas, 2000).

In most developing countries, the post-colonial years were dominated by the centralizing of power in order to gain control, which in turn led to the personalization of power and a reliance on the bureaucracy. Sandbrook (2000:3) highlights the fact that the single party became the unique voice of the people; and the unique voice became the exclusive voice of the ruling group; and soon the voice of the ruling group became the voice of a unique individual; all of which led to authoritarian governments and dictators. Through this process, decision-making was centralized around the head of state and those surrounding him. 'Leadership became a substitute for regularized channels of policy-making and the president had the final say' (Chazan et al, 1999:53; see also Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002; Bratton and De Walle, 1997). Experience from Malawi, for example, shows that parliament and the civil service were seemingly there to express support for the president, but never really engaged in policy

¹⁵ This view of a non-western political process was criticised by Diamant (1959), who believed that developing countries would benefit from an ideal type approach that had been useful in developed countries. However, articles on the distinctiveness of policy and political processes in developing countries have increased in number (Sartori, 1976; Van De Walle 2001; Bratton and Van De Walle, 1997; Cromwell and Chintedza, 2005; Bird et al, 2003; Thomas and Grindle, 1990). All these argue that an ideal model of policy-making in developing countries is not sufficient to explain policy outcomes; thus the impact of politics on the policy-making process should be explicitly acknowledged.

formulation, nor in policy implementation. Instead, their role was to rubber-stamp and rationalise top-down policies (Ihonvbere, 1997).

By the 1990s, authoritarian regimes in developing countries had become vilified as detrimental to the development prospects of these countries. Thus, the development community supported a transition from authoritarian to democratic states: democratic states were considered a prerequisite for development, and as being essential for ensuring participation and social and political rights (Edigheji, 2005; Leftwich, 2000).

However, experiences in Asia and some African countries have shown that although regime type might have a bearing on policy processes (Horowitz, 1989), there is no systematic relationship between regime type and development success, or between inter-party competition and the welfare orientation of public policy (Hofferbert, 1970). Leftwich (2000) observes that whether democratic or non-democratic, some third world countries have been successful in ensuring social and economic development and have lifted many of their citizens out of poverty through a developmental state where, 'the elites are driven by a developmental ideology and have the capacity to effectively implement policies' (Mkandawire, 2001: 290). As highlighted in Chapter 1, Malawi is an example of the paradox of the political system argument in explaining pro-poor policy success or failure, as democracy has not had the expected impact on development or poverty reduction. In many ways, the adoption of democratic institutions has been based on an ideal model by emphasising the role of elections in promoting social, political and economic development (Edigheji, 2005; Abrahamsen, 2000; Leftwich, 2002). Consequently, the politics and policy actors required to adopt, adapt and implement these democratic institutions have been ignored (Moore and Putzel, 2001; Leftwich and Hogg, 2008).

What is of interest in looking at the issue of regimes in relation to pro-poor policy is the recognition that regime types are not necessarily the determining factor in the success of pro-poor policies. Varshney (1999) notes that many democracies still have a large number of their populations stuck below the poverty line, despite the poor constituting a majority of the population. Theoretically, due to their large numbers, the poor should be better able to exert influence on government policies. In contrast, some authoritarian states like Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have largely reduced poverty, whilst others, in Latin America, for example, have been unresponsive to the needs of the poor. What is important is the recognition that it is the developmental character of elites, their commitment to reducing poverty that provides part of the explanation for pro-poor policy success (Leftwich, 2008; Hossain and Moore, 2005). Therefore, in formulating effective, responsive and comprehensive strategies for poverty reduction, it is essential to take account of the role of elites. The answer lies in understanding the way the poor are perceived within the politics that determine the nature of pro-poor policies: 'The inclusion of the poor in participatory poverty assessments may have little weight compared to the ways in which poverty and the poor are represented within elite political discourse' (Hickey and Bracking, 2005:854).

2.4.2 Formal and Informal Institutions and Pro-Poor Policy

The primacy of institutions is reasserted by Huntington (1968) when he argues that political institutions are not just the passive consequences of social and economic change but can themselves be a determinant of such change (see also Randall and Theobald, 1998). Immergut (1992) adds that institutions can explain both policy stability and policy change. By comparing the outcomes of a proposal for health insurance in France, Sweden and Switzerland, she explains the rejection and

success of policy by pointing to the importance of institutions¹⁶ in establishing different rules of the game for politicians and interest groups seeking to enact or block policies.

Huntington (1968) observes that adherents to institutionalism explain policy choices and implementation outcomes, first, in terms of the degree to which states are permeated by informal institutions such as patronage and clientelistic systems rather than by formal decision-making structures and the way in which the relationship between parliament and the executive affect the ability to produce policy. Second, they emphasise the way institutions shape access to decision-making structures, giving some groups greater influence over the policy making process. Thus, 'Institutions explain the differences in the ability of interest groups to obtain favourable policy outcomes and in the ability of executive governments to enact their legislative programs' (Immergut, 1992: 63). Johnson and Start (2001) argue that it is these institutions that put poor people at a disadvantage and prevent them from meaningfully engaging in the policy process, as well as influencing the 'range of societal interests that are represented in the policy' (Haggard and Kaufman, 1992:18).

In an ideal situation, formal institutions are meant to guide and shape people's strategies, their preferences and their power. However, in developing countries, these have been guided by the logic of neopatrimonialism, which is a hybrid system composed of formal and informal institutions. It is argued that elites in developing countries have manipulated the legal-rational basis, infusing it with patrimonial tendencies such as clientelism, patronage and prebendalism, thereby having a detrimental effect on pro-poor policy. For instance, Bird et al (2003: 19) use agricultural policies as an example of how institutions impact on policy outcomes in developing countries: first, the political interests of ruling elites

¹⁶ 'De jure rules of institutional design provide procedural advantages and impediments for translating political power into concrete policies. De facto rules arising from electoral results and party systems change the ways in which these formal institutions work in practice. Together these institutional rules establish distinct logics of decision-making that set the parameters both for executive action and interest group influence' (Immergut, 1992: 59).

are defined in a way that systematically conflicts with the principle of maximizing the welfare of citizens. Hence, agricultural policies have been formulated as a means of guaranteeing political support, favouring large symbolic gestures, the distribution of largesse and promises of favours, but no promise to resolve structural problems. Second, policies are pursued that allocate resources inefficiently, hence state intervention in the supply of agricultural inputs, pricing and food distribution persists for political reasons. Finally, state resources are diverted unofficially for personal gain, through corruption and nepotism. Civil society, the media and parliaments face serious difficulties in holding leaders to account, despite the existence of multi-party politics, and neopatrimonialism diverts political discourse from issue-based political competition in general. Therefore, the distinctiveness of neopatrimonialism in developing countries structures policy-making processes in ways that systematically divert public resources for private gain (Cromwell and Chintedza, 2005:3).

Specifically, in Malawi, neopatrimonialism has seriously impacted on coherent policy-making and long-term development planning. Policy is driven by the pressure to win elections and retain legitimacy, which seriously undermines the effectiveness of policies, for instance policies on health and food security, resulting in unnecessary HIV/Aids deaths and starvation. There is a multiplication of policy documents and an absence of implementation. Key policies such as the subsidy programme are adopted on the campaign trail with little attention paid to their viability (O'Neil, 2007; Booth et al, 2006; Bird et al, 2003; Cammack. et al, 2007). The budget has been circumvented by informal incentives and bargaining structures, and therefore does not produce spending on planned allocations, but hides real expenditures that further political interests (Rakner et al, 2004). In addition, neopatrimonialism has impacted on policy-making capacity by disempowering and politicising the civil service, leaving them unable to generate coherent, technically-grounded policy. Ruling elites have maintained tight control over policy-making to ensure that policies can be used for patronage. As a result, the civil service has experienced a loss of professional work ethic and individual performance (Booth et al, 2006).

However, Kelsall (2011) argues that neopatrimonialism can be developmental if economic rents are centralised with a long-term developmental goal. Leftwich (2006) observes that it is possible that successful countries like Botswana, Mauritius, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore used patronage to 'promote, monitor, discipline and reward economic agents' (p.25). The Asian tigers did not develop by adopting in totality the prescriptions of the good governance agenda. They adopted particular elements of democracy and combined it with their indigenous institutions and developed a new model of development that is effectively reducing poverty. They have intervened in the market, got prices wrong, engaged in rent-seeking and corruption, used clientelist politics, and eschewed multiparty democracy (Kelsall, 2008). On the other hand, neopatrimonialism is not unique to authoritarian regimes: it can be found in any society and political system (Erdmann and Engel, 2006; Van de Walle, 2007). Therefore, Kelsall et al (2010) argue that there is evidence of developmental and non-developmental patrimonialism in countries like Malawi, such that Malawi was considered a developmental state between 1964 and 1980 (see also Pryor, 1990). This shows that policy-making is not the rational, linear or incremental process that earlier models of policy-making assume.

The interaction between informal and formal institutions can be complementary, accommodating, competitive or substitutive, leading to different development outcomes. The key is in the control and discretionary power state actors have in controlling and allocating public resources (Jutting et al, 2007). An important point that this discussion leads to is that institutions alone do not produce development outcomes: it is through their interaction with elites that development is realised. This suggests that a more fruitful endeavour is to try to understand how and why decisions are made by building on existing interests, and to determine what shapes elite interests and actions (Moore, 2010). This raises the question of how elite interests may be aligned with those of the poor, thus enabling the implementation of pro-poor policy.

2.5 An Alternative Perspective on the Study of Pro-Poor Policy-Making: the Role of Elites

This perspective points to shortcomings in studies of policy-making that have failed to focus on elites and their role in determining policy outcomes, despite acknowledging that the politics of poverty are about choice, decision-making, collective goals, interests, ideas and actors. It has been assumed that institutions (the rules of the game) are the sole explanatory variable of socio-economic and political behaviour or action (Leftwich, 2010). However, there are studies emerging that argue that the extent to which institutions can be said to determine development, growth and poverty reduction is dependent on the manner in which institutions and organizations interact (see Hodes et al, 2011; Tadros, 2011; Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009 and Leftwich, 2009). Organizations, in this case, are players consisting of individuals who make choices and decisions that are influenced by their perceptions (North, 1990). The distinction between institutions and organizations in this study is important, as it helps to situate elites and brings to the fore the role played by organized human agency in influencing developmental outcomes (Leftwich, 2010). As noted by North et al (2006), elites are able to form organizations, and thus enjoy tremendous economic and political advantage as compared with unorganized non-elites (North et al, 2006). This shows that the social world is organized politically, in that issues of power, legitimacy and authority are political in nature, as well as resource use and distribution, so that pro-poor policy reflects the distribution of power and patterns of decision-making, the structure of social organizations, and the system of culture and ideology in society or in groups within it (Leftwich, 1984; Chazan et al, 1999).

Various studies (Burton and Higley, 1987a, 1998; Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009; Di John and Putzel, 2009) have shown that, in order for development or change to occur; be it political, social, or economic elites within different organizations must reach a consensus regarding development. Even though these

studies use different terms and have quite different focuses, they all help with understanding how development and pro-poor outcomes emerge. Burton and Higley (1987b) use the concept of 'elite settlements', which are relatively rare events in which warring national elite factions suddenly and deliberately reorganize their relations by negotiating compromises on their most basic disagreements (p.295), to argue that broad compromises amongst elites provide a necessary precondition for the sustained practice of representative democracy in countries such as England, Sweden and Venezuela. As a result, 'elite settlements' lead to negotiations and to compromise amongst opposed elite groups, and are thus, considered necessary for moderating political activities so that they are no longer viewed as a 'winner-takes-all' situation.

Leftwich and Hogg (2007), Beall and Ngonyama (2009) and Sebudubudu and Molutsi (2009) use the concept of 'elite coalitions' to argue that, "Successful development depends largely on political processes which involve diverse leaders and elites, representing different groups, interests and organizations, tackling a series of collective action problems in locally appropriate and feasible ways' (Leftwich and Hogg, 2007: 1), or that inclusive elite coalitions are attuned to the needs and aspirations of significant constituencies (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009:25). These elite coalitions are formed when elites are faced with collective action problems that cannot be resolved by the individual members of the coalition. The experience in Botswana shows that these elite coalitions were most effective when formed across 'the traditional modern divide, across political parties, across ethnic-racial cleavages, across the public and private sectors, and across employer and employee divisions, as well as state and non-state actors in business and non-governmental sectors' (Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009: 26).

DFID (2010), Khan (2010), and Di John and Putzel (2009) use the concept of 'political settlement', mainly in relation to state-building, to describe the types of informal as well as formal political bargains that can end conflict, bring sustainable peace, and promote reform, development and poverty reduction

– or that may fail to achieve any progress that has significant impact on development outcomes (DFID, 2010: 11). Di John and Putzel (2009) stress that political settlements are the outcomes of bargaining among contending elites and provide a route into understanding ‘why very similar sets of formal institutions, like democratic rule or rules governing macro-economic management [or pro-poor policies such as the MDGs or PRSPs], can have extremely divergent outcomes’ (Di John and Putzel, 2009:18). One explanation for these divergent outcomes may be that an institutional structure does not provide an acceptable distribution of benefits to powerful groups, so the powerful groups strive to change it. Thus, political settlements should have a combination of power and institutions that are mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability (Khan, 2010:4).

Moore and Putzel (2001) discuss the idea of ‘political alliances’ to explain pro-poor outcomes. What is common amongst these studies is the agreement that development outcomes are predicated on inclusive and collective action that includes a variety of interest groups and organizations. As well as showing us how critical junctures, crises or development challenges can be the trigger for development, these studies also explain that elite coalitions can be distributional, collusive or developmental, and that they establish the political conditions and rules of the game necessary for growth and development (Leftwich and Hogg, 2007; Sebudubudu and Molutsi, 2009).

However, these studies do not tell us what collective development challenges lead elites to form coalitions or take collective action for the reduction of poverty, and how these occur. As Brock et al (2001) note, in making sense of poverty policy outcomes, an understanding of how particular ways of thinking about poverty have gained ascendancy, and have come to determine the frame through which poverty is defined, measured and tackled, needs to be achieved.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the centrality of politics to the policy-making process and its impact on the policy outcomes. The different conceptualisations of development and poverty have been discussed and the link between politics and poverty made. The literature suggests that the mobilisation and distribution of resources in society, a critical undertaking of pro-poor policy, is inherently political, as it involves contestation, bargaining, negotiation, alliances and coalitions amongst various actors. In addition, the neopatrimonial environment of most developing countries provides a distinct context for policy-making, which makes the political analysis of policy-making processes more important. The literature further suggests that regime type (democratic or autocratic) and the neopatrimonial character of developing countries are not the sole determinants of development or pro-poor outcomes. The latter are dependent on developmental elites being able to form coalitions across public and private sectors, and on the coalitions being able to effectively address collective problems, such as the provision of welfare or public services (Leftwich and Hogg, 2007). Thus, the literature reflects that whether countries are democratic or autocratic, development and pro-poor outcomes will depend on the nature of elites and the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviour that guide their decisions concerning poverty.

Nevertheless, the literature does not explicitly address the perceptions of elites that motivate them to coordinate their activities to better their collective well-being (Sandler, 1992: 19), especially where 'individual rationality is not sufficient for collective rationality' (Olson, 1965). In addition, the literature does not deal with the issue of the mutual interdependencies that develop amongst people who live in a common territory and that characterise collective action problems. Consequently, there is no real acknowledgement that the welfare of elites is affected by the existence of poverty and the presence of the poor, who present a challenge to elites in terms of crime, disease and potential social uprisings (De Swaan et al, 2000). Nor is there a recognition that collective action is guided by various other kinds of belief, as well as the belief that consequences such as the above-mentioned threats will follow if social

action is unsuccessful (Smelser, 1962: 8). It is therefore important to understand that as a political problem, poverty reflects not only its institutionalization within social and political norms and institutions, but also its legitimation within the political discourse (Hickey and Bracking, 2005), hence the need to understand how perceptions of poverty and the poor lead to collective and public arrangements for reducing poverty. The next chapter discusses the various conceptualisations of poverty produced by elites, typologies, and the various ways elites have been seen to affect the policy-making process.

CHAPTER THREE CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conceptual and analytical framework of the thesis. The main objectives of this thesis, as set out in Chapter 1, are to investigate elites' explanations of the causes of poverty in Malawi, how these perceived explanations influence policy choices, and what elements of 'social consciousness' exist amongst Malawian elites. Theoretically, de Swaan's theory of 'social consciousness' guides this thesis and will be used to assist our understanding of how Malawian elites come to support some policies rather than others.

The chapter has three main sections. Section 3.2 outlines the conceptual framework of the thesis and discusses the contested history of the concept of elites, including the major arguments, differences and critiques of classical elite theorists, which leads us to identify the definition of elites that will be employed in this thesis. This discussion sheds light on how societies are stratified: how rewards are shared out; on which criteria privilege is accorded; and how power is exercised, and by whom. Section 3.3 explores elite structures and elite behaviour. This exploration brings to the fore the importance of elite values, attitudes and norms in creating the elite settlements, coalitions and collective action that determine development outcomes. A relevant area for this thesis, identified by Moyser & Wagstaffe (1987), is the role elites' play in what these scholars term social engineering. This position recognizes the important role played by elites in addressing issues of peace and war, human rights and, most important and relevant to this thesis, poverty. This discussion leads to a focus on de Swaan's (1988) theory of 'social consciousness', which is employed in the thesis to understand the role of elites in the policy process. Thus, Section 3.3 outlines and discusses the analytical framework of this thesis and the challenges of applying de Swaan's theory in a context different to that of his own study – nineteenth

century Europe – in a way that still assists our understanding of elite motivations and debates around poverty reduction in Malawi.

3.2 Historical Overview of the Study of Elites

The idea of elites is highly contested and deeply-rooted in political and sociological thought. Therefore, the study of elites cannot begin with a definition of the term. Instead, it is important to understand how the concept of 'elite' has been used over time and how it relates to terms such as 'power elite', 'social elite', 'oligarchy', and 'ruling class' (Parry, 1969). It is not the intention of this section to provide a comprehensive analysis of all historical concepts of elites, but rather to provide a brief overview in order to inform the analytical and methodological framework. Historically, views on elites have been concerned with whether power in society is concentrated in the hands of a cohesive minority, whether this is inevitable, or whether power is widely distributed between various rival groups which are representative of a society (Parry, 1969).

The study of elites was articulated within the social sciences in the nineteenth century, following the work of classical elite theorists such as Mosca (1939), Pareto (1935) and Michels (1962), who sought to understand the structure of politics through the relationship between elites and the masses (Hartmann, 2007; Parry, 1969). The main aim of classical elite theorists was to counter democratic and Marxist ideas about majority rule and argue that elites have a decisive influence on the development of their countries. Other authors, such as Burnham (1941), with his discussion of the theory of the managerial revolution, and Mills (1956), with his discussion of the 'power elite', can be added to the list of classical elite theorists, mainly because they display continuity with the earlier classical theorists in their drive to examine the existence and nature of a cohesive elite who dominate the affairs of their society. This is in

contrast to later studies (e.g. Dahl, 1984) that advocate a pluralist version of elitist thought, suggesting that leadership in society is aimed at by a number of elites who compete for influence (Parry, 1969: 30).

However, the work of classical elite theorists was revived in the 1980s, in an attempt to create a new elite paradigm, by authors such as Field and Higley (1980) and Burton and Higley (1987a). They introduced the concept of unified and dis-unified elites, which is an improvement on prior theories because it accounts for variations in development outcomes and brings us back to earlier arguments that elite settlements, alliances or coalitions are essential for collective outcomes (see Chapter 2). Dealing specifically with democratic transitions, Higley and Burton (1989) argue that for stable political regimes to emerge, unity, consensus and accommodation amongst elites on the rules of the game are necessary (see also Higley et al, 1990). As argued by Moore and Putzel (2001), stable political regimes are essential for development, and particularly for the provision of basic and welfare services to the poor. Of relevance to this study is how an elite's unity comes about, and is sustained, in an effort to provide basic and welfare services to the poor. As argued in Chapter 2, unity is not produced by a democratic political culture or institutions; rather it 'originates in consensual unification of the most powerful elite factions' (Higley et al, 1990:423) around problems that require collective action. This will be discussed further in Section 3.3.

3.2.1 Major Arguments of Classical Elite Theorists

The major argument of classical elite theorists focuses on three main issues. The first of these issues is the inevitability of elites in all societies, whether democratic or non-democratic. The reason for this, according to Michels (1962: 71), is that any organization – whether democratic state, political party, or social movement – ultimately develops differentiated organs and functions that create oligarchies. Similarly, Mosca (1939) contends that the elite's ability to organise over the majority in society makes

their rule over the masses inevitable; and Pareto (1935) points to the unequal individual endowments (education, skills) in society that distinguish between the governed and the masses. The pervasiveness of elites in society, as stipulated by Michels, Mosca and Pareto, has held true, as there is no society today that does not have elites. According to Moore, M. (2001) and Mbeki (2005), contemporary elites exercise a great deal of influence on the political and governmental agenda, as well as control over the material, symbolic and political resources of a country. Thus, 'The elite minority is able to not only create or execute policy, but also to define its objectives and how issues are framed within the national discourse' (DiCaprio, 2011: 2). Therefore, the 'fundamental argument of the classical elite theorists that every society has been divided into two strata, a ruling minority and a majority that is ruled, and that all societies must be so divided' (Bottomore, 1964:19) is still relevant today.

The second argument raised by classical elite theorists is that variations in elite structure (the extent of structural integration) and functioning (the extent to which there is value consensus) have an impact on political outcomes. Thus, structural integration involves the relative inclusiveness of formal and informal networks of communication and influence among elite persons, groups and factions; whereas value consensus involves relative agreement among elites on formal and informal rules and codes of political conduct and on the legitimacy of existing institutions (Higley and Gunther, 1995). This view raises questions as to how elites vary and which variation produces what political, economic and social outcomes. The answer lies in the distinction between relatively integrated or fragmented intra-elite relations and the relative consensus or dissensus in elite beliefs and attitudes (Burton and Higley, 1987). This is further discussed in Section 3.3.

The third argument is that despite elites' influence on political outcomes, their action is limited by the interdependent nature of their relationship with the non-elite (Burton and Higley, 1987:220). In Michel's (1962: 167 - 168) discussion of the struggle between elites and the masses, he observes that the

masses do revolt from time to time against a violation of their right to economic, social and political development. However, Michels (1962) argues that even when masses form movements against elites, an oligarchic structure emerges within the movement such that the masses still remain under the command of the elites. Therefore, the impact this interdependent relationship has on elite domination is minimal, as elites are able to use their power, ability to organize, and skills to exploit and maintain domination (Parry, 1969). Nonetheless, Pareto (1935) recognises that the pattern of the relationship between elites and non-elites determines the likelihood of revolutions and other political events. He observes that in order to govern effectively, elites must appeal to and mobilize non-elite support (see also Burton and Higley, 1987). Mosca (1939: 51) concurs, observing that the 'pressures arising from the discontent of the masses who are governed exert a certain amount of influence on the policies of the ruling class'.

3.2.2 Differences amongst Classical Elite Theorists

The main difference amongst classical elite theorists relates to their views on the channels of elite influence; that is, the qualities and social opportunities a group needs to possess in order to gain an elite position (Parry, 1969). The classical elite theorists identify four channels of elite influence: organizational, psychological, managerial and institutional.

Mosca (1939) and Michels (1962) employ the organizational approach to understand how groups gain an elite position in society. According to Mosca, in any society two classes emerge: a class that rules, despite being few in number, performing all political functions, monopolizing power and enjoying the advantages that power brings; and a class that is ruled, directed and controlled by the first class, despite existing in greater numbers (1939:50). This does not imply that elites are by necessity only those that perform political functions; but because the decisions they take affect all aspects of society

and all human activities, these decisions 'are regarded as political decisions even where the minority taking them are not politicians' (Parry, 1969: 30). Mosca argues that the conceptualisation of elites as the 'ruling or political class' should be the 'guiding thread that must steer us as we go looking into the causes that mature and produce the effects which at times lift societies to prosperity and power and at other times engulf them in anarchy and ruin' (1939: 333). The ruling or political class is divided between the upper stratum (those who take decisions) and lower stratum (those who influence decisions), without whom the upper stratum cannot effectively implement decisions or policies. Thus, for the ruling class to exert any influence and succeed, they have to act 'uniformly in concert, with a common understanding' (Mosca, 1939: 53). Therefore, the fundamental basis for elite control includes the elite's ability to organize, and their possession of particular attributes, such as wealth, military power, good education, concern for the public good, and status. For Mosca, it is the fact that the ruling class is small in number that makes it easier for them to organize, obeying a single impulse, whereas the unorganized majority do not have a common purpose (Mosca, 1939: 53, 57; see also Parry, 1969; Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

Michels also argues that organization leads to the domination of 'the elected over the electors, the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy' (1962: 365). As a result, any organisation – be it a nation state, a trade union, a political party or a church – assumes an oligarchic governing structure. In essence, the organization cannot exist without turning over power to the few at the helm of these organizations (Michel, 1962; see also Lipset, 1961). The powerful have superior knowledge, control over the means of communication, and skill in the art of politics which is strengthened by the incompetence of the masses (Lipset, 1961; Michels, 1962). Therefore, the nature of organization gives power to leaders who remain unchecked by their followers, who in turn have a psychological need for guidance that leads to apathy, submissiveness and deference (Parry, 1969:44). Inherent in Michel's argument is the notion that the behaviour of the

oligarchy follows a logic of self-interest, of exploiting the masses to maintain or extend their own privilege and power (Lipset, 1961).

By contrast, Pareto (1935) employs a psychological approach to understand how elites gain their position. Elites are seen as a product of human attributes and their behaviour is explained by sentiments, or what Pareto terms 'residues' (1935). A 'class one' residue is the 'instinct of combination', which is the impulse to put together ideas, by using the imagination, that might lead to political coalitions or manoeuvrings (Parry, 1969: 46). A 'class two' residue refers to 'group persistence', which is conservative in that it manifests an instinctive desire for permanence, stability and order. These residues determine the style of governing that will emerge in a society, and Pareto also uses these to distinguish between the governing elite, which include members of the government, opposition parties, industrialists, labour leaders and military personnel, and the non-governing elite. Thus, if the governing elite is dominated by 'class one' residues, then they will strive to attract the masses through ideological stances and ensure the implementation of policies to meet various development challenges. A predominance of 'class two' residues, however, will lead to slower development as the governing elite uses force to suppress opposition. Essential to Pareto's arguments is the idea that, in a democracy, the concept of elite is broadened to include the leaders of opposition political parties (Pareto, 1935; Parry, 1969).

In 1941, Burnham combined a Marxian and an elitist approach in his book entitled *The Managerial Revolution*, in which he argues that there is a transition from a capitalist society to a society controlled politically, socially, economically and culturally by a managerial elite (p.71). A managerial class is a skilled technical elite that has counterparts in the state bureaucracy, and whose position is dependent on the technical nature of modern production (Parry, 1969: 51). The managers gain dominance and become part of the ruling class through their control over the modes of production and distribution of

products, 'not directly, through property rights vested in them as individuals, but indirectly, through their control of the institutions which comprise the state' (Burnham, 1941:72). Their control over resources gives rise to political power, social prestige and wealth, thus making it essential for them to retain control over production (Parry, 1969).

Mills' (1956) argument accords with Burnham's view that elites must be studied on the basis of their positions and roles in society. The elite's power is based on their role in pivotal institutions, such as the military, big corporations and the executive. Through these institutions, elites gain power, wealth and prestige; thus the 'power elite' is 'composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences' (Mills, 1956: 3-4). Mills divides the elite into the 'inner core', which takes major decisions, and the 'outer fringes', which consist of those who are taken into account in the decisions of, the 'inner core' (1956; see also Parry, 1969). The ability of elites to work collectively is determined by common interests that lead to consensus in policies and values. In addition, elites' shared lifestyle and interconnections, for example due to similar education, provide a psychological and social basis for their unity, thus forming a coherent group. However, the unity of elites should not be seen as a reflection of the unity of institutions, but as the result of the relationship between elites and institutions (Mills, 1956:19). This demonstrates the importance of elite interests and the elite's ability to coordinate these interests. As Mills (1956) argues, elite unity is based on a more explicit co-ordination that is decisive (p.19-20).

Emerging from the work of these classical elite theorists is the idea that there is no society that does not have elites, or a distinct ruling class or governing elite that dominate (Burton and Higley, 1987:220). The elite's power, organization, political skill and personal qualities enable them to remain dominant; thus, the elite are considered a coherent, united and self-conscious group (Parry, 1969: 31). These

sources of power may derive from the elite's organizational abilities, psychological make-up, control over economic resources, or institutional positions. Importantly, classical elite theorists' division of elites into two levels – governing and non-governing elite (Pareto, 1935); ruling class and those who discharge the function of supreme control (Mosca, 1939); and inner and outer core (Mills, 1956) – takes into account the 'difference both in the degree and type of influence which the various members of the elite may possess' (Parry, 1969: 33).

3.2.3 Critiques of Classical Elite Theories

Classical elite theorists' belief in a powerful minority group (elites) has not gone unchallenged. Pluralist arguments, especially those espoused by Dahl (1961), note that as societies become more differentiated according to the division of labour, men become specialists in their field, leading to power becoming diffuse. In response, interest groups with differing values form, according to their specialist area, to exert pressure on government (Parry, 1969). Dahl (1961) argues that there has been a move from oligarchy to pluralism, and that no one power group can control a society (see also Olsen and Marger, 1993). Although Dahl argues that power is dispersed in society, he acknowledges that there is inequality in the distribution between interest groups of the resources necessary for influencing policy (1961:4). Pluralist ideas about political or policy influence in society suggest that this influence is dispersed among different social, economic and political elites who are driven by diverse interests, rather than accruing to a single elite (Parry, 1969). This dispersion is considered so essential to democracy that to think of 'power elites' is a contradiction, and an acceptance of inequality (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). However, what pluralist arguments add to classical elite theory is that there are many elite categories whose influence on political decisions is dependent on their access to resources.

On the other hand, Dahl (1958) argues that the classical elite theorists have failed to delineate the scope of the influence elites wield; in particular, with regard to the policy areas or activities they are able to influence. As Parry (1969) notes, an elite may influence transport policy but not agricultural policy; thus influence may be limited to a single issue or may span an array of issues. Classical elite theorists have tended to present elites as a cohesive group of people who can exercise power in all matters (p.121). As a result, there has not been agreement on the composition of elites (Dahl, 1958).

Critics (Dahl, 1958, 1961; Zuckerman, 1977; Scott, 2008; Giddens, 1974) thus argue that classical elite theorists have defined elites¹⁷ in too broad a manner, including all elite individuals regardless of occupation, which makes the study of elites an enormous undertaking (Moyser and Higley, 1987). In addition, the concept of an elite has been used indiscriminately to describe any powerful, advantaged, qualified, privileged or superior group, such as politicians, bishops, intellectuals, aristocrats, lawyers and successful criminals, which has rendered the term meaningless (Scott, 2008:27). These definitions become even more problematic when the issue of power is introduced, as this is a term that has remained elusive over the years (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987). As Giddens notes (1974):

No field of sociology has been more subject to vagaries of usage and to nebulous and shifting conceptualizations. Terms are legion: 'ruling class,' 'political class,' 'elite,' 'power elite,' and 'leadership group' vie with each other for supremacy in the literature. Sometimes they are applied as synonyms, some-times they are deliberately opposed to one another. In some cases terminological usage is merely careless; in other instances variations conceal ambiguities in conceptual formulation (p.2).

However, there have been other definitions of elites since the classical elite theorists put forward their own definitions (see Table 3.1). Burton and Higley (1987b) argue that these definitions show an inclination towards 'minimal definitions of elites that leave group consciousness, cohesion, conspiracy and other variables open for empirical investigation. They also show that the elite concept is now being

¹⁷ These definitions of elites have been outlined in Section 3.2.2. Some of these definitions are: 'the power elite is composed of men . . . in positions to make decisions having major consequences. (Mills, 1956:3-4); 'the ruling class is the less numerous group that performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings' (Mosca, 1939:50).

applied quite inclusively to a wide variety of “established” and “dissident” groups’ (p.222). Furthermore, these definitions seem to be inclined towards the understanding of elite status as based on institutional position, which is narrower than the idea of elites as any group able to organise espoused by Mosca and Michels (Higley and Burton, 1989; Parry, 1969).

Table 3.1 Some Definitions of Elites

| Authors | Definition | Elites Specified |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Dye (1983: 7) | Individuals who occupy positions of authority in large institutions | Business, media, legal, educational, governmental, civil, and cultural, military |
| Giddens (1974:40) | Individuals who occupy formally defined positions of authority at the head of a social organization or institution | Political, economic, judicial, media, civil service, military, trade union, church, media, educational |
| Field and Higley (1985:6) | Persons who are able, by virtue of their positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes individually, regularly and seriously | Governmental, political party, military, business, trade union, media, religious, educational, dissident or radical elites |
| Marger (1981:29) | Those who occupy a society’s top positions of power and wealth...[and] who exercise authority, influence, and control of resources within the society’s important organizations | Governmental, corporate, educational and others |
| Moore (1979:674) | Persons who by virtue of their institutional positions have a high potential ability to influence national policy making | Political, civil service, business, trade union, media, voluntary organization |
| Ornstein and Stevenson (1981:752) | Individuals occupying the highest official positions in various institutions in society | Business, legal, civil service, trade union, farming |
| Putman (1976:14) | People at or near the top of the pyramid of power | Political, civil service, economic, mass organization leaders, military, professionals, intellectual, religious |
| Suleiman (1978:4) | All those who occupy positions of authority are part of the elite | Administrative, political, industrial, financial |
| Zartman (1982:1) | Core elite: those few individuals who occupy the top political positions...plus any other individual’s with an equivalent role in decision making General elite: those, in whatever institutional position, who are regularly in contact with the core elite and therefore in a position to provide policy input on a regular basis | Political, military, economic, social, religious, professionals, journalists, large landowners |

*Source: Burton and Higley (1987: 223) *Invitation to elite theory: The basic contentions considered*, Sage Ltd

According to Scott (2008), a focus on power can be useful in narrowing down and refining the concept of an elite to encompass a very small group of people who have a degree of power. To this end Scott identifies four types of elites: ‘coercive elites’ are those able to coerce others into conformity or to act against their wishes, desires and interests, through their access to the means of violence; ‘inducing elites’ are those able to induce others to conform by influencing their rational, self-interested

calculations of personal or group advantage through their control over financial and industrial resources; 'commanding elites' are those who legitimately occupy the top administrative positions in institutional hierarchies of management and control, such as bureaucracies; and 'expert elites' are those whose specialized bodies of technical knowledge are organized into 'professional' structures and practices, such as lawyers, doctors, and investment advisers. These four groups overlap with each other in the implementation of particular policies, so that, for example, commanding elites may also have coercive powers. Therefore, Scott argues that a meaningful and useful definition of elites includes those holding and exercising power and occupying the most powerful positions in structures of domination, which makes elites distinguishable from social classes and status groups (Scott, 2008: 33).

The above definition is similar to that of authors such as Higley and Gunther (1995) and Reis and Moore (2005), who define elites in institutional terms as those in strategic positions in powerful organisations. These powerful organisations are identified as political, governmental, economic, military, professional, communications and cultural organisations, and social movements (informal or organized groups of individuals focused on specific social, economic or political issues), in society. These strategic positions enable elites to have an important effect on policies and an ability to influence or shape political and economic decisions (Higley & Gunther, 1995; Hossain and Moore, 1999). Although elites represent a very small percentage of the population, usually three to four per cent, they exercise a great deal of influence on the political and governmental agenda, as well as control over the material, symbolic and political resources within a country. Thus, elites can help define which issues are to be taken up and which are to be ignored as political and policy options, as well as how these are tackled (Hossain & Moore, 2001). It has been argued that elites in developing countries are more powerful than those in developed countries, because they have control over the national income and the influence that goes with it (Mbeki, 2005; Hossain and Moore, 2001). Leftwich (2010) defines elites as consisting of a small group of leaders – rarely more than three per cent in any unit of analysis –

occupying formal or informal positions of authority and power in public and private organizations or sectors and who take or influence key economic, political, social and administrative decisions (p.104). These definitions move us beyond the conceptualisation of elites as a ruling or political class (Mosca, 1939) or power elite (Mills, 1956) or governing elite (Pareto, 1935), to include those elites (e.g. business, the professions, trade unions) in formal or informal policy networks or communities involved in shaping policy in their sectors (Leftwich, 2010). This thesis adopts Hossain and Moore's (2001) definition of elites, which enables a clear identification of elites pertinent to this study based on their position and their influence on pro-poor policy in Malawi. Thus we begin to identify elites along the lines prescribed by Hossain and Moore (2001), taking in people such as ministers, legislators, owners and controllers of mass media and businesses, senior civil and military officials, newspaper editors, prominent professionals, socialites and leaders of trades unions, religious establishments, movements, universities and non-governmental organisations (see also Brezis and Temin, 2008).

3.3 Elite Structure, Variations, and Behaviour

Burton and Higley (1987b) build on classical elite arguments to develop a schema of elite variations and outcomes. They identify two dimensions along which elites can be classified: first, in relation to the relative integration or fragmentation of intra-elite relations; and second, in relation to the relative consensus or dissensus in elite beliefs and attitudes (Burton and Higley, 1987a: 229). Thus, integration involves relative inclusiveness of formal and informal networks of communication and influence among elite persons, groups and factions; whereas value consensus involves relative agreement among elites on formal and informal rules and codes of political conduct and on the legitimacy of existing institutions (Higley and Gunther, 1995).

Thus there emerge three basic structures of elites, which are: the consensually unified, the disunified, and the ideologically unified elites. In this case 'structure' is the fusion of attitudes, values and interpersonal relations amongst different elites (Burton and Higley, 1987b; Field and Higley, 1980). Where consensually unified elites exist, there is structural integration and value consensus, especially regarding the rules of the political game. This type of elite is relatively inclusive, with communication and influence networks encompassing all or most elite factions, and with no single faction dominating these networks. In addition to this, elites are able to participate in, and have access to, decision-making, and are able to have access to each other (Higley and Gunther, 1995). Therefore, 'This combination of tacit consensus on rules of the game and comprehensive integration disposes elite members to view decisional outcomes as a positive-sum or politics-as-bargaining game rather than a zero-sum or politics-as-war game' (Sartori, 1987:229). Agreements on the rules of the game and equal access to decision-making ensure unity amongst diverse and heterogeneous elite, which is essential for collective action.

Disunified elites exist where there is minimal structural integration and value consensus. There is no agreement on the rules of the political game, and communication and influence networks are, typically, under the control of one faction of the elite. Because there are high levels of mistrust of one another, elites engage in unrestricted, often violent, struggles for dominance. There is a fear of losing their influence and power in society if another faction takes over power; hence there is a tendency to protect themselves and their own interests (Higley and Gunther, 1995).

Finally, ideologically unified elites exist where structural integration and value consensus seem to be monolithic and highly centralized. Elites express only one ideology, which accords with a dominant faction, party or movement belief. Hence, communication and influence networks encompass all elite factions (Higley and Gunther, 1995; Higley and Burton, 1989). According to the literature on

developmental states, unified elites, nationalistic sentiments, shared norms and a commitment to development have been instrumental in bringing about poverty reduction. Development has been viewed in these developmental states as a national project and political power-holders have been motivated to support the collective achievement of this goal (Jervis, 2002:15).

What the above discussion suggests is that elite settlements or coalitions determine political outcomes in terms of the policies that are adopted. It leads us to the question of how the exercise of power structures the way state resources are distributed, and to the circumstances that bring about collective action amongst elites. Burton and Higley (1987b) observe that elite settlements are created following struggles between major elite factions, or when elites face a major crisis such as that resulting from policy failure (Burton and Higley, 1987b: 298). This latter situation, also discussed in Section 3.2.2, points to an interdependent relationship between elites and non-elites. Classical elite theorists, particularly Pareto (1935), note that the issue of interdependence between elites and non-elites can be linked to the occurrence or non-occurrence of revolutions and other important events, especially when non-elites' grievances and interests are not met by elites. Despite this, research has tended to concentrate on the power elites have over non-elites, while mostly ignoring the patterns and consequences of their interdependence (Burton and Higley, 1987b: 231-232).

The identification of the interdependence between elites and non-elites, and the recognition that there is a link between elite structures (unified or disunified) and associated political or social outcomes, leads to a re-evaluation of what drives elites to support or not support development policies, particularly pro-poor policy, and how elite interests can be aligned to a country's development goals. Arguments have been put forward by various authors on what drives elites to take action to ensure developmental outcomes. Some (Varshney, 2005; Moore and Putzel, 2001) argue that democracy imposes control on the behaviour of elites because the poor's ability to elect a country's leaders gives them power to push

elites to implement pro-poor policies, thus combining with the pressure that ruling elites will receive from opposition parties and civil society. However, these same authors and others (Hofferbert, 1970; Moore et al, 1999) argue that there is no correlation between democracy and the level of state and local expenditure on welfare related policies. Hofferbert (1970) examines several studies on American policy-making and the way these change from putting an emphasis on political systems to recognizing that public policies are a result of deliberate action by policy-making elites. Moore et al (1999) investigate sixty-one countries to determine the extent to which their national political systems have converted a given volume of material resources into human development (e.g. education, literacy, life expectancy). Varshney (2005) examines the records of both democratic and authoritarian regimes in reducing poverty; and Moore and Putzel (2001) also examine countries' poverty reduction performance in relation to the degree of democracy they demonstrate. All conclude that there is no connection between development or pro-poorness and democracy (see also Chapter 2). Thus, pressure from the poor, opposition parties and civil society through democratic processes, is not enough to produce policies that will serve the needs of the poor.

Another argument (Gelbach and Pritchett, 1997; Dunleavy, 1991; Moore, 1999) about elite behaviour centres on a view of elites as individuals primarily motivated by instrumental pursuit of material gain to the detriment of welfare. As a result of this view, it has been the elite's attraction to power, and the rewards and influence they derive from their position, that have dominated frameworks for analysing elite action or inaction. Elite interests have been perceived as ensuring that the context from which the elite derives its power remains unchanged, so that the elite will not support an equal distribution of goods or resources in society. The perceived solution has been to remove the rewards and material advantages from which elites derive their power, in order to make elites more responsive to society or to reduce their influence on policy (Higley et al, 1976).

However, Putman (1976) notes that elite behaviour is motivated by a diverse range of interests, such as status, socially defined success, sense of civic duty, and adherence to an ideology; or that elites may be interested in finding solutions to policy problems. One explanation pertinent to this study has been provided by de Swaan (1988), who argues that elites are moved to action when their welfare is affected by the presence of poverty and the poor, who present a challenge to elites in terms of crime, disease and potential social unrest. It can be argued that elite behaviour may be influenced by some independent facets of their perceptions, and we need, therefore, to account for the impact on development policy of 'ideology, leadership, inertia, actions and attitudes broadly included under the label of "elite behaviour"' (Hofferbert, 1970:325). This possibility is based on Lasswell's (1948) view that an elite's behaviour is derived from its unconscious emotional needs, not its conscious political values. In order to understand elite behaviour, inquiry should be directed towards the elite's private psychology rather than towards the logic of the situation.

Therefore, there is a need to understand the fundamental orientations that underlie elite perceptions and actions. Putman (1976) identifies four orientations that underlie elite perceptions or attitudes: cognitive, normative, interpersonal and stylistic. Cognitive orientations refer to the predispositions that lead elites to see and interpret reality in a particular way. For instance, assumptions have been made by policy-makers in developing countries that politics is a zero-sum game, so conflict in the distribution of the 'national pie' is inevitable, and social or economic policy must favour some groups in society over others. However, others believe that there are common interests in society which can be drawn on in making policy, thus making the pie bigger and ensuring that there are no losers. It is the task of policy-makers to develop and implement policy in a way that satisfies everyone in society. These assumptions are what guide the everyday perceptions and behaviour of elites (Putman, 1976: 80 – 81).

Normative orientations are views about how society ought to work, and they refer to fundamental values that elites hold about individual self-reliance, social justice, national independence and material progression. It is these values that guide elites' policy preferences. For instance, elites' attitudes to political and socio-economic equality determine the extent to which they support both pro-poor policy and a liberal democracy in which citizens can fully participate in the development process.

Interpersonal orientations refer to elite attitudes towards other players in the political game, for example, suspicion or cynicism. In this view, politics is considered to be a moral game between good and evil, where trust and tolerance are extended only to one's colleagues or there is a risk of betraying one's side. However, if trust and tolerance exist across party boundaries, then elites view each other as legitimate contestants in a mutually beneficial game. Therefore, cooperation and reciprocal concession allow public problems to be confronted and social conflicts to be accommodated (Putman, 1976:86).

Lastly, stylistic orientations are the structural characteristics of elite belief systems and style of policy analysis. These structural characteristics include elites having more information about politics and society, as well as ways of interpreting, storing and using this information. Their perceptions are intensely held and stable over time, and their belief system is coherent, to the extent that their views on one issue are likely to predict their views on many other issues. Elite perceptions and beliefs are usually structured by partisan ideological commitments which are put out by the elite to their supporters in their programmes and statements (Putman, 1976).

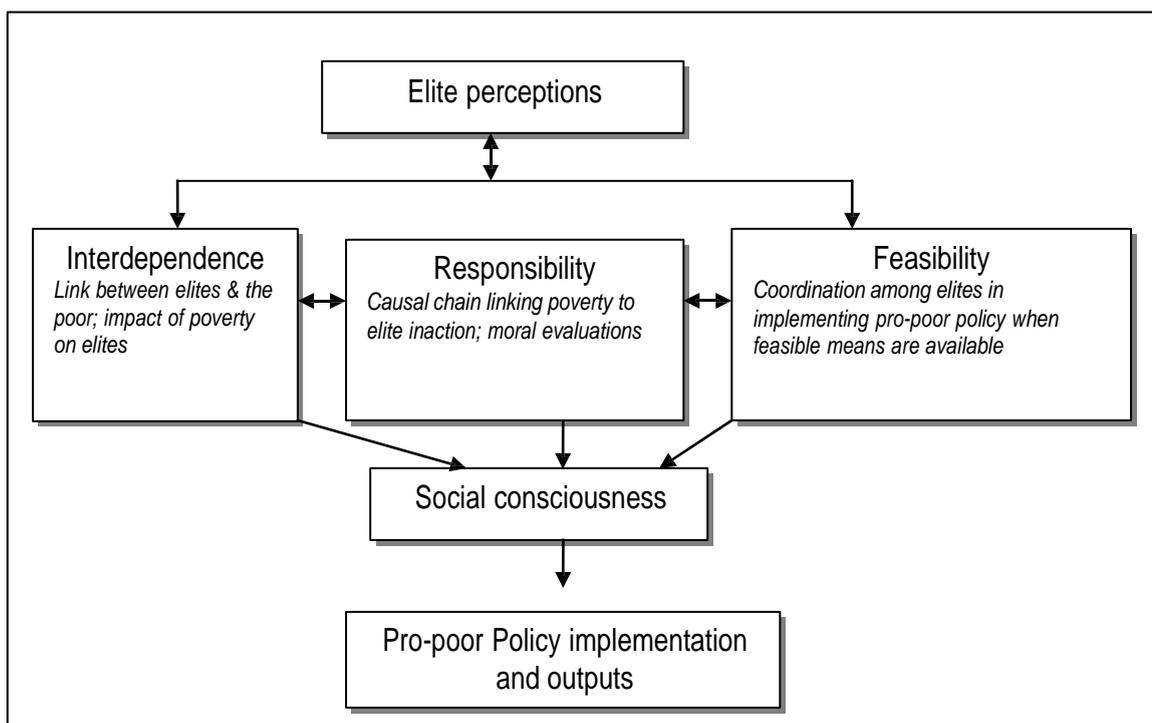
An important theme that emerges from Putman's (1976) four orientations is that elite perceptions make possible an explanation of the variance between stated objectives and policy outcomes. For instance, choices made between investing more in the education of the rural poor or in improved urban transportation (Wharton, 1990) can be explained by elite perceptions of these issues. This makes

possible an understanding of why some public policy initiatives are preferred over others. Perceptions are an important input in decision-making processes, and all decision-makers may be said to possess a set of views and to be governed by them in their response to policy problems (Brecher, 1968). Consequently, the perceptions that elites have of poor people and poverty play a powerful role in shaping public policy as well as its outcome (Heróles, 2004).

3.4 De Swaan’s Theory of ‘Social Consciousness’: the Framework of Analysis

According to de Swaan (1988; 2005), an interpretation of the extent to which an elite’s ‘social consciousness’ (i.e. a set of perceptions) is developed can determine the extent to which the elite is likely to support pro-poor policy. Therefore, the analytical framework developed for this study is based on the concept of ‘social consciousness’ (see Figure 3.1) as utilised as well in Reis and Moore’s (2005) study on elite perceptions of poverty and inequality.

Figure 3.1 Analytical Framework



The framework is based on an analysis of the link between macro-historical processes (such as state formation, the development of capitalism, and urbanization) and micro-based approaches to policy decisions, with an emphasis on the processes that have driven elites to engage collectively in countering poverty and deprivation. Thus 'social consciousness' refers to a set of perceptions which de Swaan (1988; 2000) uses to analyze the ways in which poverty affects elites and to interpret their efforts to control it in the evolution of welfare systems in Europe and the USA.

In his book *In Care of the State*, de Swaan argues that it is elite initiatives and elite consent that are pivotal in bringing about collective and public arrangements for remedying ignorance, disease, deprivation and poverty. He emphasises that a pre-condition for state action is the development of a 'social consciousness' among elites, and this develops following recognition by elites that the negative externalities of poverty have an impact on their welfare. These external effects refer to the indirect consequences that one person's deficiency or adversity has for others not immediately afflicted themselves. De Swaan terms this the 'mutual dependency' of human beings, which helps to explain standards of behaviour and modes of experience in terms of major, long-term social transformations (1988:2). The concept of mutual dependency leads de Swaan to outline three conditions under which the elite consider it in their interest to reduce poverty.

Firstly, elites are aware of the interdependence among social groups in society and, most relevantly, of the external effects of poverty on people such as themselves, which they may perceive either as threatening or as promising opportunities. Therefore, elites perceive the poor to be a threat to social order through riots, revolts or social uprisings, or to public health by spreading contagious diseases, or a threat to private property through criminal activities. Secondly, elites realize that as members of the elite they bear some responsibility for the condition of the poor; thus, they develop a sense of social responsibility that leads them to come up with solutions to poverty. Finally, elites believe that feasible

and efficacious means of improving the lot of the poor exist or may be created. Reis (2010), also observes that if the means are not identified, or elites feel powerless to act, they will not respond to the negative externalities of poverty (p3).

De Swaan (2005) points out that the three elements of 'social consciousness' refer to three different types of thinking by elites. The first entails a factual assessment of the condition of the society in which the elites live; the second entails both factual assessments (the identification of a causal chain linking their (in) action to the living conditions of the poor) and moral evaluations; and the last requires the elites to accept the power of collective or public agency to change the prevailing situation. Hence, it is argued that, 'to the degree that elites possess a social consciousness, in all three respects, and if that awareness resonates with personal and societal moral concerns, it should facilitate voluntary and public action to tackle poverty' (de Swaan, 2000:45). Thus mutual interdependence between the rich and poor, the strong and the powerless is central to the collectivizing process.

In order to illustrate the nature of mutual interdependence, de Swaan (1988) uses the example of the mass outbreaks of cholera in nineteenth century Europe and the recognition by elites that this was a result of the living conditions of the urban poor. At the time, the non-poor moved to healthier areas, which led to the creation of slums. It was soon recognised that in order to prevent the spread of diseases beyond the slums, collective action was required. Elites used taxpayers' money to provide fresh water and sewerage connections to slums, in order to protect themselves from disease. De Swaan shows that when people settle in communal territory, when they develop shared resources and build up shared stocks (for example, in granaries), they develop mutual dependencies. Thus 'the main impetus for collective action came from the struggles between elites, which sought to ward off the threats arising from the presence of the poor among them' (de Swaan, 1988: 218). As Reis (2010) argues, the detailed historical analysis carried out by De Swaan shows that the elites' activities followed from their belief that

they were responsible for the plight of the poor, that the means to reduce poverty were present, and that poverty had an impact on their own welfare. De Swaan's framework explains the implementation of pro-poor policies as motivated largely by self-interest. This conceptualisation of the emergence of pro-poor policy is a departure from the view put forward by Hochman and Rodgers (1969) that altruism, compassion and mutual benefit can explain pro-poor policies. However, this self-interest is not conceived simply in narrow economic terms, but is combined with elite perceptions of moral obligation towards poverty alleviation and the resultant benefits they themselves will reap. Therefore policy, particularly pro-poor policy, is not always a result of the actual conditions of the poor, or an expression of pure humanitarian impulse (Toye, 1999:525): appeals to elite moral responsibility for the poor are very powerful when consistent with self-interest; moral responsibility and self-interest are not contradictory principles (Moore, 1999; Hossain and Moore, 2002; Reis, 2010).

This thesis uses de Swaan's (1988) theory of social consciousness to ascertain whether similar perceptions to those identified in his study of European and American elites are present in Malawi. In the thesis, the analytical framework (see Figure 3.1) derived from de Swaan's work, will be applied as follows: firstly the framework will apply the *interdependence* variable to an analysis of factual assessments made by elites concerning the link between themselves and the poor. This analysis will assist in identifying how elites in Malawi understand poverty and the poor within their society, their understanding of the nature and extent of poverty, and the causes of poverty, and the anti-poverty solutions they offer. It will help us appreciate the extent to which Malawian elites feel threatened by poverty and the extent to which they feel the poor represent opportunities for them. The factors that will determine this external impact of poverty are the threat of disease, crime and social unrest that elites face from the poor. The discussion of the external impact of poverty helps us to appreciate alternative types of threat to Malawian elites that emanate from the presence of poverty – types of threat that might be different from those experienced in the West. Secondly, the variable of *responsibility* is applied to

understand the extent to which elites identify causal chains between their action or inaction and the level of poverty. This variable emphasises a moral evaluation by elites of their own behaviour. It aims to link the factual assessments made by elites about poverty in Malawi to the elites' willingness to consider improvement in the living conditions of the poor that leads to the implementation of reforms that are pro-poor in nature.

Finally, the variable of *feasibility* is applied to the factual assessments to explore the extent to which Malawian elites perceive that something can and should be done about poverty. It probes the views of elites on the existence of available policies or instruments to alleviate poverty in Malawi, and their own preferred anti-poverty solutions. This leads to a discussion of the ways in which elites' policy choices are influenced by their perception of the causes of poverty in Malawi.

There are problems that might be raised here concerning the applicability of a theory developed in a different historical and global context. According to de Swaan (2005), the history of the welfare state in western countries is closely connected to the emergence of the nation-state. For instance, the industrial revolution (from 1700s) that occurred in the west produced political and welfare consequences that were national. These consequences tended to produce pro-poor attitudes, policies, outcomes and national identity (Hossain and Moore, 2002). However, in most non-western countries, national identity is eclipsed by neopatrimonialism that emphasises loyalties based on ethnicity, class or region, thus failing to produce a sense of interdependence among different groups in society. Then again, the development of western nation-states into welfare states was something state elites strove for, and was under their control which increased their sense of ownership and accountability. By contrast, elites in developing countries have inherited their states from colonial masters; their industrialisation has occurred in the shadow of established industrial nations, leaving them heavily reliant on developed countries for trade, access to technology and machinery; and they are dependent on donor aid, which

limits their control over the development of their states. Hence they have less ownership and accountability (De Swaan, 2005:188-189). For instance, Malawi is heavily dependent on international aid, with 80 per cent of her development aid coming from donors (AFRODAD, 2007b; Sahley et al, 2005), which means that the external influence on policy choices in Malawi is quite significant. In addition to this, donors are part of the technocracy that manages the processes necessary for the implementation of various policies in Malawi (Sahley et al, 2005; Rubin, 2008).

It is evident that there are major differences in the political, economic and cultural conditions of western and non-western countries. In relation to this, some authors (Skinner 1969; Bellamy, 1987) argue that the ideas, questions and philosophies of the past cannot transcend the historical and social context in which they were developed. It is therefore plausible that de Swaan's (1988) framework of 'social consciousness' might be seen to have relevance only to a distinct European socio-economic or political tradition. Morton (2003) argues, however, that limiting ideas, questions and philosophies in this way 'smothers a concrete sense of how these thoughts and actions may help us understand alternative historical and present-day conditions' (p.128). As Femia explains, 'All theory is certainly linked to the social relations of a particular epoch, [however] some problems are perennial because underlying thoughts about a range of concrete particulars do recur as explicit focuses of concern' (Femia, 1981:122-123). Accordingly, the experiences of the West of reducing poverty in times past may contribute to the clarification of present day challenges and suggest the formulation of alternative hypotheses. For instance, 'Assuming that the more privileged sectors of society always confront the need for solutions to negative externalities of poverty, it follows that the preferred solutions derive from the perceptions the elites have of their own position in the market; the state regulatory capacity; and the strategies and tactics of the underprivileged' (Reis, 2010:3). Thus the application of the theory of 'social consciousness' to non-western countries does not imply that these countries should follow the same path as that followed by western countries, and it would be 'a great loss for social science if the

extensive knowledge that has been assembled about Europe and the USA were not brought to bear upon the study of Southern and Eastern societies' (de Swaan, 2005:188). Then again, examples (see Section 3.4.2) of different contexts (post-communist countries, South Africa, Bangladesh) where elite perceptions have been studied demonstrate the utility of de Swaan's framework to different contexts. Hence, a true test of any framework is whether it can be applied outside of its original context.

3.4.1 Clarifying the Concept of Perception

Perceptions refer to three things: cognition (non-evaluative understanding); norms (internalized ideas about appropriate roles); and values (ideals about what might be) (Reis and Moore, 2005). Norms are a shared expectation of behaviour that connotes what is considered desirable and appropriate (Marshall, 1994), and a society's norms determine poor people's interaction with various groups in that society. So, poor people's interactions with elites in their society are not governed primarily by the laws of the land, but by the norms that dictate who has what value in each interaction. For instance, domestic abuse in India persists, despite changes in the law, because social norms support these practices (Narayan et al, 2000:278).

Although laws create the space for change, social practice does not change without the support of changes in social norms; and changing social norms requires a change in mindsets. Otherwise, the persistence of an 'untouchable' class in India, of female genital mutilation in Africa, and of the theft of state resources with impunity in many countries all suggest that technocratic fixes will continue to be defeated by social norms. If elites commonly believe poor people to be lazy, stupid, undeserving and pampered, pro-poor policies are unlikely to be formulated and implemented in ways that serve poor people (Narayan et al, 2000:279).

The role of ideas has become central to political analysis, especially the question of how these ideas influence political outcomes. Berman's (2001) concern with ideas leads him to suggest how they can be used as weapons, embraced and deployed by political actors to justify and further self-interested agendas. Ideas can influence political behaviour by shaping motivation, interests and preferences. Hence, perceptions are important inputs in decision-making processes, and decision-makers act in accordance with their perception of reality, not in response to reality itself. In any event, all decision-makers may be said to possess a set of images and to be governed by them in their response to policy problems (Brecher 1968). Consequently, the perceptions that elites have of poor people and poverty play a powerful role in shaping public policy as well as its outcome (Herules, 2004).

As noted by Hickey and Bracking (2005), the range of possible political responses to poverty and to different categories of poor people is closely shaped by the ways in which political discourse frames issues of poverty and responsibility for poverty reduction. It is about how people talk about and visualize poverty, hence the discourses of poverty as articulated through language and images' (Lister, 2004:4). Jervis (2002) argues that perceptions matter for policy-making. First, in order to understand human behaviour, we have to understand how people think, interpret their environments and reach decisions. In addition, we need to look inside the black box of the state and study the goals, beliefs and perceptions of the decision-makers. Second, a study of decision-makers reveals both common patterns and idiosyncrasies, as there are common strands in the way that most leaders think and perceive. Lastly, behaviour is related to the self-images and identities which are so important to people: for instance, people define themselves as different from, and usually better than, others; and they see their own behaviour as rational and consistent (Jervis, 2002:2). In this thesis, I have attempted to separate short-term opinions that are usually driven by current events from stable, long-term perceptions. Thus I have examined elite perceptions of poverty and the poor for relatively stable values and beliefs (Reis and Moore, 2005).

3.4.2 Historical Perspectives on Elite Perceptions of Poverty and the Poor

As noted in Section 3.4, the utility of a theory rests on its generalisability and universal applicability. To ascertain utility, it is necessary to review the theory, its insights and limitations (Ncube, 2010), which is what this chapter sets out to achieve. It is also important to analyse the past in order to understand the present, paying attention to historical conditions whilst adopting and adapting de Swaan's insights and concepts (Morton, 2003). Therefore, this section seeks to understand the historical context of elite perceptions of poverty in nineteenth century Europe and the USA.

How elites perceived poverty and the poor powerfully influenced policies and practices for tackling poverty and for neglecting or repressing the poor in nineteenth century Europe and the USA. Welfare policies were implemented in such a way that they distributed advantages and disadvantages, benefits and sanctions; thus they could be disciplinary, punitive and coercive in character (Squire, 1990), as well as positive. The literature on elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in developed countries shows that classification of the poor, which involved judgements of their worthiness, meant that resources went towards assisting the deserving¹⁸ poor whilst the undeserving poor were relegated to the poor house or subjected to onerous conditions for relief (Sher, 1983:2; see also Hossain, 2005). The perceptions of poverty and the poor held by elites resulted in a phenomenon called 'othering': a dualistic process of differentiation and demarcation whereby a line was drawn between 'us' and 'them'; between the 'more' and the 'less'; and, most commonly, between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. This line was constructed out of negative value judgements that presented the poor, variously, as a source of moral contamination, a threat, an undeserving economic burden, and objects of pity (Lister, 2004:101). Therefore, elites in nineteenth century England and the USA developed ideologies that justified the presence of the poor and held the poor responsible for their unfavourable situation.

¹⁸ The deserving poor are those who are poor through no fault of their own; and the undeserving poor are those whose poverty is due to character defects such as laziness, drunkenness and immorality (Berthoud et al, 1981; Lister, 2004; Hossain, 2005)

These perceptions of poverty and the poor are reflected in dominant conceptualizations of poverty and pro-poor policy. For instance, unfavourable images of the poor in the USA reinforced a belief in self-help and the American dream that saw poverty as the result of personal failure (Lister 2004). Elites believed that income, wealth and social position depended wholly on hard work, ability, honesty and responsibility. Similarly, in early nineteenth century Britain, a distinction was made between the dependent and the independent poor; paupers and the labouring poor; the deserving and the undeserving poor. This distinction had obvious 'moral implications as well as social and political ones' (Himmelfarb, 1991:122), which served to protect the respectable from the morally undesirable and to facilitate a vast machinery of disciplinary social intervention aimed at remoralization (Squires 1990).

The images held by elites in the nineteenth century USA and UK characterised the causes of poverty as individual or group deficiencies. There was a belief that the exercise of the virtues of diligence, prudence, sobriety, thrift and initiative was the pathway to affluence. Therefore, poverty was caused by idleness, improvidence, intemperance, and defects of character which the individual could overcome if she or he chose. Although the 'hazards of life such as unemployment, sickness, old age, and death of the breadwinner were acknowledged, it was the mark of a provident man that he set aside savings to cover these risks' (Berthoud et al, 1981:7). However, it was also recognized that among those in poverty were people believed to be decent, hard working, clean living and provident, who in spite of personal effort were defeated by successive and prolonged crises beyond their control. This led to the categorisation of poor people as either 'deserving poor' or 'undeserving poor'. Similarly, Kreidl's (2000) study of elite perceptions of poverty and wealth in western and post-communist countries concludes that the elite's lack of concern with inequality might be a result of distinctions made in characterising the poor: 'merited poverty', brought on by an individual's own actions; 'unmerited poverty', external to the individual; and 'fatalistic poverty', which elites ascribe to the characteristics or mindset of the individual.

In addition, Lister (2004) outlines three ways in which distinctions were made in categorising the poor: first, the distinction between pauperism and poverty, whose dividing line was thin and permeable as individuals slipped between the two but also led to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Hence welfare policy (i.e. better parenting, education) attempted to prevent the poor from lapsing into pauperism and to break the cycle of poverty. Second, the distinction between the undeserving able-bodied and the deserving, impotent/incapable paupers resulted in relief that was restricted to absolute necessities and was provided in a form that deterred the recipients from remaining dependent on it, as well as deterring others from conduct that would result in destitution (e.g. the 'less-eligibility' law of the workhouse¹⁹). The third differentiation was aimed at identifying and containing the dangerous and criminal classes who provoked fears of criminality, vice, sexual immorality and other threats to the social order (Lister, 2004:104-106; see also Himmelfarb, 1984). Therefore, the poor were to be kept at a distance, contained or socially and economically 'engineered', as they were feared as a source of both physical and moral filth and contamination (Berthoud et al, 1981).

Thus, welfare policies in the USA and UK were implemented either to prevent the deserving poor from becoming destitute, or to deter the undeserving from staying on welfare, or to protect the elites from crime and disease (Hossain and Moore, 2000). These classifications of the poor are politically significant, as they lead to a pre-policy-making arrangement that enables elites to prioritise policies towards the deserving poor and provides them with justification for ignoring the chronically poor (Hossain, 2005). For instance, in Botswana the official policy and inherent strategy is to support those who make the biggest contribution to the growth of the economy, enabling the leadership to ignore the already impoverished and vulnerable poor who have nothing to contribute (Good, 1999:199). Similarly, a study on elites and poverty in Bangladesh found that despite a public discourse treating the poor as

¹⁹ The less-eligibility principle enforced in the workhouse meant that relief given to the able-bodied poor was more meagre and the work more onerous than would have been achieved by paid labour. Relief was to be provided within the confines of the workhouses in conditions – food, shelter, work, discipline – that enforced the status of 'able-bodied poor'. The harshness of workhouse conditions ensured that only real destitution would induce an individual to enter it and the habits of industry would be preferred (Himmelfarb, 1984; Lister, 2004; Squires, 1990).

homogenous and equally deserving of government support, social policy targeted the economically active rather than those who lacked such potential (Hossain, 2005).

Notions of the 'poor' might also include the slightly or temporarily poor, who attracted more sympathy from policy makers; for instance, members of the upper caste during the 1943 Bengal famine (Greenough, 1983) or Victorian Londoners threatened with descent into the ranks of the unrespectable (Himmelfarb, 1991; Hossain, 2005). In seventeenth century Italy, intra-elite conflicts over power and gender issues relating to patterns of inheritance affecting aristocratic women stimulated action towards poverty generally and towards poor widows in particular (Cavallo, 1991). In twenty-first century Bangladesh, similar examples exist, as Hossain (1999b) indicates: compared to attitudes towards the chronically poor, the sudden downward mobility of a household receives more sympathy. Similarly, in Ghana, which is lauded as a success in the fight against poverty, research has found there is a strong bias towards the economically active, leaving the poorest excluded from poverty programmes (Hickey, 2005; Hossain, 2005). These examples show that ideas or perceptions of poverty vary in different contexts; thus understanding these ideas leads to an understanding of elite motivations to enact anti-poverty initiatives and the character of these initiatives (Hossain, 1999).

Research carried out in the UK and USA has underlined the impact these perceptions or images of the poor have had on the development of punitive attitudes and policies towards recipients of welfare (Lister, 2004). These studies have underscored the important links that exist, not only between politics and pro-poor policy, but also among those with power within the policy-making process, their perceptions, and the outcome of such policies. They have also particularly underscored elites' 'ideas about how to mitigate or solve the problem of poverty, and ideas about what constitutes poverty and what makes it a problem requiring remedy or solution' (Himmelfarb, 1984:7). Hence Lister (2004) notes that explanations that focus on what people in poverty do or do not do are inadequate for dealing with

poverty, preferring explanations that focus on what powerful people do or do not do and the impact of their actions. 'While the actions of individuals in poverty can be a contributory factor, the underlying causes of poverty are to be found in the wider society. We need to pay more attention to the exercise of agency of poor people, but this cannot be divorced from their severely disadvantaged structural position or from the exercise of agency by more powerful actors, which helps to perpetuate that structural position' (Lister 2004:178).

3.4.3 The Role of Elites in Poverty Reduction

Drawing on arguments earlier presented, we can conclude that elites play a significant role in influencing policy processes, particularly those pertaining to poverty reduction. This is because of their control over resources as well as their positions in institutions that are important to national political influence and policy-making (Reis and Moore, 2005). But are elites likely to engage constructively in poverty reduction activities, or to reinforce poverty? Two competing arguments exist: first, is that elites can reinforce poverty by structuring policies, programmes and institutions in their own favour or by skimming the benefits that are intended for the poor. Second, elites may speak on behalf of poor people and implement policies that effectively reduce poverty (Bird et al, 2004). Hossain and Moore (2005) set out reasons that might entice elites into supporting pro-poor policies: first, relatively specific arguments linking policies, whether in education, health, sanitation or social insurance, to the advancement of a widely accepted (human resource based) conception of development, such as the argument that girl's education is the best means of fertility control. Second, is a more general assertion about the essential incompatibility of poverty and destitution with the achievement or condition of 'development', or some other urgent goal, such as 'national unity'. Third, is an appeal, explicit or implicit, to a sense of rivalry with other similar countries, especially neighbouring countries, and to a sense of national pride that might be invoked through the belief that one is doing better than one's

neighbours. Fourth, are persuasive narratives, totally lacking visible instrumental content, that have a moral, or a sense of altruism: for instance, doing what is right for the people. And last come persuasive narratives that demonstrate that feasible solutions exist to alleviate poverty (pp.206-207).

As argued by Hossain and Moore (1999), there is considerable potential for presenting the character, causes and solution to poverty in ways that mobilise elites to want to do something about poverty (Hossain & Moore, 1999). In no way does the study of elite perceptions of poverty devalue the experiences of the poor themselves about their condition. Perceptions offer an understanding of ways in which we can *'begin to prick the conscience of elites so that they put a premium on poverty'* (MP, 8/04/2008).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the conceptual and analytical framework of this thesis. The aim of the chapter has been to understand elites and their role in social policy in relation to their perceptions of poverty and the nature of the solutions they support. In order to understand the conditions that motivate elites to reduce poverty, de Swaan's theory of social consciousness is employed to reveal elite perceptions of the problem and the elite's support for particular pro-poor policies. The chapter has demonstrated that elite perceptions were crucial in the priority nineteenth century European elites accorded to poverty reduction and the policies they supported. These perceptions included elites' fear of crime, disease and social unrest that emanated from the presence of poverty and the poor. Perceptions therefore provide the fabric in which public initiatives can be sewn and become entangled, and they shape or constrain leaders' decisions by creating a space for addressing issues, and suggesting the nature of the approach needed to deal with them and a set of solutions to be considered (Selee, 2005). Thus, elite perceptions can be changed by presenting poverty in such a way that it becomes an issue that needs urgent action, that it is in elites' own interest that something is done, and

that there are effective instruments available, making action feasible. In studying elite perceptions, it is not possible to say that these perceptions are homogenous amongst various categories of elites. Elites' perceptions of poverty and the poor may differ and these differences can be crucial for understanding how to formulate effective policies.

The chapter has also discussed the concept of an elite, the different definitions of elites, relating this to the identification of elites, and elite influence on development outcomes. Insights from various classical elite theorists show that the term elite has been used variously to refer to a 'power elite', 'social elite', 'oligarchy', 'ruling class', and 'managerial elite'. These different conceptualisations of elites have had a bearing on the identification of who elites are, with some classical thinkers limiting this category to the bureaucracy, and others limiting it to the political arena or the ruling elite. The conceptualisation of elites for this thesis has drawn on these distinctions to identify a suitable definition of elites that will capture the array of elites involved in policy making. This understanding of elites accepts that not all elites are decision-makers, but that some instead influence decision-makers, form public opinion or have the resources to ensure the effective implementation of policy. Despite these differences, various authors discussed in this chapter agree that elites control material and symbolic resources in different countries, thus they have a decisive role to play in policy decisions. Therefore, the role of elites in developing countries like Malawi is crucial because after fifty years of development assistance, it is clear that policies are not created in a vacuum: they are formulated by elites with a particular mindset, in a particular culture, and with particular social norms.

The next chapter discusses the methodological framework adopted in this thesis in order to understand elite attitudes towards the poor and pro-poor policies in Malawi.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in this study to understand Malawian elites' perceptions of poverty and the poor: whether elites blame the poor for the persistence of poverty, or feel that it is their responsibility to reduce poverty; the solutions they offer for reducing poverty; and whether they believe there is mutual dependency between elites and the poor such that the presence of poverty and the poor among them has a negative impact on their own welfare. The chapter is organised as follows: Section 4.2 presents the philosophical perspectives and research design of the study and a justification for the approach adopted; Section 4.3 sets out the across-method triangulation approach employed to collect data; Section 4.4 sets out the logic and procedures that guided the analysis of data; Section 4.5 discusses some issues that emerged in the collection of data and other methodological limitations; Section 4.6 outlines the study's ethical considerations; and Section 4.7 concludes the chapter.

4.2 Philosophical Perspectives

C. Wright Mills argues, in his 1970 work, *The Sociological Imagination*, that the confusion prevailing in the social sciences is a result of the long-running controversy about the nature of science. This controversy is based on ontological, epistemological and methodological arguments – arguments that reflect the different ways of observing, studying and measuring the world (Neuman, 1994). Ontology is defined as 'claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality'; whereas epistemology consists of 'the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is

understood to be. In short, claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known' (Blaikie, 2000: 8). Methodological arguments concern 'the best means for gaining knowledge about the world' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:91); that is, the methods used to collect and produce information (Creswell, 2003).

The main approaches in social science research – positivist and interpretive – adopt different ontological, epistemological and methodological arguments to shape theory and design research techniques. They each hold a particular philosophical assumption, principles and ideas about conducting social research. They are also different in the way they approach issues of subjectivity versus objectivity and the role of values, context and contingency in social research (Neuman, 1994; Creswell, 2003; Greene, 2008). Consideration of these issues helps to clarify the study's approach.

Positivist social science believes in natural scientific research, and accepts as scientific evidence only facts established by systematic personal observation. Thus, a positivist researcher employs a deductive process to gather facts and produce generalizations about cause and effect relationships between variables through objective, observable, and quantifiable data. These cause and effect relationships, once identified, can be used to predict general patterns of human activity or outcomes. Methodologically, the aim is to detect regularities in nature, propose generalizations, deduce what these imply for the next case, and observe whether the prediction succeeds or not (Marsh and Stoker, 2002; Deacon et al, 1999; Neuman, 1994). Therefore, one positivist epistemological assumption is that questionnaires, experiments, surveys, and statistics should ensure objectivity, replicability and causality (Deacon et al, 1999; Neuman, 1994; Creswell, 2003; Greene, 2008; Marsh and Stoker, 2002).

An interpretive social science is rooted in the belief that internal reality is an important element that can be researched to better understand the way in which people make sense of their world. It emphasizes an understanding of how people feel inside, how they create meaning, and their personal reasons or

motivations for making decisions. This implies that evidence about social action cannot be isolated from the context in which it occurs, nor from the meanings that social actors assign to them. Therefore, people act on their beliefs and preferences, and their actions can be explained by these beliefs and preferences (Neuman, 1994; Bevir et al, 2003; Jennings, 1983). Methodologically, the aim is to inductively generate theory about social reality, which involves drawing 'generalizable inferences' out of observations or findings (Bryman, 2001). The interpretive epistemological assumption is that through methods such as interviews, document analysis and observation, we can understand people's beliefs, preferences and the meanings they attach to social phenomena. Therefore, an interpretive researcher cannot divorce themselves from their own socio-cultural realities and adopt a value-free position, nor can they operate in an apolitical environment. Researchers need to reflect on their own views and feelings and identify how these might impact on their study. In other words, an objective analysis of events or social phenomena is impossible (Deacon et al, 1999; Neuman, 1994; Marsh and Stoker, 2002).

Both positivist and interpretive researchers have been criticized, mostly by each other, for taking an inflexible approach to studying and understanding social reality. Although changes have occurred within positivist approaches, their core features, mainly a belief in the superiority of observable or external reality over internal reality, have been retained. A main drawback of positivism has been this inflexible concern with abstract laws, formulas and statistics that ignores the importance of contextual factors such as social and cultural forces that might also affect human activity. Thus positivists are said to fail to distinguish people and social institutions from the world of nature; assume a connection between their measurements and the concepts they are meant to reveal, as well as assuming that respondents to a questionnaire interpret the questions in the same way; and tend to believe that it is possible to 'control' variables in experimental research involving 'human subjects' to achieve unambiguous results (Denzin, 1970; Cicourel 1964; Blumer, 1956; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Conversely, critics of an interpretive approach to understanding social reality argue that it is 'soft' and 'unscientific'; that it offers only opinions or subjective judgments about the world, and has no basis on which to judge the validity of its claims. Thus interpretivists are said to be too subjective; their data and findings raise questions of representativeness, because of the use of brief or limited examples in relation to explanations; and the generalizability of information obtained from the normally small samples involved is questionable (Marsh and Stoker, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Grix, 2002).

Although these two philosophical approaches (positivism and interpretivism) have been conceptualized as incompatible and mutually exclusive, they can be combined to offer a comprehensive understanding of phenomena under study. The two approaches 'provide a way of considering structures and processes, establishing relationships and thereby providing a means of bridging macro-micro levels of social analysis' (Bryman 1988:8). For instance, qualitative findings can illustrate, explain and add depth to quantitative findings, and also highlight different dimensions of a research problem (Gilbert, 2001). Thus, a quantitative positivist approach could produce useful data in the study of human behavior, for example in assessing Malawian elites' attitudes towards poverty and the poor; but it would not capture individual variations in experience and meaning. On the other hand, an interpretive approach could produce useful data on Malawian elites' history, values, beliefs, meanings, and feelings towards poverty and the poor (Kopinak, 1999; Deacon et al, 1999; Neuman, 1994). This is what is called pragmatism or pluralism, a more recent approach to social science that can be traced to the work of Charles Peirce (1905), William James (1907; 1981), and John Dewey (1917; 1931). However, there is also evidence of a mixed-method approach in the works of sociologists such as Gans (1963), Hollingshead (1949), Jahoda, Lazarsfeld & Zeisel (1931/2003), and Lynd & Lynd (1929/1959), before the label 'mixed-method' came into use (Johnson et al, 2007; Cherryholmes, 1992).

The emphasis of pragmatism is on the problem being studied, and pragmatists (for example Cherryholmes, 1992; Greene et al, 1989; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008; Creswell, 2003) believe that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods ensures a deeper understanding of the problem, thus, knowledge claims can arise out of actions, situations and consequences. Therefore, a researcher who adopts a pluralist point of view is able to rely on multiple methods: the application to their research of different world views and different forms of analysis. The logic of inquiry includes induction (discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations in order to understand one's results) (Collins et al, 2007). Clearly, positivist and interpretive approaches offer different ways of understanding Malawian elites' perceptions of poverty and the poor, which makes it logical to combine or triangulate qualitative and quantitative methods and findings. This assists in gathering data that reveal the underlying formations that organize meaning-making and provide an understanding of how elites make sense of their world on a day-to-day basis. In addition, a weakness in one approach may be compensated for by a strength in the other (Kopinak, 1999; Deacon et al, 1999; Neuman, 1994).

4.2.1 Research Design

The decision to combine interpretive qualitative and positivist quantitative approaches to understanding elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in Malawi raised questions on the procedures to be employed for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data. Thus a decision had to be made regarding the timing (concurrent or sequential) of data collection; the weighting (equal or unequal) given to the different approaches; and the type of mixing (merging, embedding or connecting data) employed during data analysis. These decisions could lead to the adoption of an integrated triangulation, or embedded, explanatory or exploratory research designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The most likely of these was an integrated triangulation research design, where mixing would occur throughout all stages, from data collection to analytic processing and then to interpretation (Jang et al 2008). Such a process

involves the combination of two or more data sources, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives and analytical methods within the same study (Thurmond, 2001:253). The aim is to compare and contrast, or validate and expand, quantitative data/findings with qualitative data/findings, or vice versa, in order to counter biases and limitations within the research design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, et al, 1989).

Generally, this study was driven by a qualitative paradigm, because understanding elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in Malawi requires a face-to-face discussion with the actors involved or observing them in their settings. However, data from both qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated, in order to fully explore, describe and understand the phenomena under study. This was the first level at which triangulation occurred in this study, and between- or across-method, rather than within-method, triangulation was employed. The triangulation of data from interviews, observations and questionnaires with information from documents ensured that the subjective and objective aspects of elite perceptions of poverty and the poor were fully revealed (Kopinak, 1999).

Second, at the data sources level, a concurrent approach to the timing of research was employed. Thus, qualitative and quantitative data were collected during the same timeframe, independent of each other, but from the same unit of analysis. The same individuals were selected for both the qualitative and quantitative data collection processes, in order to ease convergence or comparison, although sample sizes were different (see Section 4.3) (Jick, 1979; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, et al, 1989).

Lastly, at the data analysis level, each dataset (qualitative – interviews, observations, documents; and quantitative – questionnaires) was analyzed within the parameters of its paradigm. Based on the literature and research questions, themes were picked from the qualitative datasets and followed

across the quantitative dataset to 'create a constellation of findings which can be used to generate a multi-faceted picture of the phenomena. This is an analysis led by a grounded, inductive approach but developed through a focused, iterative process of data interrogation which aims to interweave the findings that emerge from each dataset' (Moran-Ellis et al, 2006:54). This procedure preserved the value of open and exploratory qualitative inquiry, whilst incorporating the focus and specificity of the quantitative data (Moran-Ellis et al, 2006).

There are instances where collecting two different datasets might lead to conflict between them, but such inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative datasets can lead to the development of new theoretical perspectives on the phenomena under study. Rather than rejecting one dataset, it is prudent to accept the two conflicting datasets as revealing different aspects of the same phenomena, thus providing a holistic view of reality. However, these inconsistencies can be minimized if quantitative and qualitative datasets are different in terms of their strengths, limitations and biases, and ask or answer the same question (Freshwater 2007; Slomin-Nevo et al, 2009; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008; Greene et al, 1989).

The use of methodological triangulation in this study ensures convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomena, thus increasing the validity of, and confidence in, the findings. During data analysis, triangulation served to elaborate, enhance, illustrate, and clarify results from one method by setting them against results from another. This involved verification of overlapping results; validation of quantitatively generated constructs through comparison; probing in order to determine the cause of discrepancies due to misrepresentation by participants; identifying representative and non-representative cases; and clarification of ambiguous replies to questions (Kopinak, 1999: 173; Johnson et al, 2007). Thus the study was not limited to the understanding of facts or mere opinions, but provided an inquiry into elites' political culture, and their deeper values and

beliefs, especially those that upheld particular institutional arrangements (Reis, 2010; Wilson, 1992; Almond and Verba, 1989) about the sort of questions raised in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2).

4.3 Data Collection Method

Method is used here to refer to the techniques of data collection and analysis that were guided by questions developed from the analytical framework (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4). The fieldwork on which this thesis is based took place between March and August 2008. The adoption of a mixed-method design allowed the researcher to use different sources of data, such as documents, archival records (speeches, newspaper articles and parliamentary proceedings), interviews, observations and questionnaires. These are detailed below.

4.3.1 Document Analysis

This stage of data collection involved the gathering and analysis of documents produced in the course of everyday events, such as official government publications and official statistics, policy documents, budget documents, political speeches, official reports on and records of poverty, and mass media reports, to understand how policy is made and how politics impacts on it. These documents were sourced from the Malawi Parliament, the Malawi National Archive in Zomba, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Library. Specifically, the following records were analysed:

1. Proceedings of Malawi's parliamentary budget sessions between 1961 and 2007, as outlined in Hansard. Thirty-one sessions were analysed from the colonial period, the one party state period, and the democratic state period.

2. Newspaper articles between 1996 and 2008 were sourced from the main newspapers (*Nation* and *Daily Times*) and older newspapers covering the one party state period were sourced from the national archive.
3. Twenty six presidential speeches (Dr Banda [1964-1991], Dr Muluzi [1994-2004] and Dr Bingu Wa Mutharika [2004-2008]) were sourced from the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation. This also included recordings of party political broadcasts and Malawi Congress Party Conferences.
4. Various policy documents and reports from Government, donors and NGOs.

The analysis of documents was linked to the research questions for the study, and intended to draw inferences from audio and written reports as to how elites in Malawi thought and talked about poverty and the poor. Drawing on analytical styles within content analysis, the emphasis was on understanding what was said in relation to poverty and the poor, who said it, and why. This involved coding, extraction of major themes, grouping of similar and different themes, and creating categories. Categorisation involved comparisons between data classified as belonging to one group and data classified in a different category, which provided a means of describing the phenomena under study. Thus, trends and patterns of elite perceptions of poverty and the poor were established. The greatest advantage of document analysis is that it is unobtrusive and non-reactive: it can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. However, the main point made against it is that the researcher determines where to place the greatest emphasis after gathering the data, which can lead to bias (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Dey, 1993; Weber, 1990; Krippendorff, 2004). In order to offset this criticism, data from observations, interviews and questionnaires were used. These are discussed below.

4.3.2 Observations

Observations provide additional information or insight into elite perceptions and help to capture what elites actually do or say, rather than what they say they do. As a non-participant observer, I was able to observe how elites talked about poverty, their priorities, and their opinions about poor people. To ensure that unusable data was not collected and that the researcher's own experience and perceptions did not impact on the process, an observation checklist drawn from the interview guide was prepared (Yin, 2003; Denscombe, 1998) (see Appendix 1). The data collected through observations was placed within the analytical framework for further investigation; thus a check was carried out on the frequency and distribution of phenomena. This work focused on understanding what perceptions of poverty and the poor were typical and widespread, and how these views were distributed among elite categories (Denscombe, 1998:164).

The observations that were carried out were of meetings, workshops and debates on social protection policy and poverty in Malawi's capital city, Lilongwe. I introduced myself as a research student and all those being observed were aware of my status. This procedure was accepted by the respondents, and my presence did not seem to affect the discussion. The following seminars, meetings, parliamentary proceedings and media debates were observed:

1. 25th-27th March 2008 – Training on social protection programming for senior civil society leaders organised by the Institute for Policy Research and Social Development;
2. 28th-29th March, 2008 – Member of Parliament training and dialogue on social protection policy organised by the Institute for Policy Research and Social Development;

3. 12th April, 2008 – Meeting on the way forward for an old age social pension scheme in Malawi organised by the Ministry for the Elderly and Disabled;
4. 17th April, 2008 – Parliamentary Committee on Social and Community Affairs consultative meeting on social protection organised by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development;
5. 22nd May 2008 – Round table discussions with female Members of Parliament organised by the Catholic Centre for Justice and Peace (CCJP);
6. 7th May, 2008 – Central Region Consultative Workshop on a civil society manifesto on social, economic and political programs organised by the Malawi Economic Justice Network;
7. 20th June 2008 – Public debate: 'Is the villager aware of his/her share in the national budget' organised by ZODIAK radio station;
8. 21st May-July, 2008 – Observed parliamentary proceedings on the budget session;
9. July, 2008 - A briefing by IMF to the Ministry of Finance on the world economic outlook and what Malawi needs to be doing in the face of inflation to cushion the poor.

4.3.3 Interviews and Questionnaires

A semi-structured interview format was adopted for this study. Semi-structured interviews are more interactive than questionnaires, as well as being flexible in nature, and they enabled an in-depth exploration of elites' views and personal accounts of poverty issues. This involved understanding various emotions, experiences and perceptions about poverty and the poor; as well as receiving sensitive or privileged information which required coaxing and careful handling, as well as contact with selected key elites in the field (Denscombe, 1998; Mason, 2002). A critical case purposive²⁰ sampling

²⁰ Choosing settings, groups, and/or individuals based on specific characteristics because their inclusion helps the researcher with compelling insights into a phenomenon of interest (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

was used to select key informants, which was complemented by snowballing²¹. Snowballing enabled access to other informants who could elaborate on some issues pertaining to poverty in Malawi. As opposed to random sampling, the sampling method in this thesis selected people who were perceived to hold considerable knowledge on poverty issues, solutions and pro-poor policy processes. This ensured that a representative sample of elites involved in, or having a say in, the policy process were selected during sampling.

This thesis is interested in powerful individuals, those who are in decision-making positions and those who exercise influence over decisions pertaining to pro-poor policy. The definition of elites adopted in Chapter 3 necessitated a positional approach to sampling, as opposed to a reputational or decisional²² approach. The positional approach assumes that power in society is based on resources associated with positions of authority. Therefore, holders of key positions in political, public and private institutions are identified as belonging to the elite (Hoffmann-Lange, 1989).

For this thesis, individuals were sampled from the main institutions, including: occupants of political office (Government Ministers and MPs from the major political parties); the upper echelons of the civil service (Principle Secretaries); leaders of private sector organisations; civil society leaders; academic and media elites; and INGO leaders and leaders within donor organisations.

A brief discussion of some of the institutions from which key informants were selected is important.

First, Government Ministers and MPs from the major political parties (UDF, MCP and DPP) were

²¹ Snowballing sampling is a non-probability sampling method often employed in field research whereby each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing (Babbie, 2008).

²²A reputational approach relies on experts' perceptions, which might be subjective, or might be the result of incomplete knowledge about the power structures that exist. Thus its usefulness is limited to communities where decision-making power is concentrated among a readily identifiable elite group. A decisional approach identifies powerful individuals based on active or direct participation in political decision-making. Its emphasis is on behaviour as a measure of influence; therefore it is less prone to subjectivity than the reputational approach. But the necessarily small range of issues that can be studied empirically in order to identify decision-makers makes it difficult to generalize findings to cover the entire power structure (Hoffmann-Lange, 1987: 29-30).

sampled. According to Rakner et al (2004), these people are key stakeholders in decision-making. They are able to undermine the formal rules of the game that govern key decisions, such as the budget process, in a manner that reduces transparency, limits distribution and ensure that decisions serve powerful interests. Second, civil servants in Malawi, as in many other states, have extensive influence on policy processes. Their power lies in their responsibility for enforcing decisions and their ability to decide the allocation of budgetary resources, which allows them to pick and choose the individuals, families and communities that undergo development (Huntington and Weiner, 1987; Johnson and Start, 2001). Bureaucrats in Malawi move easily into other elite positions in the private sector, NGOs and Parliament; thus it is not uncommon to find MPs who are former bureaucrats or MPs owning newspapers or other businesses. Third, private sector leaders were sampled for their role in policy-making as established in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). In this document, the Government identified the development of the private sector as essential to economic growth and poverty reduction through public-private partnerships and job creation. Fourth, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Malawi are many in number and have always had an influence on social development policy, albeit limited under the one-party system.

In recent times, CSOs have contributed to representing the voices of the poor in policy decisions, and the resulting improved relationships with government have had measurable results in terms of policy development. For instance, their participation in the Poverty Reduction Strategy process and the budget cycle influenced the direction adopted by the Malawi government in the economic partnership agreement negotiations. Malawian CSO leaders seem to be closely connected to political, bureaucratic, private sector and other national elites, as they often share the social origins and educational background of these people. Fifth, the sample of the media and academic elites included lecturers, reporters and individuals who could influence Malawi's social and cultural values but who also

contributed to policy through budget consultations. Finally, elites from the INGO and donor sector were sampled for their role in influencing policy decisions and implementation in Malawi.

The list of respondents was drawn from the Ministers' Private Red Book, which contains names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of all Ministers, Principal Secretaries, Heads of Departments, Heads of Parastatals and other important people such as Advisors to the President. Another list sourced from Parliament provided the names and contact details of Members of Parliament and heads of parliamentary committees such as the Committees on Social and Community Welfare Services, Agriculture, and Finance. A list from CONGOMA²³ provided the names of the various registered CSOs, the heads of these organisations and their contact details. A list of media institutions sourced from Namisa²⁴ provided the names and contact details of editors and journalists. Using these four lists, names were drawn up of possible respondents and priority was given to those organisations dealing with pro-poor policy. Initially, a list of 200 respondents was drawn up, which was later trimmed to 100 individuals. The 100 respondents were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 4) and 60 of these 100 respondents, were asked for face-to-face interviews. Fifty-two of the 60 respondents asked for face-to-face interviews consented to be interviewed, thus 52 interviews were held. The same respondents used in the quantitative phase of the research were used for the interview phase, which made converging and comparison of data easier (Creswell, 2009).

The 60 respondents were sent an introductory letter, a letter requesting an interview and a schedule (see Appendix 2 - 3) from which the respondent could choose an appropriate date and time or suggest an alternative date and time. The requests for interviews and the questionnaires were hand-delivered and included a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study and the need for cooperation and confidentiality. The questionnaires included information regarding the date on which the questionnaire

²³ Council for Nongovernmental Organisation in Malawi, an umbrella body for civil society in Malawi

²⁴ National Media Institute of Southern Africa (Malawi Chapter)

would be collected, and this ensured a higher return rate than a request for them to be posted to the researcher would have done. Of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 86 were returned (see Appendix 16). Some questionnaires had to be discarded because they were incomplete or had been filled in by personal assistants or secretaries on behalf of their bosses. Sometimes, the recipients of a questionnaire would request a meeting to discuss the questionnaire in depth, which always proved worthwhile.

Once requests for interviews were sent, they were followed up with a phone call to ensure that respondents had received the letter and to check whether they had picked a suitable time and date for the interview. These follow-up calls proved important, as some respondents ignored, or indicated they had not received, the request, and another request had to be delivered. The system of hand delivering the interview requests, though time-consuming, proved worthwhile, as I was sometimes able to meet respondents and set up interviews in the process of delivering the letters. In a very few cases, I was asked to carry out the interview on the spot as I was delivering these letters.

The personal delivery of interview requests was made easier because I had already categorised the potential respondents, and the interviews were carried out in phases. Phase one was government and civil service figures, and consisted of Ministers, Principal Secretaries and Heads of Departments. Gaining access to elites within the civil service was not easy at the beginning, but as soon as I started 'name-dropping' or making a reference to someone important I had already interviewed and, in some instances requesting my father²⁵ to make a special appeal, access became easier. Phase two interviews involved Members of Parliament (MPs). This was problematic as MPs in Malawi do not have offices, and this meant that when I interviewed those who lived within the area where I was based, I had to find a place to meet them, usually the public foyer of the nearest hotel. However, since my

²⁵ Hon Tedson Kalebe, Member of Parliament and Minister of Energy and Mines at the time of the fieldwork.

research coincided with the budget sitting of Parliament, I was able to interview more MPs than I might ordinarily have expected, especially those from the Opposition. There were some MPs whom I had wanted to interview because of the knowledge they had displayed during parliamentary debates, but I could not do so because they requested general expenses, accommodation and fuel expenses. The researcher's financial position and ethical considerations, did not allow for this kind of expenditure.

Phase three of the interviews was with civil society and the media. This phase proved much easier, as the respondents were willing to be interviewed and the discussions were more casual, more like having a chat – mainly, because I was seen as a colleague doing something they had already done or intended to do. This allowed the interviewees to impart information they might not have otherwise done, especially on their views about other elites. The final phase involved interviewing the donor community, which proved extremely difficult. Many donors did not want a face-to-face interview, as they indicated that the research subject was too political. Of the respondents approached, only one agreed to an interview; some filled in the questionnaire; and one, the IMF Chief Resident, asked to meet me, and although refusing a formal interview, did discuss some issues of poverty. However, several Malawian employees working within donor organisation in positions of influence were interviewed.

I conducted 52 interviews (see Appendix 5)²⁶, which provided me with a diverse group of elites. An interview guide (see Appendix 6) permitted an open-ended discussion with respondents and enabled an understanding of their perceptions, attitudes, views and opinions on poverty and the poor in Malawi. All interviews were recorded and notes taken during the interview.

4.3.4 Generalizability

A mixed-method approach enabled a fuller, broader and deeper understanding of Malawian elite perceptions of poverty and the poor; but the findings did not ensure generalizability to other individuals,

²⁶ A more detailed list of respondents is available upon request.

groups, contexts or settings, or to other time periods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). When it came to sampling, labelling the group being studied 'elites' made it difficult to establish the precise outer boundaries of any elite in order to construct a representative sample (Hossain, 2005). However, as the concern of this study was to understand the dominant themes and areas of dissent among elites on poverty issues, it was not necessary that the sample should enable measurement of differences or priorities among the different elite sections. Although I cannot claim generalizability, the use of triangulation permits me to claim a degree of representativeness and strengthens the inferences drawn from the data. In addition, after a succession of interviews produced no new categories, themes or explanations, a saturation point was reached which increased confidence in the data (see Bowen, 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

4.4 Data Analysis Strategy

In analysing the research findings, I had to be aware that the perceptions articulated by elites might be what these people considered to be acceptable discourse, rather than their own deeply held views about poverty and the poor in Malawi. Therefore the analysis and interpretation of Malawian elite perceptions of poverty in the thesis can be seen as one of many possible interpretations of the phenomena under study. Despite these limitations, the analysis and interpretation of the perceptions of poverty was conducted in a rigorous manner. The initial analysis of the interview material involved re-reading the data in the course of transcribing it. During this process, I developed confidence in the data I was analysing and attempted to differentiate mere opinions from deeply held attitudes or values that appeared to be under discussion amongst the elites (although this distinction is difficult). This involved estimating the extent to which elite perceptions were realistic and consistent when set in their social and political context and compared with their views on other aspects of Malawian society. In addition, elite perceptions expressed in interviews were compared with other forms of public discourse on poverty in Malawi, for instance with media coverage, observations of elite meetings carried out by the

researcher, and political, government and donor policy and documents on poverty. In order to identify areas where particular elite views were dominant and to compare views (differences and consensus) amongst the different elite categories, some elite perceptions were quantified and presented in table form. These tables are not conclusive, nor even necessarily evidence, in their own right; but they are indicative, providing a rough and additional guide where useful (Hossain, 2003).

Generally the process of analysing data involved categorising and coding interview notes using analytical coding that represented the themes of the key research questions of the study. Statements with similar viewpoints were clustered and labelled with the same code. The codes were grouped by similarity, and themes and relationships were identified, so that patterns, commonalities and differences emerged. Generalizations that explained the themes and relationships identified in the data were developed after careful inspection and review of the initial coding and categorisation of the data (Jick, 1979; Denscombe, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). These generalizations and findings of the research were compared with the propositions put forward in de Swaan's (1988) theory of social consciousness, in order to determine whether the latter were valid for the Malawian elite. The analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was aided by the use of NVIVO analysis software and SPSS.

4.5 Issues in Data Collection and Other Limitations of the Study

4.5.1 Gaining Access to Respondents

The problems associated with gaining access to elites in Malawi are similar to those faced in similar undertakings in other countries. The issue of the time elites were willing to commit to an interview at the onset of my research necessitated the use of a questionnaire for wider coverage. In Malawi, the problem of access was compounded by the lack of offices for Members of Parliament, who formed one category of the elites interviewed. Members of Parliament, unless serving as ministers or deputy

ministers or as presidents of a party, do not have offices from which they work, or a secretary. Therefore, at the beginning of the fieldwork, it proved difficult to gain access to political elites. This was further made difficult by the political environment and the continuing battle between the ruling party (the DPP) and the Opposition over Section 65²⁷. The battle over Section 65 had had made the headlines of every newspaper in Malawi since 2004, and was still dominating public discourse in the six-month period during which fieldwork was carried out. Since 2004, the budget session of Parliament has been the place where the issue of Section 65 becomes magnified, as the budget fails to pass unless the speaker of the Parliament invokes the Section.

For the past four years, the Government in Malawi has been in a standoff with the Opposition, who have refused to pass the budget unless certain seats in Parliament are declared vacant. The Government has had to use CSOs, Chiefs²⁸ and members of society at large to put pressure on the Opposition to pass the budget. During my time in Malawi there were a number of demonstrations by Chiefs and their communities in various areas who presented petitions to the District Assembly requesting MPs to pass the budget. At one time, a group of angry people mobbed Parliament before a parliamentary sitting started, holding some MPs hostage and preventing others from entering Parliament. This meant that during the budget sitting I attended, a significant number of the discussions were on Section 65, with the Opposition boycotting parliamentary sittings, particularly when the President was scheduled to be in the House. With a budget sitting that commenced in May, the budget for the year 2008-2009 was only passed at the end of August.

²⁷ Section 65 of the 1995 Constitution states that if a member of parliament leaves the party on whose ticket he was elected and joins another party in the National Assembly, his/her seat will be declared vacant.

²⁸ Chiefs were another category that would have been useful to interview, considering their importance in Malawian politics. There were several chiefs at the Central Region Consultative meeting on 'a civil society manifesto on social, economic and political programmes' that I observed. I gave questionnaires to some of them, but then I realised that these were incomplete and they had to be discarded. Having had a chat with one of the Chiefs, it was evident that I should have translated the questionnaire into Chichewa (the local language).

During this sitting, bills such as those for peri-urban water, among others, failed to get past the first reading and were defeated when they went to the vote because of the failure of the Speaker to declare vacant the seats of MPs deemed to have crossed the floor. Hence, many of the respondents were suspicious about the goals and purpose of this research. My position²⁹ made respondents from opposition parties question whether I was collecting information on behalf of my father. In addition to an appeal to Chiefs and members of civil society, the President was telling Malawians that the Opposition did not care about the poor and that was why they were refusing to pass the budget. Therefore, questioning elites about their views and perceptions of poverty and the poor aroused suspicion amongst respondents, and I had to make an extra effort to gain and win their confidence. The system of hand delivering requests and following up with telephone calls proved very helpful in building trust and establishing my identity as a student researcher.

The problem of gatekeepers also affected access to respondents such as Ministers, Principal Secretaries and Heads of Departments. I had to convince secretaries and personal assistants that the research was important enough to take up their boss's time. In one instance, I was informed that it was beneath the Principal Secretary for Education to respond to the questionnaire. I asked some well-positioned people to speak on my behalf and I received a personal call from the Principal Secretary to pick up the questionnaire. I found that name-dropping was a good tactic to get respondents to either answer the questionnaire or agree to an interview. Bureaucratic culture was also a problem as some respondents expected me to go through their superiors, particularly in the case of Principal Secretaries and their deputies.

Getting the information from the interviewee was not always easy. Interviews ranged from one that lasted only 13 minutes (despite rephrasing of questions and probing) to some that lasted 45 minutes

²⁹ Daughter of a sitting Member of Parliament and Minister in the ruling party (the DPP).

(mainly Ministers and Principal Secretaries) and others that took as much as two hours. None of my respondents refused to be recorded during the interview, which was useful as it allowed for a better discussion.

4.5.2 Axiology

Axiology refers to the role of the researcher's own values within a piece of research. It is the acknowledgement that researchers have personal characteristics and ideas influenced by their class, ethnicity, gender, religion and historical period. These in turn influence or become connected to the researcher's values and moral notions. Therefore, the researcher approaches the phenomena under study with preconceptions, assumptions, ideologies and beliefs.

As an insider within the community, and someone familiar with the phenomena under study, my experience of poverty, the poor and elites influenced my values and moral judgements. During my previous employment as a public relations officer for the Tobacco Association of Malawi, I saw first-hand the injustices within the tobacco industry, where the rich manipulated the poor to their advantage. The poor smallholder tobacco farmers invested (for them) a lot of money in their farms but received very little money from the sale of their tobacco, whilst the rest of the industry, from the buyers to the association that represented them, prospered. It is important to understand that, in Malawi, farmers, particularly tobacco farmers, form a majority of the country's poorest people. It was difficult for me to accept what I considered exploitation of the poor by elites in the tobacco industry, as well as the inequality that existed. During this time I experienced behaviour by political elites, such as government ministers, that I felt perpetuated poverty in Malawi: for example, elites bought up maize from the national reserves in times of plenty and sold it to the poor at exorbitant prices when there was a maize shortage. The tobacco industry bosses failed to take any action to alleviate the suffering of poor farmers as they sank deeper into poverty and debt every year. I wondered why leaders within the

tobacco industry did not see that a lack of support for the farmers might have a negative impact on these industrialists' own livelihood if the farmers stopped growing tobacco.

My second job, after the one with the Tobacco Association of Malawi, included working on politics and governance for the British High Commission and the management of the DFID's Small Grants Scheme under the British High Commissioner. This was a job that enabled me to work with politicians and bureaucrats, especially those working on social policy. I observed that elites seemed to express their concern and propose policy for alleviating poverty, but there was no real impact on poverty levels. There seemed to be a lack of political will to implement and monitor pro-poor policies, as corruption was rampant.

Throughout the process of preparing and conducting this research, I have had to face my own prejudices towards elites (of which I am arguably one). My experiences have meant that my attitude towards elites is negative, in that I view them as the cause of many problems, particularly economic ones, in Malawi. During my fieldwork I became more aware of my own values and my position as a researcher, and how my personal feelings and moral notions about various things could impact on the research as a whole. I was conscious of my prejudices against certain respondents because of what they had done in the past when in office, or their stance on various issues (particularly civil society organisations, MPs and Ministers). This realisation, which came about early on in the research, was important: it enabled me to use my values, beliefs and knowledge as a fundamental resource during the research, particularly when carrying out observations, listening to political speeches and, most importantly, during face-to-face interviews with elites. It involved me in self-reflection, in order to avoid bias, and in acknowledging evidence that would seem to disprove my value position, whilst at the same time using these values as a frame of reference for further probing on particular issues (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985). Although I was aware of my values and moral notions, the use of questionnaires helped me to separate these from the research, as the questionnaires were self-administered.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Researching social life presents the researcher with ethical dilemmas that need to be taken into account at the beginning of his or her study. This dilemma is between truth, or the right to know, and human dignity and privacy. Ethics are a matter of “principled sensitivity to the rights of others and these ethics limit the choices we can make in pursuit of the truth. Ethics say that whilst truth is better, human dignity is much better, even if it leaves us ignorant” (Bulmer, 2001: 45).

There are four issues a researcher must consider in order to ascertain the extent to which the study has adhered to the ethical principles of social research. The following ethical issues were important for this research: that there was no harm to participants; that there was informed consent by interview respondents and by those who provided access to materials from parliament and the national archives; that there was no invasion of privacy; and that deception was not involved. Ensuring that respondents or participants in a study are not harmed is an important aspect of any research. This relates not only to physical harm, but also to the harming of people’s development and self-esteem, the raising of their stress levels, and the possibility that they might be induced to perform reprehensible acts (Bryman, 2008:118).

The best protection for participants is to ensure that they cannot be identified in any material published, and therefore their identities or records should remain confidential. In this research, confidentiality was guaranteed in writing when participants were first solicited for the study. Participants were informed in writing that the purpose of the interview or questionnaire and the use of the outcomes of the study were

purely academic, and that the respondents' identities and the data collected would be confidential. During the interviews, participants were further assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The participants for this study were elites from the civil service, members of parliament from different parties, and leaders within civil society, and the issue of confidentiality was very important to them. There was a fear of bosses, especially from Principal Secretaries, but interestingly none of the respondents refused to be recorded. Permission to record an interview was sought at the beginning of each interview session. On the other hand, the researcher had to make decisions on the extent to which participants were pressed for their views, to ensure that there was voluntary participation. To ensure the ethical integrity of the study, all recordings of the interviews, and questionnaires, have been stored in such a way that they cannot compromise anonymity. Consequently, where direct quotes have been used, they have not been attributed to people by giving their real name.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological framework employed in the collection and analysis of data in the study of elite perceptions of poverty and the poor in Malawi. The study adopted an across-method triangulation, with the qualitative inquiry leading the analysis of data in a way that preserved the value of an inductive approach but incorporated the focus and specificity of the quantitative data. This chapter has also discussed some issues in data collection, as well as other methodological limitations. The researcher had aimed to use semi-structured interviews, observations, document analysis and focus group discussion. However, at the beginning of fieldwork, getting elites to sit for an interview of at least 45 minutes proved difficult, hence a questionnaire was developed. Time constraints, previous commitments and different schedules made it impossible to carry out focus group discussions. This was also made difficult by financial constraints, as some potential respondents demanded expenses to attend a meeting of this kind. This chapter concluded with an explanation of the ethical considerations accepted for the study. The next chapter introduces the background to the study and the political- economic environment under which Malawian elites operate and pro-poor policies are implemented.

CHAPTER FIVE

MALAWI'S POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines some key characteristics of Malawian society and the Malawian economy, and highlights the country's elites' preferences for a 'human resource' conceptualisation of development and anti-poverty interventions. Section 5.2 details the economic philosophy that underpinned development policy in Malawi from quasi-state capitalism to market-orientation, and this is of relevance for understanding the market-orientation of elite support for pro-poor and economic development policies and elite attitudes towards the role of the state (Chapter 8). Section 5.3 is a brief description of the features of Malawi's social structure and the rise and transformation of elites in relation to social, economic and political changes, from the colonial period to independence and the present democratic dispensation. Section 5.4 discusses the pervasiveness of poverty and inequality in Malawi – features that have persisted despite good levels of economic growth at various periods in Malawi's development. This helps to make sense of the elites' explanation for the presence of poverty and inequality (Chapter 7) and their opinion regarding policy initiatives (Chapter Eight). Section 5.4 (Subsection 5.4.1) explores the political context in which various development policies have been implemented in Malawi, to understand how state elites have shaped economic, political and social outcomes. This section goes on to document how neopatrimonial characteristics have been evident across the different political systems (democratic and authoritarian) and regimes in Malawi, but with different development outcomes. This background is of value for understanding the views elites have of the poor as passive or dependent, and the elites' faith in the continuing importance of social relations for reducing social conflict in Malawian society, and thus ensuring the continued absence of the threats that can emanate from poverty and the poor (Chapter 7).

5.2 Economic Policy and Economic Development

Malawi's macroeconomic policies since the colonial period (1891-1964) set the context for understanding social change, politics and the impact of economic policies on poverty. Economic policies also provide the context for exploring the formation and transformation of elites in Malawi. Malawi emerged from a struggle against the economic exploitation and political oppression of the colonial period with the need for economic development and poverty reduction high on the agenda. Symptomatic of these needs were low African wage rates, poor transportation networks, land shortage, underdeveloped African trade, and lack of market regulation (Power, 2010:47).

During the colonial period, Malawi's economy was characterised by estate farming, peasant cash crop production and a labour reserve economy. The growth of the estate sector was facilitated by the transfer of land to Europeans, with Malawians providing hard labour. The introduction of the hut³⁰ and poll taxes ensured that Malawians sought wage labour on estates. These taxes were not fully effective in ensuring an increase in wage labourers, as Malawians were able to pay them by growing cash crops or by migrating to South Africa or Zimbabwe. This led to the introduction of a differential tax, where on production of a certificate from a non-African employer, the tax was halved (Power, 2010). At the same time, a quasi-feudal system called 'thangata'³¹, which developed alongside the 'visiting-tenant'³² system, led to a growth in peasant cash crop production. Although there were some contributions to the economy from the estate and labour reserve economy, the economy did not flourish, as coffee, cotton and tobacco prices fell in 1902 and then again in the 1930s (Kydd and Christiansen, 1982). Many of the tobacco estates were abandoned, and as Malawi was of no strategic importance, the colonial

³⁰ A hut tax was a form of taxation that each hut or household had to pay in cash, labour or grain to the colonial masters. This generated revenues to support the development of the colonial administration, encouraged cash mindedness amongst the Africans, and provided a stable African labour force (Power, 2010: 14; see also Baker, 1975)

³¹ Thangata was a quasi-feudal arrangement under which peasants had to supply labour to the plantation in exchange for the use of a plot of land (Kydd and Christiansen, 1982: 357).

³² This was a share-cropping arrangement under which peasant families obtained land on estates on the condition that they grew a cash crop which was sold to the estate at a price determined by the estate owner (Kydd and Christiansen, 1982: 358).

government did not spend significant amounts on health, education or manufacturing. Thus, the low standard of living and the 'thangata' system became a source of discontent amongst Malawians, which led to the Chilembwe uprising of 1915. This uprising was aided by the creation of native and tribal associations³³ from 1912 on (and continuing up to 1940). These associations were formed to represent African interests on various government bodies (Pryor, 1990; Kydd and Christiansen, 1982).

The native associations were merged in 1944 to create the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), which became the vehicle for demands for independence in Malawi. The NAC was renamed the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in 1959, with Kamuzu Banda as its leader. The MCP had the following aim: 'to work for unity of the aborigines of Nyasaland in order that a well-digested native opinion may be available and ascertainable by the Government and to encourage the inculcation and practise of habits of industry, thrift and cleanliness amongst the people and to propagate the gospel of the dignity of labour' (McCracken, 1998: 234). Thus the Banda government that came to power in 1964 and autocratically³⁴ ruled Malawi from 1966 until 1993 under a capitalist label was enhanced by Banda's familiarity with the virtues of private enterprise and individual achievement gained from his stay in Britain and the United States. Although Banda espoused capitalist ideals by encouraging private ownership of large-scale enterprises, he practised quasi-state capitalism: at one end he encouraged the development of private large-scale enterprises; and at the other end he encouraged 'setting up state industries, taking shareholdings in private enterprise, or outright nationalization' (Thomas, 1975: 33). This is not surprising as Banda's goal in the post-independence period was not only political but also economic independence from Britain. To this end, Banda appeared willing to adopt any economic

³³ There were a significant number of native and tribal associations in Malawi, among which were: the Southern Region, the North Nyasa, the Central Region, and the West Nyasa Native Associations; and the Angoni Highlands, the Lomwe tribal and the Achewa Improvement Associations (Power, 2010).

³⁴ Banda introduced a new constitution in 1966 abolishing parliamentary elections and the multiparty system that existed in 1964, as well as bestowing on himself unlimited powers to rule the country as he pleased. Consequently, Banda could dissolve Parliament or dismiss his cabinet at will and decide who could run for parliamentary seats (Ihonvbere, 1997; Meinhardt and Patel, 2003:3).

ideology that suited this goal: 'If private enterprise is afraid and hesitant, I will be forced to introduce in this country state socialism, or its alternative. I am not going to wait. We want development in this country, and we are going to develop this country by all means, by all ways open to us' (Hansard, 1965: 414).

As Pryor (1990) notes, Banda's professed economic philosophy was that Malawi could not adopt capitalism in the way that the Americans had, by privatising railways, electricity, or water facilities; nor could it embrace the communism of the Russians or Chinese, where the state owned everything. Instead, Banda believed that these two philosophies could be adapted and a middle ground reached where the Government owned some enterprises but the people owned the means of production through the ownership of land. Banda adopted policies that would reduce the budget deficit and maximize economic growth. Therefore many social sectors, such as health and primary education, were sidelined or ignored. Instead, guided by the *Statement of Development Policies 1971-80* strategy, the Government put the emphasis on increasing agricultural productivity, export earnings and domestic income. In the education sector, the emphasis was on secondary, technical and university education to ensure the availability of much-needed skills at the expense of primary school education (Pryor, 1990).

According to the World Bank (1982), between 1968 and 1983 the economic sectors (agriculture, transport and infrastructure) received over 50 percent of development expenditures, whilst in the period 1967-80, this expenditure rose to 75 percent. Banda chose to ignore the growing evidence of poverty and concentrated public investment in the productive sectors, with consequent improvements in development generally, infrastructure, fixed capital formation, and worker productivity (Conroy, 2006; Cammack and Kelsall, 2011). There was no real attempt to articulate social policy objectives: 'Socially, there is nothing specific I have in mind. But the government is determined to build more primary and secondary schools, more teacher training and technical colleges, where and when they are needed and

funds are available' (Banda, 1974)³⁵. The official view of the Banda government was that as long as every Malawian was well fed, lived in a house that did not leak and had adequate clothing, the question of poverty did not arise in national policy (Chinsinga, 2002).

Therefore, in the agriculture sector, Banda implemented policies aimed at growing the estate sector that was to be the main driver of economic development. The estate sector, which was dominated by elites and significantly supported through taxes on smallholder farmers, as well as receiving other preferential treatment, grew rapidly. The bias in Banda's policy took several forms: customary land was annexed from the smallholder sector; smallholder farmers were not allowed to grow export crops such as tobacco, tea and sugar; and they were paid less for their produce by the state marketing board – the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) (Conroy, 2006; Chinsinga, 2002). On the one hand, there were elites that had unlimited access to land, access to commercial credit, and could grow any crops. On the other, there were smallholder farmers restricted to growing less productive crops, the prices of their produce were determined by the Government, and they were paid low wages for their labour. Thus the policies that the Malawian government implemented clearly defined those who would benefit from economic growth and the bias of these policies towards estate farmers was revealed when Malawi was hit by exogenous shocks: declining terms of trade, drought conditions in 1979-1980, a rise in international interest rates, and the war in Mozambique (which increased transportation costs for Malawi and disrupted Malawi's trade route to the sea) from the late 1970s. These exogenous shocks in the late 1970s revealed structural weaknesses in the economy and the deepening level of poverty. Thus GDP growth per capita between 1979 and 1984 only averaged 0.1% and was 0.5% between 1985 and 1992 (Kennedy, 1996; Conroy, 2006; Harrigan, 2001).

³⁵ An excerpt from a speech by Kamuzu Banda made during the MCP convention in Lilongwe, 1/09/1974, as Malawi celebrated ten years of independence.

Although there were some notable improvements³⁶ between 1964 and 1979, Malawi's quasi-state capitalism failed to address issues of poverty and inequality. In the face of the exogenous shocks noted above, Banda's nationalistic ideals for economic independence were weakened as he was forced to adopt a free-market economy and accept aid from the IMF and World Bank. At the end of Banda's regime, state-led development was reversed: the agriculture sector was liberalised (centring on the lifting of controls on prices, market liberalisation, and the repealing of the Special Crops Act³⁷); there were reforms in the parastatal and financial sectors (which included the liberalisation of the exchange rate, relaxation of exchange controls, and interest rate liberalisation); and the budget was rationalised to work more efficiently, thus improving the allocation and quality of public expenditures. The policies adopted by Malawi between 1981 and 1990 under Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) reduced the already minimal expenditure on the social sectors, made worse by the introduction of user fees for social services such as health (Brown, 1995; Harrigan, 2003; AFRODAD, 2007a; Pryor, 1990). During the structural adjustment period and well into the early 1990s, GDP³⁸ averaged 2.4%, well below the population growth, and adjustment failed to change the economy's reliance on agriculture (Harrigan, 2001).

SAPs were met with a lack of political will from the political elite such that full privatisation, especially of ADMARC, was not carried out; and the Banda government was unwilling to liberalise the tobacco industry, which would have enabled poor smallholder farmers to grow tobacco. Banda's reluctance to fully adopt a free-market economy ended with his defeat in the democratic election of 1994. Muluzi, who became president under the banner of poverty reduction, reversed the system that had allowed the exploitation of smallholder farmers by liberalising agriculture, removing caps on tenant wages,

³⁶ For instance 'infant mortality declined from 200 per 1000 in 1964 to 130, and per capita daily calorie intake increased from 2,250 in 1964 to 2,400 in 1975' (AFRODAD 2007:18; Booth et al, 2006). Malawi's economic performance was impressive; GDP grew by an average of 8% between 1965-1973 (World Bank, 1975). By 1981 Malawi had raised its domestic investment from 9% of GDP at independence to 25% , whilst domestic savings increased to 17%t (Record, 2007).

³⁷ The repeal of *the Special Crops Act* lifted restrictions on smallholder production of burley tobacco, which until 1994 was grown only by estate farmers (Harrigan, 2003).

³⁸ See Appendix 7 for key macro-economic indicators between 1982-1992

privatising state enterprises and levelling the playing field for private sector participation (Stambuli, 2002). Muluzi's emphasis on private sector growth was not surprising: his United Democratic Front (UDF) party was led by business tycoons who had grown rich during Banda's time by retaining close ties with the ruling party (Chingaipe and Leftwich, 2007). Muluzi also reversed Banda's industrial policy that had favoured high-level entrepreneur development through parastatals and he ensured the participation of small and medium enterprises with support from initiatives such as the National Association of Business Women (NABW), the Development of Malawi Traders Trust (DEMATT), the Small Enterprise Development of Malawi (SEDOM), the Women's World Banking (WWB), the Promotion of Micro Enterprises for Rural Women (PWERM), the Malawi Savings and Credit Cooperative (MUSCCO), the Small and Medium Enterprise Fund (SMEF), the Malawi Mudzi Fund, and the Youth Credit Scheme (Chinsinga 2002: 26).

These enterprises did not have the desired effect on the economy, nor on poverty. The neglect of agriculture led to food insecurity; and corruption, rent-seeking and economic exploitation became widespread. Beneficiaries of these initiatives deliberately defaulted in the name of democracy, leading to their demise (Chirwa et al, 1996). In addition, these initiatives seemed ill-conceived, as no real policy existed to provide the necessary access to markets and infrastructural support (Chinsinga, 2002; Chingaipe and Leftwich, 2007). Munthali (2010) notes that another reason for the failure of Muluzi's policies was that they were implemented alongside deregulation policies (i.e. privatisation) that benefited the haves rather than the have-nots, as the haves were able to purchase privatised companies or assets. So, Muluzi's two terms in office did not result in any significant growth in the economy, and fiscal indiscipline characterised this period, with government spending more than its revenues and grants, thereby increasing internal and external debt. Domestic debt increased from MK9.5 billion at the end of 2001 to MK54.5 billion early in 2004, and interest on this debt alone accounted for 10% of the national budget (Whitworth, 2004). Malawi's growth between 1994 and 2004

fluctuated, starting at -12.3% in 1994, reaching 5% in 1997, and falling back to -4% in 2001; and at the time Muluzi left office in 2004, GDP per capita remained at US\$160, the same level as when he assumed office in 1994. This is a clear indication of the poor living conditions of most Malawians, especially if we take into account inflation, which was at 11.424 in 2004 (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010; Conroy, 2006; World Economic Outlook, 2011).

The economic policy adopted by the second democratic government, elected in 2004 and led by Bingu Wa Mutharika, did not represent a significant departure from Muluzi's philosophy. The Mutharika government's 'Malawi Growth and Development Strategy' (MGDS) was a capitalist model with the private sector as the engine of growth. However, Mutharika's approach involved moderate state interventions to deal with market failures. Thus Mutharika embarked on a growth-oriented strategy to ensure the stable growth of 6% prescribed by the World Bank as an effective level for reducing poverty, and he adhered to fiscal rules to regain donor confidence (Government of Malawi, 2007). Since 2006 growth has averaged 7.5%, which the Government argues has expanded the resources available for improved service delivery and has enabled it to implement social protection policy initiatives, such as the farming inputs subsidy programme and cash transfers to the poor.

Since the implementation of SAPs in Malawi in 1981, the adoption of economic reforms has been slow and uneven, and governments (both democratic and autocratic) have been unwilling or unable (due to pressure from civil society) to implement particular aspects of the SAPs programme. For instance, some reforms, such as the removal of subsidies, the privatisation of the ADMARC, Air Malawi, the Electricity Supply Corporation (ESCOM) and the Water Boards, proceeded in 2005, following reluctance by the Muluzi regime to implement these. However, no regime has digressed from a broad market orientation in economic policy since the adoption of SAPs (Harrigan, 2001; Munthali, 2010). The

next section draws on the discussion above to explore Malawi's social structure – in particular the impact economic policies have had in the development of elites.

5.3 Social Structure and Change

One consequence of the borders imposed by the British on Malawi is that the country does not have any kind of ethnic unity. Malawi's ethnic groups are varied³⁹, with the Chewa and Nyanja constituting more than 40% of the total population. Although territorial borders shared with Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique remain unchanged, internal borders were constantly changed over the course of the colonial period (1891-1964) for commercial and administrative purposes. These borders cut across various ethnic groups with different social and political systems (Power, 2010; Pryor, 1990). Despite these differences, interethnic relations in Malawi have been relatively calm. This is mainly because, firstly, when Malawi gained independence the relative average incomes of various ethnic groups were similar; secondly, three-quarters of the population could understand the Chewa language, which was made an official language in 1968, alongside English; and thirdly, intermixing and intermarriage, as well as travel outside Malawi, primarily as labour migrants or soldiers, had led to a collective identity as 'Malawians' regardless of ethnicity. This aided the nation-building process, and ethnic differences have not since been enough to seriously undermine national interests (Forster, 1994; Pryor, 1990; Power, 2010).

However, interethnic relations have proved difficult at the level of politics, and with the introduction of multiparty politics in 1994, these differences started to play a significant role in determining who held power in Malawi (DFID, 2004). Banda's autocratic regime had ensured that there was a balance in the

³⁹ Malawi's largest ethnolinguistic groups are in the northern region (Tumbuka, Henga, Sukwa, Ndali, Nkonde, Tonga and Ngoni); the central Region (Chewa and Maseko Ngoni); and the southern region (Mang'anja, Nyanja, Sena, Yao and Lomwe).

ratio of ethnic groups in the civil service and cabinet (see Table 5.1) (Pryor, 1990). Ensuring ethnic balance, or what Pryor (1990) terms ‘ethnic arithmetic’, is a crucial political skill and was even more so during Banda’s rule, as the native associations that merged to form the MCP were based on ethnic or regional lines. Therefore, to avoid perceptions of ethnic or regional bias and ensure support for the nation-building project, some semblance of ethnic equality in the cabinet and other top government positions was essential. In addition, Banda’s four cornerstones of unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline were religiously followed, and distinctions on ethnic or regional lines were outlawed, which removed ethnic divisions to which class conflicts could be attached (Phiri, 2000).

Table 5.1: Ethnic Groups in 1966 and Ethnic Origins of Cabinet Ministers between 1964 -1983

| Ethnic Group | Population | Cabinet Ministers |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | 1966 | 1964 - 1983 |
| Chewa | 28.3 | 29.5 |
| Nyanja | 15.3 | 3.3 |
| Lomwe | 11.8 | 6.6 |
| Yao | 11.2 | 16.4 |
| Ngoni | 9.0 | 11.5 |
| Tumbuka | 7.4 | 11.5 |
| Sena | 2.8 | 3.3 |
| Tonga | 2.0 | 8.0 |
| Other | 12.2 | 9.8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: Pryor (1990: 25)

Members of the various elites in Malawi are still drawn from across the country’s various ethnic groupings.. Also, in comparison with elites in developed countries, Malawian elites are not too distant from the masses, mainly because of their recent ascent to elite status. Even members of the current elites who served under the Banda regime have not been in their position for more than two generations (see Section 5.4). Like most African elites, those of Malawi have a traditional bond with the rural masses. As Chapter 7 will show, it is not uncommon for members of national elites living in the

urban centres to send financial support to relatives in rural areas, especially for educating young relatives.

Hence,

Aside from ordinary domestic responsibilities, members of the national elites typically maintain a whole separate sphere of responsibilities to their families, which often means their home village, clan, or lineage group. Since they are educated and wealthy, relatives send them orphans to raise, who arrive on their doorsteps hungry or ill, and they expect these cosmopolitan kin to solve all sorts of family problems, from a young person who is going astray, to a baby who needs medicine, to a cousin who has been turned away by the hospital offering antiretroviral treatment (Swidler and Watkins, 2009: 1191).

Thus kinship ties mean that elites maintain close affective ties to individuals from quite disparate social levels. These ties are likely to remain, since they play a vital welfare function as deepening poverty and lack of welfare provision in Malawi require the poor to seek alternative means of survival (Miller, 1974). A three-year study on social policy by Chilowa et al. (2000) established that the poor's major coping strategy was to ask for assistance from social networks of friends and the extended family (see Appendix 8). Other studies (Chirwa and Chilowa, 1997; Pearce et al., 1996) have identified similar coping strategies. According to Miller, kinship ties not only weaken elite cohesion, but also retard the development of a class-consciousness, as there are no feelings of common cause with others in the same position (1974). This does not imply that small class differences in asset ownership (e.g. land) do not exist, nor that these cannot translate into power differences; but these distinctions are not sharp enough to arouse conflict (Miller, 1974; Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007).

5.3.1 The Pre-Independence Period

In the early colonial period, economic classes (in terms of differences in access to the means of production or gainful occupation) were not highly differentiated because of Malawi's predominantly rural society and the low degree of tenancy in rural areas. For instance, in 1945, less than 2% of the population lived in urban areas, and by 1966 this had only increased to 3.9%. This trend has not

changed, as in 2008, 85% of the population still lived in rural areas and were mainly involved in agriculture (Pryor, 1990:27; NSO, 2008). However, the division of land into crown (public), private (leasehold or freehold) and native (customary), by the colonial administration led to a distinction between commercial and subsistence farmers. Commercial farmers, though fewer in number, owned many hectares of land⁴⁰; whereas smallholder farmers owned between 0.7 and 1.5 hectares each. Thus, access to private land played a key role in the creation of elites in the early colonial period. In 1894 the first elites of European origin were created through the granting of 69 certificates of land claims, thus creating the first estates in Malawi (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007; Chilowa, 1998).

The establishment of estates led to social differentiation amongst the native population: between those who became supervisors or foremen, normally receiving certain privileges and better wages, and those who became labourers. The former were mainly those who had benefited from missionary education, introduced in the 1800s. Missionary education in Malawi contributed to the emergence of educated elites, as those educated by missionaries themselves took up teaching positions in state and mission schools, and acceded to positions in tribal authority structures and the colonial administration (McCracken, 2008). In this way, those involved in traditional authorities became a kind of local elite and these included chiefs, sub-chiefs and group village headmen (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007).

Thus the first Malawian economic elites were those who had access to mission schools and then to salary-based positions in the colonial administration. These individuals, including some who had originally been migrant labourers, accumulated wealth that enabled them to invest in estates, transport, trade, rest houses, maize mills, brick production, animal husbandry, and newspaper publishing. According to Power, 'These were "new men", members of a growing "accumulating class" born of the

⁴⁰ Before 1980 private land could reach up to 500 hectares and mainly involved larger companies that were in the hands of the national elite (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007:178).

colonial economy' (2010:44). Thus, a group of educated and entrepreneurial elites who had developed some local economic powers was created (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007).

These are the elites who became involved in the formation of the native associations that later became part of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC): they became an emerging political elite. Native associations were the main means for native Malawians to organize and, as argued by Miller (1974), organization is the vital ingredient that makes elite rule inevitable and natural. In 1912, the North Nyasa Native Association was formed to engage the colonial administration on the welfare of Malawians. The West Nyasa and Mombera Associations were formed in 1914 and 1920 respectively, with more associations formed in the south in the 1920s. Membership of these associations required the individual to be of good knowledge and character. Thus mission teachers and religious ministers, government clerks, educated headmen and chiefs took part in the deliberations of the associations (Okoth, 2006). In 1944, as nationalist sentiments grew in Malawi, James Sangala (a Blantyre educated government clerk) formed the NAC, the first political party to represent all native Malawians. The various native associations then became affiliated to the NAC and were transformed into the party's branches. The 1945 constitution of the NAC stated that only intelligent and progressive Africans should be appointed to government advisory committees. Although in theory NAC membership was open to all men and women, in practice, however, only educated people were encouraged to attend meetings (McCracken, 1998).

The first president of the NAC was Levi Mumba, a graduate of Livingstonia Institution, a senior government official, and a former secretary of the North Nyasa Native Association. Mumba and Sangala believed in unity in fighting for improvements in Malawians' welfare, but they also embraced the importance for decision-making of including a wide spectrum of associations and interest groups representing civil society. For instance, Sangala 'combined his role as chief organizer of Congress in

the 1940s with active participation in the Parents and Guardians Educational Association, the Black and White Club, the Shire Highland Football League and the Blantyre African Co-operative Trading Society' (McCracken, 1998:235). Thus the NAC's development was closely linked to associations of farmers, workers and traders. Chirwa et al. (2004), note that between 1947 and 1949, trade unions became registered, forming the first organised labour movement in Malawi. The general secretaries of these independent trade unions, such as Chakufwa Chihana and Suzgo Msiska⁴¹, were also active members of the NAC. In this way, during the colonial period, the sphere of elites had expanded to include economic, social and political elites who contributed to decision-making through their involvement in the NAC.

However, between 1956 and 1964 the NAC became intolerant of dissenting views, resulting in, for example, the suspension from the party in 1962 of Chakufwa Chihana, for calling for a workers' strike over wages. In 1963 the NAC, which had been renamed the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in 1959, stripped trade unions of their independence by opposing the Trade Union (Amendment) Ordinance. Whilst Chihana and Msiska resigned their posts and fled the country, other trade union leaders were absorbed into the civil service or party bureaucracy (McCracken, 1998).

5.3.2 The Post-Independence Period

By the time Malawi became independent, in 1964, the sphere of the political elite had been significantly reduced or restricted in terms of its participation in decision-making. Thus the one-party state undermined the role of the politicians, the trade unions, the civil service, and private businessmen in policy-making. As stated in Chapter 4, despite the increase of civil society organisations in the 1970s and 1980s, their role was limited to social issues, with no real participation in the decision-making process. From 1960 to 1993, politics began and ended with Dr Kamuzu Banda, and there was no

⁴¹ Chakufwa Chihana and Suzgo Msiska were the General Secretaries of the Transport & Allied Workers Union and the Commercial & General Workers Union respectively (McCracken, 1998).

separation of the presidency from the Government, the party from its leaders, politics from the law or the state from the nation. 'All these were fused and crystallised into Banda's personal political achievements and abilities and no one-else had the potential to offer an alternative' (Chirwa, 2001:9). Since his 1958 arrival in Malawi from Ghana, where he had practiced medicine, Dr Banda used different means to consolidate his power – including intimidation, coercion and murder – and he based his leadership style on tight control on the press, the judiciary and the legislature (Power, 1998).

According to Chinsinga (2002), the legislature and judiciary were merely rubber stamps for executive decisions. Popular participation in the affairs of government was non-existent; there was no free expression, competition or access to political processes. Unquestioning loyalty to Banda was required of everyone who participated in public life. The personal aggrandizement of the leader became the all-consuming goal of Malawian politics (Chirwa, 2001). Banda's leadership philosophy was that, 'Familiarity breeds contempt. A leader must live above the people. He must be different from them. They are proud of him when they know that he is someone different and exceptional' (Baker, 2001:4). He therefore ensured that his leadership status attained divine proportions⁴², and he was able to amass huge personal wealth. Through his ownership of the largest private commercial farm and control over the largest private enterprise, the 'Press Corporation' conglomerate, Banda set himself apart from the rest of the population (Baker, 2001). He allocated power and wealth carefully to his loyal supporters, and reserved the right to withdraw any privileges when it suited him. 'Banda therefore used the power of the state to direct productive assets into the hands of those he thought would use them most productively (politicians and civil servants with capitalist ambitions), and/or those whose political support was useful (smaller African businessmen, in particular members of the Malawi Congress Party, and investors)' (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003:4).

⁴² Therefore, Banda was not to be questioned. As one Member of Parliament, A.W. Chipungu, stated in the late 1960s, 'There is no opposition in heaven. God himself does not want opposition; that is why he chased Satan away. Why should Banda have opposition?' (Africa Watch, 1990)

Banda's land policy of 1966 adopted similar distinctions between private, public and customary land as in the colonial period. Following independence, the number of estates grew from 250 in 1970 to 30,000 in 1995. Banda's post-independence agricultural policy, which favoured large-scale agricultural and industrial development, played a significant role in the social differentiation process in Malawi. As noted in Section 5.2, under Banda's policy land was annexed from smallholder farmers and distributed to estate farmers, and smallholder farmers were prohibited from growing cash crops such as tobacco. This widened the gap between the estate and smallholder sectors and aided the emergence of elites (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2007; Chilowa, 1998). Banda's control over access to land was used to systematically reward political loyalty. Thus, there was a strong link between membership of the national elite and access to land. However, Jul-Larsen and Mvula (2007) argue that although some elites maintained their influence through large estate holdings, the most prominent and powerful elites were being reproduced through their political control rather than through their control of production. Therefore, in the post-independence era, it was not through access to land that individuals were members of the socio-economic elite but through their access to political power or positions in the civil service (p.179).

From independence onwards, the national elite were a small, close-knit group that was connected through various economic, political and social activities. Most elites held government positions, such as parliamentary or civil service positions, but also owned newspapers or various business ventures, such as transport or the running of state enterprises, or were involved in the growing of tobacco. Thus elites participated in a tight web of interconnected social relationships (Anders, 2001).

5.3.3 The Democratic Period

Since Malawi moved from a highly centralized one-party state to a more democratic system, there is evidence of expansion, diversification and wider influence on policy decisions within the elite. The

institutions created in the initial period of democratic rule have provided the incentives and space within which a variety of elites can pursue their interests (Von Doepp, 2002). Social mobility and the economic basis of elites are no longer solely dependent on political or bureaucratic positions but also reflect growth in the private sector. In addition, the intensification of aid to Malawi following political liberalisation in 1994 has provided civil society with the finances and international expertise to develop policies concerning poverty and also to influence government policy through advocacy. The international and national non-governmental organizations involved are staffed by university-educated individuals, and at times civil servants and academics supplement their incomes by acting as consultants for international agencies (Swidler and Watkins, 2009). Jul-Larsen and Mvula (2007) note that an over-reliance on aid (see Appendix 9) by the Malawian government since 1994 means that aid has played an important role in social differentiation in Malawi.

On the other hand, the state's tolerance of diversity in society has expanded, so that civil society and private sector elites have interacted with public sector elites on various issues, especially on the welfare of the poor. For instance, Chingaipe and Leftwich (2007) note that the Malawi Economic Growth Strategy (MEGS) was developed in partnership with the private sector and the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS) places the private sector at the centre of economic growth and poverty reduction. Public-private partnerships are being encouraged through the Private Sector Development Strategy and Reform Programme for Malawi 2007-2011. As indicated in Chapter 4 (4.3.3), civil society elites in Malawi have made a significant and visible difference in representing the poor by developing relationships with policy-making bodies. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have successfully lobbied to be involved in technical discussions on the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP), and they monitor core social sectors such as agriculture, education, health and governance-related expenditures. The national budget is the main area in which CSOs continue to participate to encourage pro-poor spending and prudent management (James and Malunga, 2006; Bamusi, 2007). However,

although the state has accepted the existence of CSOs as an alternative voice to government, the magnitude and sustainability of these contributions to the development process is debatable, especially as their independence is questionable and their sustainability dependent on donor funding (James and Malunga, 2006).

Democracy has also increased the space for the academic and media sectors to contribute to development processes. These sectors have been involved in the technical and monitoring aspects of the MPRSP, in order to promote accountability and transparency. The media have also been involved in the dissemination of information on various policies, for instance they have disseminated government information on HIV/Aids to young people (Manyozo, 2004; Kerr and Mapanje, 2002). There is, however, continuing suppression of the media and restriction on academic freedom⁴³ such that their contribution to development is limited.

Despite the difficulties in accurately measuring increased wealth and inequality, a comparatively wealthy and educated elite has developed since independence and the trend toward more general inequalities of income has not been reduced by government (Thomas, 1975). However, contemporary elites seem to rely less on bureaucratic position, wealth and political power, than did elites during the one-party system. Since 1994 the civil service has experienced a loss of its professional work ethic, because the possibility of securing employment is dependent on political, family or regional/ethnic connections and not on merit (Booth et al., 2006, DFID, 2004). Thus positions in the civil service are filled by political cronies, sidelining senior officials in a way that de-motivates them and reduces administrative efficiency (Booth et al., 2006). On the other hand, elites have been attracted to perceived opportunities in the business and NGO sectors. Thus professional elites in the private, media, CSO, INGO and academic sectors have emerged; and these new elites have to some extent entered into

⁴³ For instance the recent dismissal by President Mutharika of several lecturers at the University of Malawi over the content of a lecture that pointed out that, social problems could lead to social uprisings, as evidenced in Tunisia and Egypt (Nyasatimes, 2011).

partnerships with the Government on poverty issues. Generally, political elites can no longer exercise monopoly power over decision-making as they did under the one-party state. Thus, a change from one-party politics to democratic politics has influenced the transformation of elites in Malawi. The next section discusses Malawi's politics and poverty policy.

5.4 Politics and Poverty Policy in Malawi

Under the one-party state, anti-poverty policy was not a priority; but by 1994 there was a political consensus on the importance of reducing poverty in Malawi. However, over the past 30 years there has not been a significant reduction in poverty, and per capita income has grown by only 0.2% percent per annum, despite attempts by successive governments and donors to improve the lives of the poor. In addition, Malawi faces several challenges, some longstanding, others newer. Among them are its landlocked position, the AIDS pandemic, chronic malnutrition, declining soil fertility, shortages of land, food insecurity and inadequate agricultural policies (Conroy, 2006; Action Aid, 2006). These challenges, which make the poor even more vulnerable, mean that for every 30% of the population that moves out of poverty, 30% of the non-poor become poor (MGDS, 2006-2011). There has, however been a modest improvement in Human Development Indicators (HDIs), especially for the areas of life expectancy (up by 10 years), education (enrolment levels up by 3%) and GNI (up 21%). Between 1980 and 2010, Malawi's overall HDI rose by 1.3% annually, from 0.258 to 0.385, moving Malawi from 164th position in the HDI figures for 2008 to 153rd out of 169 countries in the HDI figures for 2010 (see HDR, 2010; Conroy, 2006). According to Malawi's welfare survey of 2009, poverty has declined from 52.4% in 2005 to 39% in 2010⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ It is important to note that the Welfare Survey does not measure all the dimensions of poverty, as does the Integrated Household Survey, which indicated that poverty was 63 percent in 1998 and 52.4 percent in 2005. The 2010 HDR indicates that multidimensional poverty in Malawi stands at 72.3 percent of the population and the intensity of deprivation is 53.2%.

Poverty in Malawi is experienced through unemployment and lack of access to resources or social services such as education and health services; therefore those living in the rural areas of Malawi are more likely to be poor. For instance, 56% of the rural population is living in poverty compared to 25% in urban areas, and 25% are ultra-poor compared to 6% in urban areas. This is mainly because rural areas are less developed than urban areas in terms of roads, schools, health and business centres. In addition, the manner in which agricultural policies have been implemented in Malawi over the past 40 years has served to increase inequality. The rural poor own small pieces of land, which has increased their vulnerability to poverty because they are unable to produce enough for subsistence (Integrated Household Survey, 2004/2005).

The prevalence of rural poverty does not negate the fact that urban poverty is also severe. There has been a modest level of urbanization in Malawi: in 1964 only 5% of Malawians lived in urban areas; but this figure had grown by 5% and 11% in 1966 and 1987 respectively. According to the 1998 and 2008 censuses, 14% and 15% of Malawi's population lived in urban areas in these two years. The fact that the increase in urban populations has not been matched by a growth in urban employment levels or in decent housing has worsened the life of the urban poor and led to the spread of slums. Only 35,000 jobs are created each year for 200,000 job seekers. Without employment, people are unable to pay for services such as health, education and clean water and are also more vulnerable to inflation. In urban settings there has been an escalation in cases of armed robbery, suggesting that there is a link between the level of poverty and that of social ills, such as crime (USAID, 2002; Englund, 2002c; NSO, 1998 and 2008).

The period between 1964 and 1980 was one in which Malawi achieved unprecedented levels of economic development (GDP averaged 5.6% annually) despite being an autocratic state (Pryor, 1990). However, Banda's market-based policies, the aim of which was to increase national income, meant that

social protection took the form of price controls and subsidies. Although these policies brought some successes⁴⁵, many Malawians did not benefit from them or from Banda's impressive economic performance (GOM, 2005; Fozzard and Simwaka, 2002). Conversely, the implementation of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) between 1981 and the early 1990s meant that the only visible poverty reduction initiatives were food transfers and targeted nutrition programmes. SAPs had a negative impact on food security, and this saw Malawi experiencing a food crisis in 1987 that forced the Government to import 140,000 metric tonnes of maize. In terms of GDP, Malawi experienced a growth rate of just over 1% in 1986 and less than 1% in 1987, leading to an increase in poverty in the 1980s (Conroy, 2006). With the policies Banda implemented, an increase in poverty was inevitable, given the Government's previous low expenditure on social services (Chinsinga, 2002). Banda tried to reverse the situation by adopting a special programme called the Social Dimension of Adjustment in 1990 to ensure that social and poverty concerns were integrated into development policy.

However, by 1993, Banda was being ousted from power, and in 1994, the democratically elected United Democratic Front (UDF) government, led by Muluzi, a former secretary general of Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP) who also held several ministerial positions in the Banda regime, allocated substantial funds to social sectors such as free primary education and health (Nthara, 2003). The Muluzi government's overarching goal was poverty reduction based on the reversal of Banda's policies. The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), devised in 1994, guided policy and aimed to empower the poor to change their life circumstances. PAP interventions, many of which were market-oriented, included credit schemes, targeted input subsidies, public works, cash or food for work and integrated livelihood support. Despite being well articulated, the PAP had little impact on actual

⁴⁵ Despite the emphasis on the productive rather than the social sectors, there were some improvements in social welfare. 'Infant mortality declined from 200 per 1000 in 1964 to 130, and per capita daily calorie intake increased from 2,250 in 1964 to 2,400 in 1975' (AFRODAD 2007:18; Booth et al., 2006). Between 1964 and 1979 the economy grew at an impressive rate: GDP rose from 0.3% in 1964 to 19.7% in 1979; industrial output expanded at the rate of 10% per annum. The average economic growth was estimated at 6% compared to only a 2.9% growth rate per annum. Domestic exports rose from US\$48 million in 1970 to US\$285 million in 1980 (Chirwa and Chilowa, 1997; Pryor, 1990).

programmes and expenditure decisions. There was no real understanding of who the poor were, what poverty was, the specific solutions to be applied to different dimensions of poverty, the stakeholders who should be involved in implementing pro-poor policy, what each institution's activities were, and especially who was responsible for translating the PAP into concrete activities (Kennedy, 1996; Chinsinga, 2002; Bloom et al., 2005; Slater and Tsoka, 2007). The above problems, coupled with lack of 'political will', made any real changes in the life of the poor difficult (Chirwa, 2004). Despite its pro-poor stance, the PAP still operated within the policy environment of market-oriented policies under SAPs, without consideration of the impact SAPs would have on its agenda. For example, the Government failed to recognize that the full privatisation of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) might have an impact on the ability of the poor to empower themselves, as this closed the only ready market where they could sell their produce (Chinsinga, 2002).

Ellis et al. (2003) observe that, by 1999, Malawi had abandoned the PAP, discarding any lessons learnt from its implementation, and had adopted the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP), which became fully operational in 2002. The MPRSP divided social welfare provision into support for different categories of the poor, mainly according to disability and their capacity to work (see Appendices 9 and 10). A distinguishing feature of the MPRSP was its commitment to the classification of certain budget lines under the programme as Pro-Poor Expenditure (PPE), which were to be protected against cuts. Despite these efforts the MPRSP failed to have the desired impact, as resources were diverted to non-priority areas. In 2003, instead of a projected PPE expenditure of 25.2%, there was a decline of 9.2% (IMF and IDA, 2003; GoM, 2005). Muluzi's preoccupation with domestic political rivalries and bolstering the UDFs position in Parliament seriously undermined the implementation of the stated objective of poverty alleviation. Rather, he satisfied the economic interests of his supporters within the legislature and electoral constituencies and resorted to populist policies (Fozzard and Simwaka, 2002; Von Doepp, 2002).

The second democratic government, elected in 2004, and led by Mutharika, recognised that economic growth should be complemented by equality policies. Inequality in Malawi remains a significant concern as the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) of 2008 shows: 'The richest 10 percent of the population has a median per capita income that is eight times higher than the median per capita income of the poorest 10 percent. Moreover, the richest 10 percent of the population has a median income that is three times higher than the overall median income in the country.' (p.146). The Mutharika government adopted a growth-oriented strategy, guided by the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), which focused on agriculture and food security, irrigation and water development, transport and communication, infrastructure development, and the prevention and management of nutritional disorders, HIV and AIDS (Government of Malawi, 2007).

In order to respond to poverty specifically, the Mutharika government developed the Malawi Social Protection Framework in 2006 to move the country towards long-term social protection. Prior to the implementation of this social protection policy, measures for dealing with poverty had been ad hoc and short-term. There were some extensive programmes, particularly the Malawi Agricultural Inputs Subsidy Programme, but the resources were thinly spread and failed to have the desired impact. According to Tsoka and Slater (2007), the Social Protection Policy initiative is a more long-term, predictable programme that helps poor households deal with risk and disaster through a more institutionalized and coordinated approach. The interventions implemented under the Social Protection Policy address different types of vulnerability, such as chronic poverty, disasters and market failures. Thus, productivity-enhancing interventions, such as agricultural subsidies, cash transfers or public works are targeted at economically active people who lack access to assets, inputs or markets; whereas, direct welfare transfers, such as food and cash transfers, range from short-term relief during periods of disaster (e.g. drought or floods) to institutionalised social security (old age pensions, cash transfers dispensed mainly to the elderly and female- or child-headed households, and school meals

programmes). These interventions, in particular the Agricultural Subsidy Programme, have improved food security for destitute and vulnerable households, as maize production has increased⁴⁶ since 2005 (Chinsinga and O'Brien, 2008; Slater and Tsoka, 2007; Devereux et al, 2006). A summary of social protection strategies (see Table 5.2) implemented since 1964 shows that they have been heavily market-oriented, with a concentration on productivity-enhancing initiatives, and Appendix 12 shows a timeline for the major policies that have underpinned poverty reduction in Malawi.

⁴⁶ The 2005-2006 maize harvest of 2.6 million metric tonnes was half a million greater than Malawi's annual requirement of 2.1 million tonnes. The surplus for the 2006-2007 growing season was 1.3 million tonnes, and during this period, Malawi became a net exporter of food within the Southern African region (Chinsinga and O'Brien, 2008:33).

Table 5.2: A Summary of Social Protection Policies in Malawi

| Period | Types of Intervention | Comments |
|-------------|---|---|
| 1964-1981 | Input and output price controls Universal input subsidy Farmers' clubs and input credit facilities | Few formal safety net interventions (beyond price controls/subsidies). Market-based policies and practices predominated. This can best be described as 'the good old days' in terms of protection from exposure to the effects of poverty and covariant shocks. |
| 1981-1990 | Input and output price decontrols Phasing out of universal subsidies Targeted nutrition programmes Food transfers (relief) | SAPS forced the Government to dismantle the social protection system with no replacements. The period had no effective protection for the poor and vulnerable, except in emergencies. |
| 1990-1994 | Interventions under the Social Dimension of Adjustment, including credit schemes (Malawi Mudzi Fund) Targeted nutrition programmes and food transfers | Inspired by calls for 'adjustment with a human face'. Politics in the early 1990s weakened farmers' clubs, which led to the collapse of the credit system. The effect was that the little that remained for the smallholder collapsed. |
| 1994- 2006 | MSMEs credit scheme Public works programme, cash for work, food for work Input transfers (starter packs, targeted inputs) Food transfers (relief and other types) School meals Cash transfers (pilot) Targeted input subsidies Targeted nutrition programmes Integrated livelihood support | Dominated by government and donor initiatives. Gradual increase in NGOs offering social protection. Input transfers took advantage of the collapse of the credit scheme, escalating input prices and the frequent droughts. Food transfers and food programmes became annual, as food insecurity increased. Interventions were targeted on reducing and alleviating poverty. |
| 2006 - 2011 | Social Protection Policy: social cash transfers and agricultural subsidies Non-contributory old age pensions (planned) Community development projects Public works programme Cash and food for work Capacity building for vulnerable and marginalised people (e.g. orphans, the elderly, those infected with HIV/AIDS) | This is an attempt by the Government of Malawi to move from safety-net programming to more long-term, predictable social protection that helps poor households deal with risks and disasters through a more institutionalised and coordinated approach. The goal of these interventions is to ensure food security, raise household incomes and enhance productivity. The Government has also been planning old age pensions, which have yet to be implemented. |

Sources: Slater and Tsoka (2007) Malawi Social Protection Status Report, World Bank, p.21, (Between 1964 and 2006); Government of Malawi (2007) (Between 2006 – 2011).

5.4.1 Neopatrimonialism and Poverty Policy in Malawi

This sub-section discusses the political context in which poverty reduction initiatives have been implemented in Malawi and it shows that political systems and neopatrimonialism do not fully explain the pro-poor outcomes or lack thereof; and that understanding the role of elites is essential to understanding pro-poor policy success or failure.

Although there have been some modest rates of economic growth between 1964 and the present day (HDR, 2010), underlying the changes in the political system has been pervasive and constant poverty, as well as inequality. One explanation for the continued poverty is that an extremely small elite simultaneously control both the economic and the political spheres in Malawi, taking the formal political processes and decision-making away from formal/public spaces and re-positioning them in informal spaces from which the poor are excluded (Booth et al, 2006). Ruling elites are considered to have failed to successfully implement much-needed pro-poor policies, as public resources have been directed towards constituencies rather than national development. Politics in Malawi has been about negotiating development for localised constituencies. Neopatrimonial politics has been an unchanging feature of both authoritarian and democratic rule, resulting in a politics that is personalised, based on money, and centred on a 'big-man' (usually the President) (Englund, 2002).

Between 1964 and 1994, it was Banda's centralisation of power and his 'state monopoly capitalism' that fused state and business in Banda himself, and which played a key role in the 'cultivation of patrimonial populism which created a mix of private and public sector activity' (Harrigan, 2001:31). In order to promote a populist platform, the ADMARC was used to maintain rural markets that provided subsidised agricultural inputs and purchased crops; whilst profits from the Press Holding Company were used to construct Kamuzu Academy⁴⁷ and build houses for senior members of the Malawi Women's League. In

⁴⁷ Kamuzu Academy is a secondary school based on the British public school model (Harrigan, 2001).

addition, Banda converted one million hectares of leasehold land into estates and provided these to aspiring commercial farmers, many of them bureaucrats, MPs and party members. Thus, Malawi's political economy was a semi-state, interventionist, capitalist economy sustained through political patronage, traditionalism and populism (Harrigan, 2001; Cammack and Kelsall, 2011).

Neopatrimonialism was evident in the 1994 and 1998 parliamentary and presidential election results, which clearly showed voting along regional and ethnic⁴⁸ lines (see Appendix 13) (Chirwa, 2005:2), as the electorate believed that to get access to resources, one needed to vote for a person with whom one had kinship ties (Fozzard and Simwaka, 2002:14). UDF elites had frequently suggested at rallies that those who voted for the opposition would not benefit from development initiatives (DFID, 2004). In 1994 and 1998, regionalism produced a hung parliament, making it difficult for the ruling party to have its bills and policies approved and passed in Parliament. This created a need for coalitions, to ensure that policies were approved (Chirwa, 1994). Since 1994, the UDF government has entered into coalitions with other parties and bought individual MPs to join the UDF. Patronage used to boost Muluzi's numerical superiority in Parliament influenced the award of contracts, the appointment, and the protection of corrupt politicians, including ministers and cabinet appointments (Cammack, 2004:9).

Unlike Banda, the UDF's ruling elites have used their influence to siphon off public and project funds to their personal accounts or for party campaigning. In 1995 the UDF/AFORD coalition was accused of handing over funds meant for poverty alleviation to loyal parliamentarians (DFID, 2004). Promises of free food, fertiliser, shoes, houses, bicycles and credit, have been used to garner support. An illustration of this is the Government's decision to expand massively the free distribution of seeds and

⁴⁸ With the UDF capturing the southern region, the MCP the central region, and the AFORD the northern region, where the leaders of each party come from.

fertiliser, and the provision of free secondary schooling, in the run-up to the 1999 general elections (Fozzard and Simwaka, 2002:11).

The various political parties in Malawi cannot be distinguished from one another by their ideologies or programmes, as they compete on a populist agenda. Thus, to suppress opposition to his rule, Muluzi has resorted to the use of Banda's tradition of violence, and at times has banned all public demonstrations (Maroleng, 2003). As Ott et al. argue, the present crop of politicians in Malawi 'learned their politics at the feet of Banda and the default mode of their responses is undemocratic and you have to remind them constantly of the new political dispensation' (Ott et al., 2003:21). For instance, the UDF's leader, Muluzi, served as the MCP's secretary general until 1982, when he fell out with Banda; the UDF's secretary general had been Minister of Health in the MCP government until fired in 1991; and the UDF's Aleke Banda had a reputation as head of the much feared Malawi Young Pioneers⁴⁹ and was in charge of several portfolios in the Banda government. 'In reality they came together because they had been marginalised from the political and power arrangement of the Banda regime (Ihonvbere, 1997:232).

Thus the culture of silence, unquestioning loyalty and the need to please the President represents continuity between the old and the new Malawi. The President is still seen as being above criticism (Ott et al., 2003:17), and undue respect for authority is pervasive in most traditional settings. This has serious implications for policy implementation, as any attempt to criticise or challenge authority is seen as insubordination, seriously reducing the space for policy dialogue and participation (Bwalya et al., 2004:18).

⁴⁹ The Malawi Young Pioneers were established in 1964 and represented the paramilitary wing of the Malawi Congress Party. Up to 1967, the Young Pioneers were mainly concerned with rural development work and political indoctrination. However, over the years, the MYP became the most dreaded agent of Banda's brutality, a major instrument for the operationalisation of Dr Banda's one-party state dictatorship and domestic terrorism. The Pioneers bore arms and conducted espionage and intelligence operations, besides being the most trusted bodyguards around Banda (Chirambo, 2004).

Contemporary political culture in Malawi is in many ways similar to that of the Banda times, as can be seen in the arguments during the UDF's bid for a third term. In a move reminiscent of the Banda regime, the UDF created a youth wing called the Young Democrats who were used to carry out violent acts against the Opposition, especially during the 1999 and 2004 elections, as well as during the third term debate. Following a critical letter written to UDF leader Muluzi by the Muslim community in 2001, 'One Sheikh was beaten up after the opening of Parliament by youths shouting – are you happy when the bwana (master) is insulted?' (Englund, 2002:193). What is problematic, argues Englund, is not only the violence but the reference to the President as 'master', denoting someone who is above criticism and whose power can partly be entrenched through the use of violence and intimidation. This was reminiscent of the Banda era, where critical comments about the MCP, the Government or the President were punished by the regime. Banda would often insist to Malawians that, 'We need to be disciplined and obedient, not argumentative and contradictory. Don't go this way when you are told to go that way, don't ask why and don't ask if it is necessary' (Hirshmann 1995:250).

Therefore, the Malawi Government is still referred to as 'boma'⁵⁰ and Meinhardt and Patel (2003) argue that the reference to government as 'boma', has serious implications for political culture. 'In the minds of the ordinary people, the government is conceptualised and understood as a powerful and feared institution that operates at the top and the people do not see themselves as part of the governance process' (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003:51). For example, despite corruption being rampant under the Muluzi government, it did not elicit any strong public condemnation, and corrupt acts by elites were tolerated even when very few of the benefits filtered down to ordinary people. This is mainly because social relationships are characterised by inequality and a large power distance; collectivism in the value system generates conformism and tolerance of mediocrity; and there is an aversion to uncertainty and assertive behaviour which results in a low tolerance for dissent. Thus, 'In Malawi hierarchy is expected,

⁵⁰ 'Boma' is a Swahili word for the enclosure around the dwelling units of traditional chiefs, slave owners or colonial masters (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003).

inequality is desired and anticipated. Less powerful people are expected to be dependent on more powerful people; women defer to men; subordinates envision being told what to do and the according of privileges and status to members of the elites is expected and welcome' (Booth et al., 2006: 18). This attitude has affected the development of mutual support and initiatives among the citizens (Inglehart, 1988) and the creation of a national identity (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003).

The bulk of the literature⁵¹ on neopatrimonialism has tended to argue that this characteristic of African politics is inherent in authoritarian regimes. Thus, neopatrimonialism is seen as non-democratic, providing mechanisms and norms that stabilise authoritarian regimes and undermine political participation, as well as being the key cause of Africa's economic crisis (Van de Walle, 2007). Neopatrimonialism conceptualised in this way fails to grasp adequately the ideational and variegated undercurrents that shape African politics. Much of the discourse on neopatrimonialism has tended to ignore its legal-rational dimension and has concentrated on the patrimonial aspect. It is interesting to see that in the 1970s patrimonialism was considered important for ensuring cohesion in African societies, but in its contemporary form it is regarded as a threat to political and socio-economic development and a cause of weakness in states (Chabal, 2002; Erdmann and Engel, 2006).

In Malawi, neopatrimonialism has been evident across both democratic and authoritarian dispensations. Presidential patronage has been effective in buying off MPs, and political parties have remained weakly institutionalised groupings of the followers of particular personalities (Cammack et al, 2007; O'Neil, 2007; Booth et al, 2006). Like many African states, Malawi exhibits characteristics that defy the goals formulated in the democratisation process. These goals, according to which citizens would be autonomous, discrete and self-referential individuals, run contrary to African attitudes, where the individual's identity is formulated with reference to the community. Hence political systems function

⁵¹ For a discussion of neopatrimonialism as anti-democratic and an explanatory factor in economic crisis in Africa, see Erdmann and Engel, 2007; Van de Walle, 2007; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; and Van de Walle, 2001.

⁵⁰ 'Boma' is a Swahili word for the enclosure around the dwelling units of traditional chiefs, slave owners or colonial masters (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003).

according to the logic of community, which is informal and produces relationships that are based on kinship, ethnicity or regionalism. (Chabal, 2002:453). Leftwich and Hogg (2008) argue that formal institutions introduced by the international community are considered alien to the historical traditions, institutional legacies, cultural patterns and value systems of African societies; and so, these institutions are often distorted, undermined or by-passed. Englund (2002) describes multipartyism, regular parliamentary and presidential elections, new constitutions, freedom of expression and the existence of a non-governmental sector as the 'paraphernalia of democracy' that ensures the flow of development aid, but does not really change the neopatrimonial character of African states.

However, neopatrimonialism might not always be a negative feature in the implementation of pro-poor policy. For example, 'The success of the Asian Tigers was not a result of good governance, but a positive form of cronyism (patron-clientelism), which involved the mobilization of deeply rooted ethnic, regional and familial networks, and reciprocating systems of payoffs and political patronage', (Hyung-Gon, 2003:25). Kelsall et al. (2010) argue that there is evidence of developmental patrimonialism where rent-creation and distribution is geared towards long-term and productive activities, and non-developmental patrimonialism, where rent-creation and distribution are short-term and geared towards non-productive activities, in countries like Malawi.

The period between 1964 and 1979 in which Malawi achieved unprecedented levels of economic development (Pryor, 1990) saw a pattern of centralised, long-term rent-seeking and technocratic integrity. Therefore, Banda created a political culture and structures that enabled him to determine the major rents that would be created and how to distribute them. The creation of rents was determined by Banda's vision⁵² and the ability of the bureaucracy to provide robust and technically sound advice to the ruling elites. The period between 1980 and 1994 saw a reversal of this trend: although still centralised,

⁵² Banda's vision was to construct roads, a railway, a university, and a new capital city, Lilongwe, which he achieved (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011).

Banda's power had begun to wane due to his age (80s), and his management of rents also weakened. Rents became geared towards short-term needs and the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), which not only disrupted the system for channelling rents but also changed the types of rent-creation and distribution that could be encouraged. As a result, growth stagnated⁵³ and never again reached the heights it reached between 1964 and 1979 (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011).

Generally, the authoritarian system under which Dr Banda ruled from 1964-1994 enabled him to use repression, charisma, populism and traditional authority to gain legitimacy. His state-sponsored repression gave his patronage a distinctive character, where patronage followed policy. Excessive patronage was limited, and through his Crop Inspection Tours, Malawians were made to feel part of the development process. It has been argued in the literature that until the fiscal crisis hit in the 1980s, Malawi was seen as a developmental state⁵⁴ (see Chapter 2). Banda had a clear and well-articulated development vision for Malawi, which he sought to implement. It may have been the wrong policy (intra-sectoral bias, which skewed income distribution, resulting in massive inequalities) but it was consistently elaborated and followed (Cammack, 2007; Booth et al, 2006). The Public Sector Investment Plan (PSIP) went through an iterative process to ensure affordability and alignment with development plans. The civil service is considered to have been more professional and more highly motivated under Banda. Even though there was a stifling of independent thinking, technical advice was given and taken. The civil service had a high status, and civil servants were respected, honest, disciplined, well paid and hardworking. Corruption was centralised under Banda's rule, and even though profits were siphoned off from state companies, Banda's patronage was less damaging than Muluzi's, as economic rents were geared towards building a modern economic infrastructure,

⁵³ GDP fell by 3.3%, 7.9% and 12.4% in 1988, 1991 and 1994 respectively (Kaluwa et al, 1992).

⁵⁴ Malawi's semi-state-led, export-oriented development strategy, the indirect manner in which a strong state intervened in the economy and the resulting blurring of the private and public sector, is similar to the development strategies of the Asian tigers, who have been considered developmental states (Harrigan, 2001:47).

stimulating commercial farming, and creating an African business class (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011; Booth et al, 2006; Anders, 2002).

In contrast, the democratic period between 1994-2004 saw a pattern of decentralised, short-term rent management, a deterioration of the civil service and deteriorating growth rates (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011; Cammack et al, 2010). Muluzi, who ruled under a democratic political system from 1994 to 2004, relied on patronage to gain legitimacy, even more so than Banda, as the new political rules created insecurity⁵⁵ for the ruling elite. Muluzi did not have a clear vision for Malawi, and a lack of discipline at the top saw increasing democratisation of corruption and the informalisation of public administration. The result was political and economic chaos and a failure to consolidate democracy. During this time, patronage is said to have driven policy: Loyalists were appointed to parastatal boards and government posts, and cronies to cabinet positions, which enabled the siphoning off of monies from the public coffers to fund political careers, pay-off supporters, enable individuals to get rich, and hire UDF youths to crush opponents (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011; Cammack, 2007; Booth et al, 2006). Justin Malewezi, who once served as Vice President in Muluzi's administration, indicated in his manifesto that only 25% of government decisions were implemented, and the civil service was regarded as an avenue for self-enrichment. Muluzi not only gobbled up the profits from state-owned enterprises such as the ADMARC, but also consumed the country's capital assets (Booth et al, 2006). This was a non-developmental neopatrimonialism which had serious implications for economic growth, policy-making and poverty reduction (Kelsall, 2011).

⁵⁵ 'Muluzi had to contend with opposition parties, multi-party elections, a minority government and coalition forming, and errant MPs who could possibly be bought by other parties' leaders. To retain support, the President needed resources to distribute: he appointed (often unqualified) loyalists to parastatal boards for instance, increased the size of his cabinet to include more cronies, and oversaw the siphoning off of funds from government coffers by senior party people for political and personal ends' (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011:91).

According to Cammack and Kelsall (2011), the period since 2004, in which Malawi has been led by Mutharika, has seen a return of some aspects of Banda's centralised, long-term rent management and the promotion of a disciplined civil service. Mutharika, who came to power in 2004 under Muluzi's UDF government, inherited a weakly institutionalised democratic political system, with a weak economy and an ineffective administration. His subsequent break from the UDF and the formation of his own political party left Mutharika without support within the elite and at grassroots level. He used patronage and clientelism to build support, and took on the leadership styles of both Muluzi (personality politics and distribution of public resources to clients) and Banda⁵⁶, although many argue that his leadership style is closer to that of Banda. He reached out to civil society and the media, took a zero-tolerance stand on corruption, and implemented populist policies such as input subsidies. He used public office appointments to encourage opposition politicians to join his party and harassed the media and threatened his opponents, mostly with prosecution for previous corrupt practices (Cammack, 2007). Mutharika has sought the support of traditional leaders and elevated himself to heights similar to those reached by Banda. In 2008, the title of 'Ngwazi⁵⁷' was conferred on him by the Ngoni chiefs. This was a title used by Banda, which served to portray Mutharika, as a powerful leader, full of wisdom. However, Mutharika has gained support from donors and Malawians over the implementation of the subsidised inputs programme which has seen Malawi's food production secure over two planting seasons (Cammack, 2007:12). Cammack and Kelsall (2011) have termed Mutharika's first term in office as 'hard budget clientelism': elite political support was bought, partly through access to rents in the business sector, but not in a way that derailed the macro-economy or the development vision.

During Mutharika's rule there has been a considerable degree of growth (see Section 5.2), but since 2009, the economy has faltered and faced several crises: an exit of cotton and tobacco buyers, shortages of foreign currency, artificially high exchange rates and the emergence of a black market in

⁵⁶ Mutharika, like Banda, worked hard and took time over details, studying policy memos, quizzing his senior staff, and debating policy with them (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011:92).

⁵⁷ Ngwazi means 'conqueror' and invoked fear amongst Malawians in the Banda era (Cammack, 2007).

currency, fuel shortages, budget overspends and the withdrawal of budget support by the DFID, the World Bank, the ADB, Norway and Germany (Cammack and Kelsall, 2011; DFID, 2011). It would seem that Mutharika's second term represents a return to Muluzi's short-term rent-seeking and this seems to be affecting the development project.

During these different periods, formal and informal institutions interacted but produced quite different outcomes, leading the 'Drivers of Change' study in Malawi to conclude that development in Malawi will not necessitate a sharp break with neopatrimonialism (2004; Jutting et al., 2007). Some authors (Booth et al., 2006; Ihonvbere, 1997; Kelsall et al, 2010) argue that Malawi needs to revert to the pattern of 1964-1993, where patronage followed policy rather than policy being entirely driven by patronage. According to Kelsall et al. (2010), centralised control over rents, organised clientelism and a long-term approach to rent management would lead to support for development goals and control over corruption. In addition, ruling elites need to draw on a nationalism that can invoke powerful and widely shared moral symbols, as in some periods of Malawi's political history. This would require the formation of norms, values and moral judgments that encompassed emotional attachments and patterns of identity and affinity (Duffield 1999). However, wherever informal institutions dominate, the exercise of power is discretionary and behaviour is determined by moral and social norms rather than by the rule of law. The answer lies in the discretionary power state actors have to control and allocate public resources in society (Jutting et al, 2007).

Although democracy opens up societies to popular participation in policy-making processes, ensures that state power is no longer the preserve of the executive and the bureaucracy, and makes state actors accountable to the legislatures and more transparent in their dealings with citizens (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005), variations in development outcomes are a result of how elites exercise power (Helmke and Levitsky, 2006; see also Leftwich and Hogg, 2008). In countries like Malawi, where the state is not

properly institutionalised, the judicial system is deficient; and where there is no productive investment in society, it is difficult to understand how electoral competition alone can result in better government and a more efficient framework for economic growth and poverty reduction (Chabal, 2002). Interest should be directed towards how the self-binding element of ruling elites can be institutionalised, or how to restrain or mitigate the worst effects of neopatrimonialism (Hyden, 2008; Kelsall, 2008).

The above discussion shows that the exercise of power is discretionary, and behaviour is determined by the discretionary power that state elites have to control and allocate public resources. In Malawi, where elites have great influence over political, social and economic life, they can now enhance their importance by implementing development policy. The particular personalities and leadership styles of Malawi's post-independence presidents (Dr Kamuzu Banda, Bakili Muluzi and Bingu Wa Mutharika), and the changing environment in which they have governed, has influenced economic development and anti-poverty policies. These leaders have differed in their approaches to policy, especially in terms of policy consistency, long-term vision, ability to discipline and coordinate both donors and different arms of government in line with their vision, prioritisation of objectives and resources, and the improvements they have brought about in civil service performance (Booth et al., 2006; Cammack, 2007). All the factors identified as key to the success of economic reform in the literature are dependent on effective elites, for instance: the government's level of understanding of economic issues, its commitment to reform, the insulation of key technocrats, and their ability to build coalitions on behalf of reform (Gyimah-Boadi and Van de Walle, 1996:228). In Malawi, where elites have increasing influence over political, social and economic life, they are important in implementing development policy.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the socio-economic and political characteristics of Malawian society that underpin the persistence and pervasiveness of poverty and inequality. It has reflected on social changes, political culture and poverty from the colonial period to the present time. It has shown that the rise and transformation of elites has been related to political developments and changes in the economic philosophy and social policies of Malawi. Between 1964 and 1994, Banda's centralisation of power and quasi-state capitalism led to the formation of business and bureaucratic elites, as well as political elites whose wealth was based on involvement in estate farming or state enterprises. There was limited space for media, academic and civil society elites to participate in decision-making. Since the transition to democracy began in 1994, there has been an expansion and diversification within the elite. The economic basis of elites is no longer limited to access to bureaucratic or political positions. The intensification of aid has created a professional layer of media, academic and civil society elites. In addition, liberalisation and privatisation have introduced a medium in which private enterprise can develop. Despite this expansion, elites still remain a close-knit group, with individuals straddling worlds as diverse as political positions newspaper ownership and other business activities. On the other hand, aid dependence has pushed Malawian elites towards implementing the donors' free-market policies.

The chapter also shows that there was a healthy growth in the economy under Banda's rule; but growth increased inequality. Inequality and poverty continued to grow during Muluzi's rule, a period in which economic development deteriorated and eventually became negative. Since 2004, Mutharika has implemented growth policies alongside equality policies, and these have led to a healthy growth in the economy and some improvement in human development. So it would seem that it is not growth alone that has determined changes in human development indicators: increased spending on social sectors has played a part; anti-poverty policies have been implemented; and there have been institutional

reforms. Yet poverty and inequality persist in Malawi, and the impact of colonialism and the one-party state on political culture and policy are not enough to explain this persistence. It is decisions, actions and inaction by ruling elites that have shaped social change in Malawi and determined the degree of this change. Ruling elites that are committed to development will fashion strategies and institutions in such a way that they respond to their vision and goals for this aspect of the national life. In order to understand the direction and mechanisms of social change in Malawi, we need to understand the perceptions of elites, their preferences, beliefs, values and norms. These issues are discussed in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER SIX: ELITE UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY AND THE POOR IN MALAWI

6.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses respondent's perceptions of the nature and extent of poverty in Malawi. It offers a factual assessment by respondents of the society in which they live, and forms the basis of this study's understanding of elite thinking about the character of the poor, the causes of poverty, and the solutions to poverty. The chapter demonstrates that Malawian respondents are not detached from the community in which they live; nor do they overtly place the blame for poverty on the poor themselves: rather, they display substantial knowledge about the extent and causes of poverty. The chapter will also demonstrate that Malawian respondents' opinions on the consequences of poverty for democracy and economic growth suggest that they perceive poverty to be synonymous with underdevelopment generally.

Of particular interest is Malawian respondents' insistence on thinking of poverty in terms of equity rather than equality. This implies that respondents would prefer that resources were distributed according to the needs of the individual. However, a belief in equity also means a belief in making resources available to 'deserving' individuals who work hard, whereas a belief in equality can mean making resources available to everyone, including 'undeserving' free riders. Again, respondents do not categorise the poor along ethnic lines; nor do their perceptions seem to be laden with value judgements concerning the poor's morality. The poor are not considered very different from the respondents themselves, and there seems to be a perceived bond between respondents and the poor, particularly the rural poor, suggesting a belief that despite differences between elites and the poor, Malawi is seen as a harmonious society.

Respondent's perceptions of the nature, character and extent of poverty are similar, despite the fact that, since the transition to democracy in 1994, the Malawian elite is no longer a narrow-based group dominated by political and bureaucratic elites. The reforms undertaken by government have opened up the market to new entrants: for instance, the private sector has grown and more people are involved in the growing of tobacco and the running of businesses. In addition, there has been a proliferation of civil society organisations, media houses, and INGOs, which has weakened the grip of the old colonial and one-party state elites⁵⁸. Despite this expansion, the respondents expressed a unified view of poverty and inequality, signifying that elites may form a relatively homogenous group with interaction among the different sectors. Despite this, there are some differences in their views: for instance, political and media respondents' descriptions of poverty emphasise access to productive resources such as land, and they appear more sympathetic to the rural poor. In another example of difference, inequality was not a major concern for political respondents, as it was for academic and civil society respondents.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 6.1 discusses respondents' estimation and descriptions of poverty. Section 6.2 focuses on respondents' categorisation of the different types of poor. Section 6.3 examines respondents' views about rural and urban poverty, with an emphasis on their views of the severity of poverty. The discussion in Section 6.4 centres on respondents perceptions of inequality and on their preference for equity as the basis for allocating and distributing resources, and Section 6.5 shows which social groups respondents consider to be most at risk of poverty in Malawi.

6.1. Elite Estimation and Description of Poverty

The results of the survey and semi-structured interviews carried out for this study indicate that Malawian elites are knowledgeable about the problem of poverty and consider it the most important

⁵⁸ See Chapter 5 on the development of elites; Clarke and Sison, 2005

issue facing Malawi. A majority of the respondents opened the interview with a statement of their belief that poverty was real, severe and a problem that would work against Malawi's development. No respondent claimed that poverty was not severe and significant. Even when asked a question that might not seem directly related to poverty, respondents identified poor social conditions as a concern. As the survey results (Table 6.1) show, when asked what the main obstacle to democracy was, social issues such as low educational levels (74% of respondents) and high levels of poverty (71% of respondents) were top of the list. These problems seemed to attract more attention than political issues, despite the prominence at the time of the study of political issues concerned with Section 65⁵⁹. Inflation⁶⁰ was considered far less relevant, although this problem had been seen as a major concern in terms of its impact on growth⁶¹.

Table 6.1 Obstacles to Democracy

| | YES | | NO | |
|---|----------|----|----------|-----|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Low educational levels | 64 | 74 | 22 | 26 |
| High levels of poverty | 61 | 71 | 25 | 29 |
| Lack of party tradition | 36 | 42 | 50 | 58 |
| Incompetence of those in power | 32 | 37 | 54 | 63 |
| Selfishness of elites | 32 | 37 | 54 | 63 |
| Political clientelism | 24 | 28 | 62 | 72 |
| Power centralised in the Executive | 11 | 13 | 75 | 87 |
| High inflation rate | 0 | 0 | 86 | 100 |

*Data derived from questionnaires; *n* = 86

Social issues remained salient amongst the examples cited by elites, even when the latter were asked what they consider to be the most important problems for Malawi. Table 6.2 demonstrates that poverty

⁵⁹ Section 65 authorises the Speaker of the Malawian Parliament to declare vacant the seat of any member of parliament who leaves the party on whose ticket he was elected and joins another party in the National Assembly. As shown in Chapter 5, following the regional and ethnic lines voting took in the elections of 1999 and 2004, ruling parties have not had the overall majority necessary to pass urgently needed bills. This has led to coalitions; but more common has been the movement of party members from the Opposition into ruling parties, attracted by promises of cabinet positions or financial compensation (see Appendix 13).

⁶⁰ According to the IMF, inflation in Malawi was 7.41% in 2010, which is a significant improvement on the inflation of 15.464%, 29.597% and 83.148% in 2005, 2000 and 1995 respectively (World Economic Outlook, 2011). Since 2007 (see Appendix 14) inflation has been within single digits, and this could explain the lack of concern amongst respondents.

⁶¹ Honourable Friday Jumbe, Hansard, Budget Statement of 2003/2004; Hon Goodall Gondwe, Hansard, Budget Statement of 2008/2009.

was the top choice for respondents (90% of respondents) followed by education and health (74% of respondents). Other social issues⁶² received interest from 67% of respondents, as well as unemployment (62%) and income distribution (55%). This awareness of the social problems Malawi is facing is not surprising considering that social issues were at the heart of the struggle for independence (see Chapter 5) and poverty reduction was the platform on which multiparty elections were fought in 1994. Since 1994, poverty reduction and improving social services has been a preoccupation of Malawi's governments. Then again, Malawian elites are not far removed from the poor, since extended family and social network ties are relatively strong (see Chapters 5 and 8), and poverty is quite visible, with beggars a common sight on Malawi's streets⁶³.

Table 6.2 Malawi's Most Important Problems

| | Yes <i>n</i> | % | No <i>n</i> | % |
|--|-----------------|----|----------------|----|
| Poverty | 77 | 90 | 9 | 10 |
| Education and health | 64 | 74 | 22 | 26 |
| Corruption | 62 | 72 | 24 | 28 |
| Other social issues | 58 | 67 | 28 | 33 |
| Unemployment | 53 | 62 | 33 | 38 |
| Income distribution | 47 | 55 | 39 | 45 |
| Foreign dependency | 45 | 52 | 41 | 48 |
| Political patronage/clientelism | 44 | 51 | 42 | 49 |
| Governability | 40 | 47 | 46 | 53 |
| Behaviour of elites | 34 | 40 | 52 | 60 |
| Other political issues | 31 | 36 | 55 | 64 |
| Moral crisis | 28 | 33 | 58 | 67 |
| Inflation | 26 | 30 | 60 | 70 |
| Other economic issues | 26 | 30 | 60 | 70 |

*Data derived from questionnaires, *n* = 86

Consequently, responses derived from semi-structured interviews (see Table 6.3) on the level of poverty in Malawi show that 42% of the respondents considered poverty to affect over 70% of the

⁶² Other social issues that were not itemized in the questionnaire included equality, equity, shelter, overpopulation, gender, crime and HIV/AIDS. These issues were raised by respondents during face-to-face interviews and in their discussions of the character and extent of poverty in Malawi.

⁶³ Agnes Mizere, 'Begging for Survival', *The Sunday Times*, March 2, 2008.

population, whilst a similar percentage considered poverty to affect over 50% of the population. In total 84% of the respondents across different categories believed that over 50% of the population was affected by poverty and only 10% considered poverty to affect less than 49% of the population. This estimation ran contrary to the official view that poverty levels are declining and can now be estimated at a maximum of 40% (see Chapter 5). Some respondents indicated that poverty was as high as 90%, and many within the civil service indicated that 'to be politically correct' then they would estimate poverty at a little over 50%, but if they were being frank, poverty was at least 65%. As one high-ranking government official indicated, '*To be realistic, 70% of Malawians are poor*' (Principal Secretary, Civil Service, 6/6/08)⁶⁴. The respondents (10%) who indicated that poverty affected less than 49% of the population consisted of four bureaucrats and one reporter from a state-owned media house. These respondents indicated a trust in the Government's official statistics. They believed that low poverty levels were a result of improvements in growth and good harvests that had led to food security (Regional Controller, Media, 19/05/08; PS, Civil Service, 17/05/08, 5/05/08, 23/04/08, and 30/04/08).

Table 6.3 Elite Estimate of Poverty

| Elite estimate of the proportion of poor in the population | Elite | |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| | n | % |
| 71-100% | 22 | 42 |
| 51-70% | 22 | 42 |
| 40-50% | 5 | 10 |
| Missing Value | 3 | 6 |
| Total Interviewed | 52 | 100% |

*Derived from semi-structured interviews. Total Respondents = 52

Other respondents (84%) considered that the statistics⁶⁵ being used by the Government were outdated and reflected neither poverty in 2008 nor the number of people threatened with poverty in the future as

⁶⁴ In keeping with a positional definition of elites, all interviews from this page are referenced as follows: (position, organisation and date of interview).

⁶⁵ According to Government of Malawi Welfare Monitoring Surveys, poverty in Malawi decreased from 52.4% in 2004 to 50% in 2005, 40% in 2008 and to 39% in 2009 (see <http://www.nso.malawi.net>).

a result of climate change, food security issues and access to financial resources. In addition, the official estimate of poverty was seen to be based on an international understanding of poverty, rather than a local understanding, which would result in a much higher percentage.

Levels of poverty in Malawi are much higher than the official statistics. The recent statistics indicate that poverty has declined from 65% to 52%, and I think these statistics are suspect. They are meant to serve a political purpose and there is a huge paradox in terms of the relationship between poverty and the elites. On one hand, the elites love the existence of poverty, because it gives them the basis to campaign, for purposes of getting into office. If there was no poverty, there would be no reason to campaign for office, and they have campaigned on the basis of what they can do to alleviate poverty. At the same time, for them to stay in office they have to underplay the level of poverty in order to create the impression that they are doing well to reduce it. This tension ends up distorting the realities of the levels of poverty and in my view 70% of Malawians are struggling. If you look at the prices of food, they have silently risen, so that I have to buy a chicken at MK900 when last month I bought it at MK500. As a lecturer I am struggling to make ends meet and I think of the man who does not have a job or lives in the rural areas, surviving on subsistence farming. How much are they suffering? This is not portrayed by the official statistics (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/05/08).

These higher estimates of the levels of poverty in comparison with official statistics suggest two things: first, a lack of faith in official statistics; and second, that elites perceive high levels of poverty perhaps because poverty really is visible. As earlier stated, Malawian elites are not detached from their communities⁶⁶ and are therefore exposed to the realities of poverty. Most respondents considered poverty a constant companion for Malawians: for example,

In Malawi it is accepted and expected that if you travel ten minutes out of the city, you will not have electricity, running water, sanitation, and that you will see children without clothes on their back or begging by the side of the road during school time. These things are not questioned; they are normal (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08).

During my observations of budget proceedings in parliament, MPs often indicated that poverty was the defining characteristic of Malawi. One MP⁶⁷ said in an almost nonchalant way, ‘Who doesn’t know that there is poverty in Malawi? An analysis of documentary evidence such as newspapers, presidential

⁶⁶ Unlike South Africa, where a study on elite perceptions found that there was a greater geographical distance between elites and the poor, because South African elites lived quite separately from the poor (Kalati and Manor, 2005).

⁶⁷ Honourable Folger Nyirongo, Member of Parliament (observed on 30th April, 2008).

speeches and national assembly debates indicated that there was undoubtedly knowledge of the character and extent of poverty in Malawi. In his speeches from 1994 on, former president Bakili Muluzi often reiterated the importance of reducing poverty and would say, 'When I see poor people, my heart breaks. We can't go on like this'⁶⁸. Presidential speeches from 2004 on by President Mutharika pointed to the importance of moving from poverty to prosperity by strengthening the public, private and agricultural sectors. In addition, my analysis of *The Nation* newspaper shows that since it was launched, in 1996, it has discussed various anti-poverty strategies implemented by Government, from the Poverty Alleviation Programme and the MPRSP to MDGs, pro-poor budgeting and the MGDS. In 2005⁶⁹, *The Nation* published an article where it discussed the 'numerous' economic strategies that had failed to reduce poverty and this was reiterated in a 2006⁷⁰ article that noted that Malawians were still as poor as they had been ten years previously. In addition, in 2008⁷¹ the paper analysed the impact that a pro-poor budget had had on poor people and concluded that the incomes of the poor had not changed.

Nevertheless, respondent's perceptions of a high level of poverty do not necessarily mean that they have a deep understanding of poverty in Malawi, as their views could be a reflection of donor views⁷² about poverty in the country. Many of the respondents were familiar with 'buzzwords'⁷³ in international development discourse, such as 'the poverty line', 'empowerment' and 'participation', which is an indication of their awareness of national and international debates on poverty; but this awareness also creates the space for combined anti-poverty efforts. It is also true, however, that this awareness might also be indicative of Malawi's dependence on donor aid and policies, which several respondents

⁶⁸ Speech delivered by Bakili Muluzi at the launch of a village housing scheme in Mzimba, Malawi on 07/10/2002.

⁶⁹ Ephraim Munthali, 'Numerous strategies, several poor people', *The Nation* on 03/02/2005.

⁷⁰ Willie Zingani, 'Malawians still as poor as ten years ago', *The Nation* on 01/06/2006.

⁷¹ Dumbani Mzale, 'Pro-poor budget: Has a poor man's life changed?' *The Nation on Sunday* on 01/06/2008.

⁷² Several respondents quoted the World Bank, UNICEF and UN statistics on poverty in Malawi and used the poverty line to discuss estimates of poverty in Malawi.

⁷³ See Cornwall and Brock (2005) on buzzwords in development discourse and their implications for development policy.

commented on. One respondent's view captures the mood of those who talked about donor dependency:

The problem that we have had in Malawi is that our policies have been donor driven. We have failed to generate our own policies. All our policies came from donors. They keep coming from donors and from the Bretton Woods institutions (MP, Parliament, 23/03/2008).

Table 6.4 Elite Descriptions of Poverty

| Description of poverty | Elites | |
|---|--------|----|
| | n | % |
| Failure to access basic resources: food, shelter, shoes, clothing | 48 | 92 |
| Lack of access to basic services: health, water, education | 35 | 67 |
| Lack of access to land | 8 | 15 |
| Helplessness/voicelessness; lack of political participation | 7 | 13 |
| Lack of employment (mainly for the urban poor) | 5 | 10 |
| Overpopulation | 1 | 2 |

*Derived from semi-structured interviews with more than one response allowed. Total Respondents = 52

Table 6.4 presents respondents' descriptions of poverty and shows that 92% of the interviewees viewed poverty in terms of lack of well-being or the lack of access to basic resources, with 67% seeing poverty as the lack of access to basic services. Therefore, respondents argued that in Malawi poverty started with the failure to access basic resources such as food, shelter, clothes or shoes followed by lack of access to basic services such as education, medical care, potable water, sanitation and infrastructure, all of which made the poverty situation severe. The concepts used by respondents to convey their ideas about poverty in Malawi seemed to be based on direct observation or interaction with the poor more than on conventional poverty measures such as poverty lines or income. The respondents tended to describe poverty in terms similar to those in which the poor conveyed their own understanding of poverty⁷⁴, and they stressed the negative implications of lack of access to water, health and education services for the poor's income, food security, literacy levels and general vulnerability. Although these services were seen as secondary in terms of pressing needs, they were

⁷⁴ Khaila S. et al. (1999), *Consultations with the poor- Malawi*, The Poverty Group, World Bank.

still considered real tragedies of poverty, with the poor dying from curable diseases because of lack of fees to pay for medical care or from ignorance because of lack of education. It was noted that despite free education many children from poor households were failing to access primary education, and the problems associated with water and sanitation were also considered a cause for concern. Despite similarities in elites' views regarding access to basic resources and services, the respondents who emphasised lack of access to land (15%), voicelessness and helplessness (13%) and unemployment (10%), were academic, CSO, INGO/Donor, private sector, media and political elites. These issues ranked low amongst bureaucrats.

Illiteracy featured highly in the discussions with different elite categories about access to basic services. The very high illiteracy levels were a concern for some elites, as this response illustrates: 'Malawi is the most uneducated country of all the countries I have ever been to' (Managing Director, CSO, 6/05/08). Illiteracy was perceived as the basis of lack of participation in political decision-making processes by the poor, who failed to participate because they were not able to understand policy issues. One respondent argued that many pro-poor policies being implemented would never have the desired impact on poverty if the poor were not educated, as they could not meaningfully contribute to development (Regional Manager, Media, 9/04/08).

Generally, respondents spoke with conviction and fluency about what it meant to be poor, often giving examples of family members who were poor or of people who worked for them. It may be Malawi's extended family system, or the fact that since independence, in 1964, poverty has been a key policy issue, that has caused respondents to be sensitised to the issue of poverty; but they were aware that poverty could mean helplessness and a struggle for survival. As one respondent indicated, poverty is '*kuvutika kwa kaya kaya*', meaning that in the face of available resources such as water, the poor have no bucket to fetch water, or cannot access free education because they have no clothes for their children: 'Only God knows how they survive' (Director, CSO, 7/04/08).

6.2. Elites on the Categories of the Poor

Table 6.5 shows respondents' responses to the question: 'What categories can you identify among the poor?' This question was important in understanding whether elites saw the poor as a homogeneous or heterogeneous group, and in the latter case, how they distinguished between different categories of poor. This formed the basis for understanding whether respondents distinguished the deserving from the undeserving poor, and the impact of this on their policy choices in dealing with poverty (see Chapter 7). As we can see, responses are along the lines of those prevalent in international discourses on poverty. The main defining factor was the poor's capacity or opportunity to do something about their condition. Respondents tended to rank the poor as follows: first, the very poor, who lacked all the basic necessities of life, had no employment, and survived on a day-to-day basis. This group was defined as 'qualifying for handouts from government' and requiring constant help⁷⁵.

Table 6.5 **Categories of Poor**

| Category | Description |
|--|--|
| Very Poor (<i>Ovutikitsitsa</i>) | Those who cannot do anything to improve their lot, they can only just get by, and are barely able to feed themselves (elderly, children, disabled and uneducated). |
| Poor (<i>Osapeza bwino</i>) | Those who, given the resources or opportunities, would be able to change their situation, but not have the means, such as land or employment. |
| Better-Off Poor (<i>Opezako bwino</i>) | Those who can afford at least one meal a day, have some clothing, shelter, access to markets and land, but are still poor because they are vulnerable to external or internal hazards such as drought or rising market prices. |

*Derived from semi-structured interviews

The second group was that of poor people who had energy and ability, but lacked the economic or social opportunities to live a decent life. As we shall see, many in this group were considered lazy as

⁷⁵ This is not to say that respondents were in support of welfare programmes, which are considered handouts, as most went on to say that Malawi needed to reduce this category (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.1.2 for a discussion on handouts).

they failed to move themselves out of poverty. This perception resonated with the responses from many respondents that poverty was related to the ability of a person to exert themselves and work hard. Finally, the third group was considered better off in relation to the rest of the poor. This group could afford at least one meal a day and some form of clothing, were able to find casual labour, and could access markets for their goods, for instance for tobacco they had grown. However, respondents pointed out that by international standards of poverty, even this third group still fell below the poverty line.

According to the respondents, this categorisation of the poor (see Table 6.5) should determine the interventions targeted at each category. Some respondents noted that government interventions had targeted all three categories with subsidies and public works programmes, but that these had favoured the active poor, thus excluding the inactive poor such as the elderly and the disabled, who should have been receiving welfare transfers. To be effective, it was said that interventions for these three groups should be implemented simultaneously to avoid a cycle where one group moved out of poverty and another became poor (see Chapter 5). For instance, the labouring poor had seasonal jobs where they were low paid and could fall into poverty if they lost their job (Project Coordinator, Government, 28/4/08).

However, some respondents who had argued that at least 90% of Malawians were poor divided Malawi's society into four groups, as this respondent shows:

There are four categories: the first segment is about 2% who are the very rich and includes politicians, businessmen of Indian origins and some professionals such as lawyers or those working for private companies, such as managing directors and financial controllers. Then you have the moderately rich who are about 20% and include those in white collar jobs such as principal secretaries, civil servants, lecturers and members of parliament. This group of ordinary Malawians survive because they have a predictable source of income, which they use to meet shortfalls, and people are able to lend them money because they know that they can repay it. This is the group that best describes life because it shows that it is a continuous struggle to survive and it is only their permanent employment that gives them some kind of insurance. The third category is 40% percent and mainly in rural areas and they are able to have food through farming but they have to supplement this with business and remittances from children in the urban areas. For instance my mother would fall in that category because

she expects that I will send something every month. The last category that has increased are those people who survive by the grace of God. They are not sure where their next meal is coming from and survive through piece work. They can only survive if they are healthy, because they rely solely on their labour. If they become sick then they are at the mercy of the community. The majority in this group are young men (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/05/08).

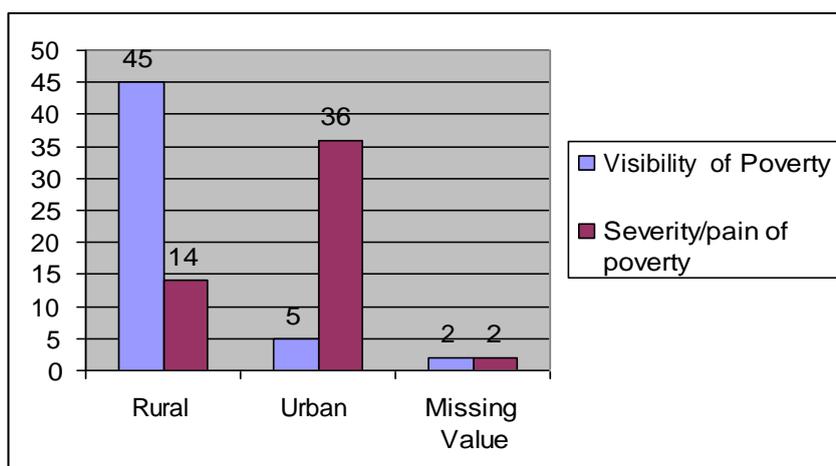
Some respondents argued that it was difficult to categorise the poor in Malawi because even those in employment were unable to develop personally or afford a good lifestyle, because they were weighed down by remittances to family members⁷⁶. Hence, almost all sections of society were considered poor. In this sense, respondents did not draw a very clear distinction between themselves and the poor. As this respondent indicated: *'Elites care about the poor but they do not have very much themselves. The will is there, but no resources'* (Minister, Civil Service, 15/04/08). This attempt to downplay social distinctions suggests that respondents felt that they were similar, or ought to be similar, to the poor.

6.3 Elites on the Location of the Poor: the Visible but Happy Rural Poor versus the Invisible Suffering Urban Poor

Derived from interview data, Figure 6.1 presents the location of the poor and the visibility or severity of poverty in Malawi. According to the 2008 population and housing census, 85% of the 13.1 million total population live in rural areas (NSO, 2005). Respondents' views were consistent with this data, as 45 of the 52 respondents noted that in terms of visibility, there were more poor people in rural areas. However, 36 respondents argued that although the urban poor were fewer in number, they tended to suffer more than those in the rural areas. Despite this perception, there was less sympathy for the urban poor because of a sense of greater opportunity not being taken up. As this respondent noted, *'In urban areas the poor have opportunities, and if they had a little imagination they should not be poor'* (Principal Secretary (PS), Civil Service, 8/6/08).

⁷⁶ At least 42 of the 52 respondents mentioned the impact of the extended family on personal growth. This is discussed at length in Chapter 7.

Figure 6.1: Elite Perceptions of Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas



*Derived from semi-structured interviews; $n = 86$

The rural character of poverty in Malawi has had important implications for policy and social change. First, most government policy efforts have focused on developing solutions for reducing rural poverty. Post-1994 pro-poor policies, such as the Malawi Social Action Fund, Malawi Rural Development Fund, Rural Land Development Project and the Integrated Rural Development Programme, have aimed at boosting rural incomes, agricultural productivity and market activity, and compensating for production deficits (Government of Malawi, 2007; Dorward and Kydd, 2004). The respondents saw the rural poor as disadvantaged in that they had no access to employment except as casual labourers, and no access to potable water, health centres or education – or, where these were present, they had to travel long distances to access them. One minister said,

Poverty is so vivid in the rural areas because as an MP when I address meetings, I see scantily dressed children with no shoes and hungry. Even though we talk about a dollar a day, there are some people in the rural areas that live on zero dollars a day (Minister, Civil Service, 30/4/08).

Second, rural poverty was seen by the respondents as increasing levels of urban poverty, because some of the rural poor had migrated into urban areas, leading to a growth in poverty and slums in urban areas. As a principal secretary explained, 'People are looking for a better life, jobs and better social services such as health, education and food' (PS, Civil Service, 15/5/08). Therefore:

In Malawi behind every developed suburb there is a growing slum; for instance, Area 47 has Ntandire, Area 10 has Kauma and near Area 43 you have Senti and Mgoni. This tells you that Malawi is growing into a two-tier society and these slums do not provide basic services. The people in these slums buy water on a daily basis. Not that people in suburbs do not buy water, but the difference is that in suburbs people pay at the end of the month for their water bill. The poor are in a situation where they have to find money on a daily basis to buy water and at the same time they have no food or cannot afford three meals a day. They are strained and resort to crime. These slums are the hubs of crime (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/05/08).

This is considered the tragedy of urban poverty, as the poor live on the edge of the suburbs:

Urban poverty is relative because there is someone living in a mansion in Area 47 next door to a slum called Ntandire. The people in Ntandire do not close their eyes to what is going on in Area 47. You are watering your yard and they do not have potable water. Poverty therefore becomes more pronounced because their neighbour is enjoying the luxuries that they are denied. The urban poor live close to plenty and they do not have anything to eat, but that is not to say there is no desperate poverty in urban areas, there is. The bulk of the urban poor have no access to safe drinking water, only 20% have access to electricity and the rates of HIV/AIDS infections are higher than in the rural areas. Although the rural poor do not use potable water they have other sources such as shallow wells. In urban areas if a poor person has no access to water then they really feel the impact as they start to rely on unsafe sources. Just compare a person living in Ntandire or Tsiliza and a person living in Area 47 who are only separated by a road. In Area 47 one is throwing away grams of nsima⁷⁷ and in Ntandire or Tsiliza someone is sitting on an empty stomach. There are defining characteristics of urban poverty that make it different to rural poverty but the average person in the rural areas is poor and you are likely to meet poor people in rural areas (Managing Director, CSO, 24/4/08).

That Malawi's slums had problems in the areas of sanitation and drinking water, and had experienced some outbreaks of cholera and waterborne diseases, was agreed upon. However, the respondents pointed out that in comparison to other countries such as Tanzania or Kenya, Malawi was better-off. By contrast, other countries like Kenya, slum dwellers use carton boxes to sleep; at least in Malawi, the urban poor lived in mud houses (MP, Parliament, 28/03/08; PS, Civil Service, 15/5/08; Director, CSO, 7/04/08).

There was an idealistic view among the respondents, especially bureaucrats, that the rural poor were better able to survive because they had access to land, and were living within their own social

⁷⁷ Nsima is a maize meal product and a staple food in Malawi. It is made from ground maize flour known locally as ufa

environment, close to their relatives who could share with them what they had; whereas the urban poor could not rely on social networks because those they met were strangers who were also trying to survive. The rural poor were considered to be 'more comfortably poor than the urban poor' (Regional Manager, Media, 16/5/08).

Those in the rural areas are able to grow their own products because of access to land, which the peri-urban poor do not have (Minister, Civil Service, 15/04/08).

If I am poor in the rural areas, I have a little bit of land to farm on and a place where I can build a hut, uncles and aunts I can rely on when times are hard and everything collapses. When you are in town and you do not have money, you have nowhere to go, you don't have water, food or an uncle to assist you (PS, Civil Service, 8/4/08).

However, having access to land was not considered an immediate passport out of poverty. Respondents, mainly academic and those belonging to INGOs and civil society, acknowledged that other issues, such as land ownership, agricultural inputs, education, and irrigation affected people's productivity. In addition, Malawi's natural resources in the rural areas are being depleted, making it difficult for the rural poor to access enough for their needs, for instance enough wood for fuel. Fourteen respondents argued that poverty had deepened in the rural areas in the past 20 years. They argued that climate shocks such as drought, and SAPs, which led to the removal of input subsidies, had left the 85% of the rural poor who relied on farming unable to access needed inputs. This made farming unprofitable, made life unbearable for the rural poor, and broke down their traditional support mechanism.

In the past the people in the rural areas could help each other survive conditions of shocks and stress, but now it is every man for himself, which has led to the deepening of poverty in rural areas. These days you hardly see the stratification that used to be there in the rural areas. Because in the past you could go into the rural areas and immediately notice that there are some people who are slightly better off and those that are not doing so well. But now a common response from the people out there is that we are all poor, there is no difference between the rural and urban poverty, especially if the poverty is in those traditional settlement areas (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08).

Sometimes you can see extreme poverty in the peri-urban areas where there is overcrowding, people drinking water from unsafe sources, a lot of alcohol and substance abuse. However, the

sharing that used to be there in the rural areas is no longer there. People do not have the same resources they used to have to share with others. Things are changing. In our culture we are not supposed to have orphans because these are supposed to be absorbed by our extended family, but now you see many orphans in the rural areas. People cannot help because they are overstretched and people in the rural areas are dependent on ties with people in the urban areas to provide for their basic resources. Especially with HIV/Aids and scarcity of land, the extended family is overstretched (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08).

Therefore, for some respondents, both urban and rural poverty were painful and severe; but the outward appearance of the urban poor (perhaps a nice shirt and shoes), might be deceptive, resulting in the under-appreciation of their poverty by policymakers. Thus respondents believed that in order to reduce urbanisation and the perceived negative effects (for instance, a belief that urbanization would lead to a two-tier society or a process of class segregation), pro-poor policies should aim to ameliorate both rural and urban poverty. For example, reviving rural growth centres and implementing food security programmes would create jobs and keep the rural poor from migrating.

These policies were also considered a means of evading a 'ticking time bomb'⁷⁸ that might one day escalate into violence that was already brewing amongst the urban poor (see Chapter 8). Some of the responses to the issue of urban-rural poverty exposed elite's self-interest and a sense of interdependence between them and the poor. For instance, respondents were interested in dealing with rural poverty to stop urbanisation, which they saw as bringing in social ills that needed to be addressed.

There are programmes to address poverty in rural areas, such as the Rural Growth Centres and the Integrated Rural Development Programmes supported by the World Bank. A number of donors aim to ensure an equal footing in terms of access to basic necessities such as water, roads, telecommunications, and health services. The aim is to spur economic growth and development in the rural areas, so that jobs can be created in people's own areas and stop urbanization. Those of us in the urban areas need to address the social ills of immigrants from the rural areas (PS, Civil Service, 15/6/08).

⁷⁸ Poverty was likened to a 'ticking time bomb' which if not addressed could result in social ills such as social uprisings, crime and diseases (interview with MP, Parliament, 8/04/08).

Interestingly, one respondent noted that it might be important for Malawi's development not to stop rural-urban migration. He argued that an increase in urban poverty would force elites to experience poverty in their midst and might also result in the urban poor demanding their rights. This might force the government to develop the education system, and improve the availability of employment and housing, because there would be a demand for development (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08). This view is quite similar to De Swaan's (1988; 2005) argument that the impact of social ills emanating from the poor is a strong incentive for the elite to act.

An important point to note is that the political respondents were more sympathetic towards the rural poor than other elite categories, which could be mainly due to their close proximity to the rural poor. The political respondents, by virtue of their representative position, interacted more with, and were closer to, the poor through patronage or social networks, as well as having constant interaction with their constituents, who were mostly poor. In addition, they were expected to provide for the poor in terms of food, money for accessing education or health services, and much more (argument developed in Chapter 7). During my observations of parliamentary proceedings on 5th May, 2008, a bill was tabled under the European Union Water Facility (Malawi Peri-Urban Water and Sanitation) project. During the second reading of the bill, it went to a vote and failed to go into the third reading because 89 MPs voted against it. There were other political factors that influenced this decision (see Appendix 14), but the interesting thing was the reason MPs gave for voting against the bill. Those opposing could be heard shouting: 'nza ntauni izi' (this is for urban areas) hence arguing that it was not as important as it would have been if it had been targeted at the rural poor.

Thus, urban poverty might be seen as more painful, but CSO respondents believed that it had been easier to ignore because the urban poor were fewer in number and most elites had never really thought of any urban dweller as poor.

You can smell the poverty in areas like Ntandire, Kauma, and Nchesi. These are forgotten because when we talk about poverty in Malawi we talk about rural poverty. The poverty in our midst is usually forgotten (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/5/08).

In the past I used to think that the poor in the urban areas are much better off, but after CADECOM carried out a survey, we discovered that there are areas like Nchesi, Kauma (peri-urban areas) that are poorer than those in the rural setting. It all comes down to basic things like firewood, water, land that the rural poor person can easily access in the village. The urban poor require money to access these basic things in town. The same water that the rural poor collects from a stream and boils it to make it safe, the urban poor have to purchase it, buy firewood to boil it to make it safe. Whilst the rich pay for water at the end of the month these peri-urban poor pay on a daily basis. They are not able to negotiate payment because of their position in society. You also find that it is more expensive to pay for water on a daily basis. Urban poor are more vulnerable and their poverty is more severe (Secretary General, CSO, 7/05/08).

Interestingly, the role of CSO respondents is to influence policy-making processes and direct service delivery. Thus, a partial comprehension of the location of the poor might greatly impact on their capacity to influence policy processes. This was evident during my observation of a consultative workshop where CSOs were to draw up a manifesto for influencing economic, social and political issues in Malawi. During discussions, the workshop coordinator (Dr Edge Kanyongolo, University of Malawi) observed that the participants were not aware of what was in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which they were supposed to draw on in deciding on areas they might influence.

6.4 Elites on Inequality

Malawi has been considered to be a highly unequal country, with its levels of inequality sometimes likened to those of Brazil and described as the highest in Africa (Durevall, 2002). This might not have been accurate by 2009, when the gini index was 0.39, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report (2009), but inequality in Malawi had been steadily rising from 1968, when the gini-coefficient stood at 0.48, to 0.62 in 1995 and 0.50 in 1998. The rationale for asking respondents to discuss their understanding of inequality was to ascertain their conception of how inequality might be related to

poverty. Did elites view inequality in terms of income, access to services or other factors not easily quantifiable, such as power differentials in social relationships?

The respondents saw a strong relationship between poverty and inequality. According to the interview data, the respondents felt that there was a wide gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor in Malawi, although political respondents were quick to point out that inequality was not as bad as in other countries. As one minister indicated, income inequality was only beginning to show because the rural poor spent their time working on other people's land (mainly that of elites) rather than in their own gardens. 'The rural poor prefer to make money for the day. Therefore the rich become richer and the poor poorer' (Minister, Civil Service, 30/4/08).

The political respondents denial of a wide income gap between the rich and the poor seems like an attempt to defend themselves against accusations of corruption and conspicuous accumulation of wealth levelled against them by academics and other elite categories. Since the transition to democracy in 1994, political elites have used public resources to garner political support by giving handouts to supporters, but have also used public office to accumulate wealth (Booth et al., 2006). As these respondents pointed out:

There is a positive correlation between wealth and politics. People move from professional jobs to politics because that is where you accumulate wealth. For instance, Patricia Kaliati (Minister of Information and Civic Education) was a school teacher and before she joined politics she did not even have a car, but the moment she went into politics she started driving fancy cars and living in a mansion. Therefore inequality is political in nature and if you discuss it then you are discussing those people in power (Head of Section, Civil Service, 28/04/08).

Under Kamuzu Banda corruption involved very few elites; but under Bakili, corruption involved a big group of people who plundered public resources. It was common to see certain groups of people having many mansions, buy and constantly change vehicle, and own businesses, when millions were perishing. It was moral decay on the part of political elites (National Secretary, CSO, 6/05/08).

In contrast to political, academic, and civil society respondents argued that income inequality was increasing because a minority of the population had control over a majority of the national income, whilst the majority of the population, who were poor, enjoy a nominal proportion of the national income.

Inequality over the years has increased, whilst the majority of the people are suffering in their livelihoods. There is a small minority that has become much better than the rest of society. This small grouping of the political elite has benefited from the liberalisation of both the political and economic system. The politicians have really exploited the state because economic liberalisation has meant putting up state owned companies for sale and they are the people who have ended up buying these companies. They have extended these benefits to a small group closely related to them through lucrative contracts. You see in Malawi the private sector exists but its survival relies on having close links with the state because most of the lucrative contracts are given out by the state. Therefore you find that it is the very same politicians who are also businessmen and have ended up accumulating wealth at the expense of the poor majority. The gap between the poor and the better offs has widened and at the same time the number of those that are well-off has shrunk. Sometimes when you drive around town you are surprised by the type of cars people are driving and that is a manifestation of conspicuous consumption (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08).

Inequality in Malawi is high and 5% of the population controls over 50% of the national income. The poorest 80% percent enjoy only 20% of the national income (Managing Director, CSO, 6/5/08).

Elites identified other areas where inequality was evident in Malawi. First, gender inequality, which was mainly discussed in terms of empowering women to participate in policy processes and increase their representation in parliament. One respondent noted that in a cabinet of 19, only two were women and out of 38 permanent secretaries, only four were women (PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08)⁷⁹. Although respondents acknowledged that there had been marked improvements, as some top positions, such as Director of Public Prosecutions and Chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission, had gone to women, they recognized that stereotypes in Malawi's traditions and the upbringing of its people threatened to worsen gender inequality as women were generally seen as inferior to men. Second, inequality was conceived of in terms of access to basic services such as education, which made social

⁷⁹ Views on gender inequality were substantiated during sampling, where 14 out of the 86 survey respondents were women. None of the 16 CSOs sampled for interviews were headed by a woman.

mobility difficult or impossible. *There is a big gap between elites and the poor because one is educated and the other is not and their entry levels into employment are different. The problem in Malawi is the low numbers of spaces at tertiary level (PS, 17/4/08).*

Inequality in education also had an impact on gender inequality, as more men were educated in comparison to women. Third, respondents agreed that land was a major source of inequality in Malawi, especially between estate and smallholder farmers. As land was a productive resource and the main means of earning a livelihood, those without access to land were recognized as being significantly disadvantaged. In areas like Mulanje, Thyolo and Chiradzulu, there were people owning vast tracts of fertile land whilst the poor were left with infertile hill side land or did not even own land and were squatters on other people's land (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08; Academic, University of Malawi, 08/05/08; and PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08)⁸⁰.

Many respondents agreed that Malawi's agricultural economy maintained and reproduced patterns of inequality. For instance the economic policies implemented by Kamuzu Banda perpetuated inequalities by favouring elites, thus allowing them to limit the opportunities available to the poor (see Chapter 5). Elites exercise social, economic and political power to impose their preferences, in a manner that benefits them. As a project coordinator noted, 'When we employ servants in Malawi, no one cares about minimum wage. It is take it or leave it.' (PS, 28/4/08). Another respondent stated that:

The distribution of resources in Malawi favours the well-to-do. I would blame it on democracy, because the Asians that supported the Muluzi government in 1994 have benefited immensely. But the mothers who were dancing at political rallies in 1994 are still dancing today and have not gotten anything out of it. Even now the President has got his boys (Mulli Brothers, Noel Masangwi⁸¹) who are pumping in money and some he takes around on his trips especially to

⁸⁰ According to the 2005 Integrated Household Survey, the gini coefficient for land inequality is 0.884 between estate and smallholder farmers (IHS, 2005).

⁸¹ Mulli Brothers is a company whose mission is to enhance the profitability and competitiveness of manufacturing companies and uplift the lives of local people through a variety of community based economic activities. Mulli Brothers has worked in partnership with the Government and has often been retained to provide agricultural inputs for the Government's subsidy programme. Until the cabinet reshuffle on 8th September, 2011, Felton Mulli served in Mutharika's cabinet in the

mainland China. These are the groups that will benefit when he wins again in 2009. Mulli brothers are the biggest transporters all of a sudden, when their businesses were not doing so well. This is a trend that will not change. In this same country people are living in mansions that you cannot believe exist here, and outside of Lilongwe people are living in shacks. You even have people within the same catchment area, one family has enough food that it throws away some of its food, whilst someone who lives in the servants' quarters is struggling to survive. Even in the tobacco industry there are the peasant farmers who have been growing tobacco for over 30 years and they get very little for their tobacco. There is now a growth in contract farming and this is the group that is getting a lot of money from the auction floors, not the poor farmers. These contract farmers are hired by big tobacco companies such as Limbe Leaf, and even the President is doing contract farming. And when their tobacco goes to the floor they get US\$9 per kilogram whilst the peasant farmer gets US\$1 for their tobacco (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/5/08).

There was also agreement amongst the respondents that inequality existed because the poor were unable to organize for mass action, tending to organize vertically instead of horizontally. Therefore, poor people considered relationships with MPs or those in authority within the civil service or civil society as more important than affinity with other poor people, and they conspired with those in authority, reporting to them plans for mass action. On the other hand, respondents felt that inequality did not lead to any form of civil unrest caused by the poor because poverty had been a constant companion of Malawians. As this respondent comments: 'It is like a tradition. To be poor, or not to have access to basic resources, is the order of the day. It is normal; it is the way things are. Poor people are resigned to their fate' (Executive Director, CSO, 15/4/08). Another reason cited was that the poor took inequality as normal because they were not aware of their rights. They felt that elites knew better and should not be questioned. The poor were seen as 'letting sleeping dogs lie' to preserve communal life, where the poor and elites were dependent on each other (Regional Manager, Media, 16/4/08). The excerpt below captures elites' view that the poor in Malawi have not developed the attitudes or personality characteristics that would enable them to take an active role,

Ministry of Health. Masangwi, which owns Elvis Freight and Cargo Services, belongs to Noel Masangwi, who is also the ruling party's (the Democratic Progressive Party's) regional governor for the southern region of Malawi. Elvis Freight has also been given government contracts to transport agricultural inputs for the subsidy programme to rural areas (see Nyasatimes.com and Mullibrothers.com).

to accept the privileges and bear the responsibility of the democratic process in their society (Packenham, 1964).

Excerpt from Interview Transcript – Executive Director, CSO, 15/4/08)⁸²

Inequality in Malawi is not really discussed because poverty has been a constant companion for us, traditionally. Therefore to be poor or not to have access to basic resources is the order of the day. It is normal; it's the way things are. If we had a helicopter and we took some poor Malawians to South Africa, they would realise and start to question and demand more, therefore issues of transparency and accountability will be entrenched. At the moment they believe that you cannot contradict those in authority, that they know it all. The issue of inequality does not come in as a topic that can be discussed because people accept their fate. There is a sense of fatalism. A person who has travelled can question and know that there is more, that we are lagging behind and can even question those in authority. For a poor person, if they have enough fertiliser for this season, what else do they need? If you have a lot of tobacco and the buying price is high, despite high poverty levels you cannot question the Government. That would be considered an insult. Even if you can ask people in the village about Sam Mpasu being convicted of the MK187 million education scam, people would be saying it is not fair, others have also eaten from the national cake but have not been convicted. There is no sense of ownership, that the money being stolen rightfully belongs to them. A lot of people really believe that this is the way things are supposed to be and this is unfortunate.

Another reason why society is the way it is, is because our relationships, in terms of organising for action towards policy, is not there. We cannot organise horizontally, we organise vertically. So if you have a relationship with a member of parliament, or most important person in the civil service, then that is more important. So if you were to organise mass action to fight for your rights it means one amongst that group will report to authority to get favours. Look at South Africa and how the Congress of South African Trade Unions is organised. This shows how a community can come together to fight for their rights. But in Malawi any mass action dies a natural death because there will be some people who will conspire with those in authority. That is why you cannot fight against issues of inequality, because people will talk about God has given them, it's their time and so on. President Bingu once said to the clergy that the preaching in church has led Malawians to be poor because preachers have taught Malawians that if you achieve and are successful, you will not enter the kingdom of God. In Zambia and Mozambique people are progressing and Malawi remains the poorest amongst the SADC countries and other Africans come to Malawi and start businesses and they are succeeding. Why not Malawians?

Respondents' views suggested that the problems of poverty and inequality were perceived as a political problem. Inequality was based on which policies elites chose to implement, how resources were allocated and how they implemented policies (Clarke and Sisson, 2005). However, some respondents considered inequality to be natural, as this respondent suggested: 'Everywhere people are not equal.

⁸² The Ministry of Education scam (given as an example in the excerpt) involved the giving out of contracts to companies both national and international and paying them exorbitant amounts for work that could be done far more cheaply, or for work that was not done or was incomplete. This scam also involved the Minister of Education at that time, Mr Sam Mpasu, who planned, coordinated, approved and executed activities that led to the granting of a contract to a British company (Fieldyork) to supply school notebooks in Malawi over another company that would have supplied the notebooks for far less than Fieldyork quoted. As a result of these dubious contracts, the Government lost MK187 million (US\$1.32 million) (see Ng'ambi, 2011; Khembo, 2004; <http://www.anti-corruptionbureau.mw>).

Even in a socialist state people are not equal' (Acting Executive Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08). Then again, there was a belief in the trickledown theory of economic growth. Thus equality of opportunity meant that the Government only needed to provide an enabling environment and the poor would lift themselves out of poverty (Greig et al, 2007).

Malawian society does not discuss inequality because we believe so much in the trickledown theory of economic growth. Our planners have not taken into account the issue of distribution of resources because they are obsessed with economic growth (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08).

In government, the elite do agree that we need to introduce strong macroeconomic policies that spur growth and they believe that these will have a trickledown effect (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08).

For some respondents, the term 'inequality' itself does not elicit any reaction because it is not a 'telling term' and its impact can be either positive or negative for society.

Inequality is a concept that can easily be misunderstood and is highly unacceptable amongst the poor because they have to acknowledge inequalities within their own communities. In receiving development assistance, the poor prefer to say that they are all poor within particular locations. Inequality is a concept that cannot be easily translated into our language. People understand the word 'umphawi' to mean poverty, but to make them understand inequality one would have to tell a story (PS, Civil Service, 10/4/08).

Consequently, inequity is considered a better term than inequality as it exposes issues of justice and fairness: essentially, 'Inequality is not wrong but inequity is wrong' (Managing Director, CSO, 24/4/08). Inequity appears to reflect the political culture, which is based on ethnic and regional identities. As argued in Chapter 5, ethnicity has had a major impact on Malawi's politics, more so following the dismantling of Banda's four cornerstones (unity, peace, obedience and loyalty). Often Banda would tell Malawians that tribalism played no part in the country and its politics, and no one should hate someone because of their tribe, district or region⁸³. However, regionalism linked to ethnicity underpins post democratic-transition politics, to the extent that Malawi's political parties are based on regionalism.

⁸³ H.E. Kamuzu Banda, speech at the MCP Convention held on 1/9/1969 at Kwacha in Blantyre.

Therefore, members of parliament represent regional interests and aspirations; and party representatives call for regional equity in the distribution of resources during budget discussions⁸⁴.

Equally, the preference for equity is symptomatic of the dual character of Malawi's agricultural system. Many of the Malawian elites are involved in estate farming, and they have an interest in ensuring that they also have access to subsidised inputs. During my observation of workshops on social protection policy, participants asked that subsidies be universal, for all maize and tobacco farmers⁸⁵. This suggests that whilst Malawian elites might care about inequality, they are not as concerned about it as they are about equity in Malawi. It explains why some respondents indicated that inequality was not of serious concern, as it was in South Africa, Brazil or India, as Malawi did not have extremely poor people or extremely rich people. 'The gap between the rich and the poor may be increasing, but this does not mean the poor are at the same level as ten years ago. The poor are seen to have improved in their position at the same time as the rich' (Minister, Civil Service, 7/05/08; PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; Chief Executive Officer, Private Sector, 13/05/08). These respondent's views are contrary to those of the World Bank's 2007 Malawi Poverty and Vulnerability assessment, which stated that there had not been much progress in reducing inequality since the transition to democracy in 1994. The assessment noted that income inequality persisted in Malawi, with the richest 10% of the population having a median per capita income eight times higher (MK50,373 per person per annum) than the median per capita income of the poorest 10% (K6,370 per person per annum).

6.5 Elites on Social Groups at Risk of Poverty

Table 6.6 lists in ascending order the social groups respondents considered to be vulnerable to poverty in Malawi. Children were seen to be at risk and more vulnerable to poverty because of the spread of

⁸⁴ Hon. J.Z.U. Tembo, Malawi Congress Party – Leader of Opposition, Budget Session 2004.

⁸⁵ See Chinsinga 2007a, 2011 on universal or targeted subsidies, as well as on the parliamentary resolution in 2005 for universal subsidies for both maize and tobacco.

HIV; respondents noted that the number of orphans had grown, putting a heavy burden on those relatives looking after them. This assessment is consistent with government and donor data that notes that over one million children in Malawi are vulnerable due to AIDS, which has led to child-labour, prostitution and begging. Several categories of elites noted that if these orphans were not given the right opportunities in life then Malawi would have a generation gap in the future (Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08; Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08; MP, 6/05/08; MP, 16/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 2/05/08; PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08; Minister, Civil Service, 7/05/08; Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08; Regional Manager, Media, 16/05/08).

Table 6.6: Vulnerable Social Groups

| Social Groups | Respondents |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Orphans/children | 27 |
| Women/female headed households | 26 |
| Elderly-headed households | 16 |
| Youth | 9 |
| Child-headed households | 7 |
| The sick | 5 |
| Male-headed households | 5 |
| Disabled | 4 |
| Beggars | 1 |

*Respondents were allowed more than one choice. Total respondents = 52

Even though women were considered the second group at risk, some respondents argued that women were at an advantage compared to male-headed households. Due to labour migration to South Africa and Zimbabwe during the colonial period and rural-urban migration, women took on men's roles to provide for their families and became responsible for farming activities (Pryor, 1990). Therefore, women may be considered less vulnerable because they lead farming families and they are more industrious.

As these respondents noted:

The advantage with women is that they are active members of the family because they work to earn an income to help the family. They start up small businesses to survive and fetch water.

Men are not innovative in fending for the family. Kamuzu Banda asked me a funny question once about the definition of an orphan. He said an orphan is one who has lost the mother and all the mothers' sisters including the grandmother have died, even if the father is still alive. If the father dies and the mother is still alive, then that child is not an orphan because a mother will strive hard to provide for that child because women have always been providers (MP, 6/5/08).

The social groups more at risk of poverty are men more than women because women usually find casual work. For instance, if you have a farm and you want casual labourers, it is women who come for work (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

I have reservations when it comes to women being at risk of poverty, because women are fighters (Regional Manager, Media, 09/05/08).

Women are less vulnerable to poverty because all farming families in Malawi are led by women and women are more industrious (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08).

The elderly were also seen as vulnerable to poverty because they were seen as not having the capacity to work and having no form of state support. The elderly are often deemed to be witches in Malawi and blamed for any calamity that befalls a village, such as a death and lack of rain. The elderly in Malawi have also been further burdened by the growth in the number of orphans because of HIV/Aids, which has seen a growth in elderly-headed households. In contrast, young people have been seen as more active members of society and more reliant on their ability to work, therefore lack of employment or sickness makes them vulnerable to poverty. Respondents considered that many young people had moved from rural areas to urban areas in search of employment. They ended up as street vendors because the Government had failed to create employment for them. Young people were considered to be a group that was aware that they were being pushed into vulnerability and were therefore able to act. Respondents noted that their dissatisfaction was mostly expressed through delinquent behaviour, such as theft, and they were also seen as conduits for disruption of the social and political order by the powerful in society (National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08; Executive Director, CSO, 12/05/08; CEO, Private Sector, 13/05/08; Leader, Donor, 5/06/08).

Other groups such as male-headed or child-headed households, the disabled, the sick and beggars, including young people, were picked by less than 10 of the 52 respondents as being vulnerable to poverty. These groups could be considered as active and unemployed only because of sickness or lack of industriousness. The sick were mainly those suffering from HIV/Aids, a disease considered a result of immoral behaviour. The respondents' perception that disabled people were not vulnerable was consistent with the discourse in Malawi as seen through newspaper articles. My analysis⁸⁶ of newspaper articles between 1996 and 2008 found that most articles on disability dwelled on the successes the disabled had had despite the challenges faced. This view indicated a belief that disabled poor people could lift themselves out of poverty by actively taking advantage of the opportunities in the economy and could succeed through hard work, without specific policies designed to address their needs, and without begging.

The condemnation of beggars was clear in the responses interviewees gave about begging and is illustrated by the fact that only one member of the elite felt that this group was vulnerable to poverty. It was clear that respondents preferred supporting the active poor, arguing that they had 'little sympathy for beggars' (PS, Civil Service, 16/7/08).

Sometimes I find people my age with a child on their back begging. I would not mind if that person knocked on my gate asking for a job. I would be much more receptive, even giving them alms. The same goes for children. There are children groups like 'Chisomo' and they should not be on the street. Most child beggars in town are coming from neighbouring areas like Nchesi (slums) and are sent by their parents to beg. They are professional beggars. Some people think because they have a disability then society owes them something. Some people prefer to beg than work (PS, 16/7/08).

I do not want to be burdened by beggars and am only responsible for my family (National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08).

I do not encourage people to give beggars money because each time you give you are telling them to come back tomorrow to be given again. Beggars must not be given anything. They need to be rehabilitated (Acting Executive Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08).

⁸⁶ The analysis of written documents, such as newspapers, drew on this thesis's stated objectives and research questions (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) to classify key ideas or themes relating to how and what the texts say about poverty and the poor, from which inferences were made.

As a symbol of injustice and inequality, beggars were to be rehabilitated, so that in future they would offer an image of a just and equal Malawi.

We need to find something for them to do. It doesn't reflect well on the type of society we are living that you can have people going about in the streets seeking for assistance that is the inequality we were talking about. That is why I say we need to find something for them to do. But even when they receive cash transfers from government, what do they do with that money? I met a beggar one time and we disagreed with my wife on whether to give him money as I thought he looked drunk. I asked him if he was drunk and he said he does not drink so we gave him some money. He started jumping up and down on the street screaming, 'God bless you!' and the whole street was looking at him. But you wonder what they do with this money as the next morning they are there, because it has become an occupation (Executive Director, Government, 05/6/08).

However, some respondents, who saw beggars as vulnerable, argued that it was wrong for people to think that beggars enjoyed begging, noting that it was the lack of access to resources and opportunities that pushed people onto the streets. *Do people really think someone can leave their house to wait in the streets for change if there was something better to do at home? People need to make an analysis of the situation and see how best beggars can be assisted by government, donors and NGOs (Secretary General, CSO, 7/5/08).*

6.6 Elite Perceptions of Poverty: Variation

Malawian respondents' perceptions of poverty are relatively similar across different categories of elites, such that we can with some level of confidence talk about an 'elite culture'⁸⁷. Areas of difference among the elites seem related to other characteristics, such as sector, occupation and at times political party

⁸⁷ Having been brought up in similar educational, religious and social institutions, the members of the elites acquire 'psychological affinities' which manifest themselves in shared linguistic nuances, manner of speech, dress, jokes and ideas. This makes it possible for them to say of one another: 'He/she is of course one of us' (see Cohen, 1981:228; Mills, 1956).

affiliation. For instance, senior civil servants tended to emphasise official statistics on levels of poverty in Malawi, arguing that government policies on growth and agriculture had contributed to low levels of poverty. CSO respondents tended to describe poverty in terms of human rights, participation and vulnerability. Conversely, political, INGO/donor, media, academic and private sector respondents emphasised lack of access to basic resources and services. But political and academic respondents differed in that they also described poverty as lack of access to land, which they saw as a productive resource for the poor. Although there was significant agreement that poverty was more visible in rural areas, senior civil servants also tended to believe that the rural poor were in a privileged position, as they had access to land and lived among kin. Political, academic and INGO respondents differed, and viewed the rural poor as more vulnerable to poverty owing to climate shocks and the implementation of SAPs.

Generally, political respondents, especially those in opposition, appeared more sympathetic towards the rural poor, whom they believed were denied access to basic resources and services by the Government. In contrast, CSO elites were more sympathetic towards the urban poor, whom they believed were much more vulnerable because they lived among the wealthy and close to resources (water, education) that were often out of their reach metaphorically. Variations also appeared in respondents' discussions of inequality. Private sector and political respondents tended to view inequality as inevitable, as based on one's ability to work hard. As one respondent put it: *'We are all given equal opportunities in Malawi. One's success depends on how one uses these opportunities'* (Acting Executive Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08). CSO, media, and INGO respondents, and senior civil servants, all blamed inequality on corruption by the governing elites and on unequal access to education and land. However, senior civil servants and CSO respondents preferred the term equity to equality, as it presented issues of justice and fairness. Generally, there were no significant variations in elite perceptions of poverty that were based on regional or ethnic background, or on gender.

6.7 Conclusion

The respondents' perceptions discussed in this chapter demonstrate that the respondents were aware of the nature, extent and character of poverty. Both the questionnaires and interview data show that poverty is considered one of Malawi's major problems. Respondents did not differentiate between types of poor people or types of poverty along ethnic lines; nor is their categorisation of the poor judgemental or based on the morality of the poor; rather, the poor were considered to be worthy of support. However, respondents' views on inequality do not reflect any sort of radical egalitarian values – or even a milder doctrine, such as equality in initial socio-economic conditions (Reis, 2005:43). Respondents' emphasis on equity rather than equality suggests that there is a preference for the allocation of resources based on fitness, or whether the poor are deserving or undeserving, and is related to the views expressed during interviews that most Malawians are poor, including the elite themselves. Therefore, equity would ensure that all Malawians got an equal opportunity to benefit from the economy in relation to their needs, not necessarily in an equal outcome. Outcome would be dependent on hard work, providence and the ability to discern opportunities, but respondents were concerned that a huge gap between the haves and the have-nots would lead to high urbanisation and associated social ills.

Significant inequality in Malawi is a paradox, considering the country is poor and agriculture-based. In addition, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, which were the main causes of widening inequality in the early phases of economic growth in developed countries, have been limited in most African countries (Kuznets, 1955). Following rapid industrialisation, developed countries were able to stabilise and reduce income inequalities. Then again, inequality and poverty in Malawi are politically determined and linked to how and why elites or governments make decisions and implement these decisions. Would Malawian elites see the sense in focusing on pro-poor interventions when pro-growth policies would also benefit the poor? Respondents' estimation of poverty was higher than the official statistics, which begins to explain their support for economic growth policies that would address

underdevelopment in general rather than direct welfare which might not adequately respond to everyone's needs (see Chapter 8). Accordingly, if a significant proportion of the country is poor, how do you address the problems associated with poverty and development separately, other than through economic growth?

Although respondents did not explain poverty in terms of Malawi's colonial history, they mentioned the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on rural economic and social life. This has strengthened ties between elites and the rural poor, who rely on elites for welfare support. These rural-urban connections presuppose a social cleavage between the rural poor and urban elites. However, respondents' perception of the rural and urban poor indicates their idealised view of the rural poor and also begins to suggest that the poor are responsible for their situation.

This chapter has shown that the respondents involved in this research had good knowledge of the extent of poverty and a concern for social problems in Malawi. Poverty reduction is obviously considered essential for consolidating democracy and attaining other important goals, such as economic growth. Equally important is the fact that respondents were able to define the problem of poverty using facts prevalent in the development community, which might have been a reflection of the Malawi government's dependency on donors for support in their pro-poor policy. Nevertheless, there is a meeting of minds between the respondents and donor agencies concerning who the poor are, where they are located, and the categories into which they fall (Hossain, 1999). These factual assessments of poverty by Malawian elites are a first step towards gaining the sort of 'social consciousness' that leads to taking collective action on poverty reduction.

However, knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the extent of poverty do not necessarily mean the problem will be placed at the top of the country's policy agenda (Reis, 2005). It is unlikely that Malawian elites

will be moved to act by the official government statistics on poverty, which are lower than their own estimation of poverty. However, a similar situation could arise to that which occurred in 1889 in Britain where, on being informed by Charles Booth that one-third of the population lived below the poverty line, the comfortable classes were roused to action against poverty. However, as argued in Chapter 1, it was not merely the breadth of the poverty situation that shocked British elites into action but Booth's argument that these were not lazy or undeserving people, but hard working and struggling people who needed the help of government to alleviate their poverty. Thus, welfare assistance towards the poor was linked to a range of ideas about the poor (Hossain and Moore, 1999; Himmelfarb, 1984; Squires, 1990). The next chapter explores Malawian elites' views of the causes of poverty, which will lead into a discussion of their views on the poor in Malawi, particularly on whether they blame the poor for persistent poverty or take any responsibility for it.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ELITE VIEWS ON THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse elite perceptions of both the causes of poverty and the character of the poor in Malawi. Respondents to questionnaires and interviews used in this study cited a wide range of causes of poverty, including political, economic and social factors, revealing a perception that poverty was impossible to differentiate from insufficient development in Malawi. Primarily, respondents emphasised structural causes of poverty, such as poor economic growth and low levels of education, and behavioural causes, such as the character of the poor and a lack of political will. It seems that without entirely blaming the poor themselves, respondents adopted a 'culture of poverty' perspective to explain the responsibility of the poor for their own poverty. They emphasized the poor's fatalistic attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. According to the respondents, these attitudes and behaviours lead to an opportunistic and unequal relationship between elites and the poor; but at the same time they ensured harmony between them. Although respondents' views on the structural and behavioural causes of the phenomenon may appear to be at odds with each other, together they suggest that the respondents are aware of the severity of poverty in Malawi and are also conscious of their dominant position and the fact that they may bear some responsibility for continuing poverty in Malawi.

The chapter is divided into three major sections. Section 7.2 presents elite views on the main causes of poverty in Malawi and shows the emergence of sharp distinctions between structural and behavioural causes of poverty. Section 7.3 discusses the structural causes of poverty as presented by respondents, highlighting how these structures militate against the poor moving out of poverty. Section 7.4 focuses on respondent's views of the character of the poor, emphasising their view of the poor's responsibility for their own poverty. This section also focuses on the views of respondents on their responsibility for

persistent poverty, highlighting their failure to implement policy and also the way in which they benefit from the unfair distribution of resources. Section 7.5 shows how respondents' views of the character of the poor determine the nature of their contact or relationship with the poor.

7.2 Elites Views on the Main Causes of Poverty

Table 7.1 lists the causes of poverty given by different categories of elite, as derived from the questionnaires. Respondents were given seven points with which they had to note their agreement or disagreement, and the resulting data has been organised to enable a comparison of their perceptions. Respondents could offer alternative suggestions that were not on the list presented to them, and the suggestions they came up with are listed in Box 7.1. Table 7.1 shows that insufficient economic development and lack of political will were ranked highly. Insufficient economic development was highlighted by civil service, donor and media respondents, whilst CSO respondents were split on this issue. Lack of political will was highlighted by civil service and academic respondents, and even by CSO and political respondents, who, by virtue of their positions, would be expected to mobilise political will. There was no significant support from respondents for the effect of corruption in causing poverty, although CSO and civil service respondents were split in their views⁸⁸. Similarly, with the exception of the Civil Service, very few respondents assigned blame to the poor for the presence of poverty. Nor did they blame themselves for being insensitive or for failing to implement social policies and monopolising opportunities.

⁸⁸ The respondents' views could reflect a perception that something was being done about corruption, following President Mutharika's zero-tolerance stance announced in 2004 (Presidential speech, 24/05/2004). Since then, there have been a number of high profile cases (former President Bakili Muluzi, former Minister of Education, Sam Mpasu) that have been prosecuted, and according to the 2010 corruption index, Malawi has improved from a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score of 2.80 in 2008 to 3.40 in 2010 (a score of 10 means a country is highly clean and 0, highly corrupt).

Table 7.1: Elites on the Causes of Poverty in Malawi

| Category | Academic | CSO | Donor | Civil Service | Media | INGO | Political | Private Sector | Missing Value | Total |
|---|----------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|----------------|---------------|-------|
| | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes |
| Insufficient economic development | 0 | 50 | 67 | 27 | 37 | 40 | 41 | 100 | 0 | 57 |
| Lack of political will to fight poverty | 100 | 56 | 33 | 64 | 37 | 60 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 52 |
| Corruption/patronage/clientelism | 0 | 50 | 33 | 50 | 0 | 40 | 24 | 0 | 100 | 35 |
| Lack of effort on the part of the poor | 0 | 13 | 33 | 55 | 25 | 20 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 31 |
| Monopolization of opportunities | 0 | 25 | 27 | 45 | 13 | 20 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| Government failure to fulfil social obligations | 0 | 31 | 27 | 36 | 0 | 20 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 26 |
| Elites lack sensitivity towards the poor | 0 | 13 | 7 | 41 | 13 | 20 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 20 |

*Data derived from questionnaires. Total respondents = 86. All the percentages for each category are calculated based on the total of interviewees in each category.

Box 7.1: Comments from Questionnaires on the Causes of Poverty

- Low educational levels
- Lack of performance culture
- Low resource base
- Weak human resource capacity
- Power imbalance between the different classes and sexes
- Unfair terms of international trade
- The community is ignorant of economic activities that would swiftly pull them out of the poverty cocoon
- Ethnicity and tribalism
- Physical, economic and social shocks; drought, floods, poor market prices and disease
- Economic transmission
- Natural disasters, shocks and the inability of people to be resilient
- Injustice and social exclusion or inequality
- Lack of capital for businesses
- Dependency syndrome
- Lack of political vision and policy implementation

When asked whether the Government had failed to fulfil its social function, only 26% of respondents agreed (see Table 7.1). This 26% was made up of CSO, donor, civil service, INGO and political respondents. Interestingly, this response was prevalent amongst respondents from the Civil Service, who hold the most responsibility for policy planning and implementation, and are therefore tasked with

fulfilling the Government's social obligations. However, it is important to note that, even though the Civil Service has this responsibility, power and influence in Malawi reside in the executive, and the Civil Service has been infused with politics (Rakner et al, 2004), to the extent that, in 2004, during President Mutharika's swearing-in ceremony, the President referred to the politicisation of the Civil Service and soon moved to implement civil service reforms that would ensure professionalism, efficiency and accountability⁸⁹. The politicization of the Civil Service could explain why civil service respondents suggested that there was a monopolization of opportunities, and that elites lacked sensitivity towards the poor. Tables 7.1 and Box 7.1 indicate that across the different elite categories there appears to be an inclination towards structural explanations (e.g. social and economic situations) rather than behavioural explanations (e.g. characteristics of the poor or of the elites) for the existence of poverty in Malawi. Consequently, attempts at reducing poverty are seen as equivalent to attempts at economic development (see also Jordan, 2004; Lahat and Menahem, 2009).

Table 7.2, below, shows the causes of poverty cited by 52 respondents during face-to-face interviews. The categories listed in this table were produced by coding unstructured responses, and are thus interpretations of respondent's perceptions. Although some categories, such as 'lack of education' or 'weak private sector', do not alter the respondents' perceptions, others, such as 'lack of democratisation', include an array of issues from participation, empowerment and politics generally. Therefore, Table 7.2 is a rough guide to, rather than a definitive account of, respondents' views on the causes of poverty. These responses were later grouped according to the ideas they presented on structural or behavioural causes.

⁸⁹ Swearing-in ceremony speech by President Bingu Wa Mutharika, delivered on 24th May, 2004.

Table 7.2: Elite Perceptions of the Main Causes of Poverty in Malawi

| Category | Academic | CSO | Donor/INGO | Civil Service | Media | Political | Private Sector |
|--|----------|-----|------------|---------------|-------|-----------|----------------|
| Structural Causes | | | | | | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Lack of democratisation | 0 | 55 | 50 | 8 | 0 | 10 | 33 |
| Lack of education | 100 | 64 | 50 | 75 | 71 | 60 | 67 |
| Global factors (unfair terms of trade, market prices, aid) | 0 | 36 | 25 | 25 | 0 | 20 | 67 |
| Overpopulation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 50 | 33 |
| Weak private sector | 100 | 9 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Malawi's landlocked nature /high transport costs | 0 | 9 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 10 | 33 |
| Lack of resources (land, money) | 100 | 55 | 25 | 33 | 29 | 50 | 33 |
| Lack of economic growth | 100 | 36 | 50 | 42 | 43 | 40 | 0 |
| Unequal power relations and inequality | 0 | 64 | 50 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 33 |
| Unemployment | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 20 | 0 |
| Behavioural Causes | | | | | | | |
| Behaviour and attitudes of the poor | 100 | 64 | 36 | 50 | 71 | 100 | 100 |
| Religion | 0 | 0 | 13 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lack of entrepreneurial spirit | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Lack of political will | 0 | 55 | 25 | 50 | 57 | 50 | 0 |
| Lack of visionary leaders | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Behaviour of the elite (patronage and populist politics, corruption) | 100 | 9 | 36 | 42 | 14 | 30 | 33 |

*Data derived from face-to-face interviews with elites. All the percentages for each category are calculated based on the total of interviewees in each category.

Table 7.2 indicates that the respondents appear to agree that lack of education, lack of economic growth and the behaviour and attitudes of the poor are the main causes of poverty, although among INGO/donor respondents' support for the idea that the poor themselves are a cause of poverty is minimal. However, there are areas in which the respondents' views differ. It seems that civil society

respondents emphasise unequal power relations, inequality, lack of democratisation and resources more than other elite categories, perhaps reflecting a dominance of organisations involved in advocating social justice amongst the CSO category. Political respondents emphasise the effects of population growth, lack of resources such as land, and lack of political will. There is a minority of respondents from the private sector and the Civil Service who highlight population pressure; but political respondents dominated this discussion. As one MP indicated,

High population growth is the main cause of poverty. We were 3.6 million people in 1964 and currently we are 13 million, but could be as high as 15 -18 million in Malawi. Considering that we have only one rainy season and one harvest, then the population is too big to survive (MP, Parliament, 6/5/08).

This could be a reflection of MPs' need to represent the interests of their constituents, who are mainly poor, and the close contact MPs maintain with the poor. My analysis⁹⁰ of the Malawi Parliament's Hansard documents (1965-2008) and observations of parliamentary proceedings indicated that in their contributions parliamentarians emphasised that they had been directed by their constituents to support social justice issues. As one speaker said, *'Poor people in my constituency instructed me to talk about water, housing, and food'* (Hon. Mwenifumbo, 29/04/08). Then again, political respondents seemed to lay claim to direct experience of poverty, emphasising their responsibility towards their constituents for the provision of basic needs such as food and access to services, for instance paying school fees for children in the constituency and taking people to the hospital (this point will be developed in Chapter 8).

The INGO/donor category identified the nature of policies themselves as leading to inequality, and lack of education as a cause of poverty, reflecting their direct involvement in implementing government policy. For example, at the time of the survey UNICEF and Concern Worldwide had been working in partnership with the Malawi Government to implement child policies and welfare policies through the

⁹⁰ The analysis of Hansard documents drew on this thesis's stated objectives and research questions (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) to classify key ideas or themes relating to what and how various Members of Parliament discuss issues of poverty and the poor, from which inferences were made. A similar procedure was followed for the analysis of parliamentary debates and observations.

social protection policy. This is likely to be why INGO respondents argued that policies in Malawi allocated wealth to certain groups to the detriment of others, and more resources to urban than to rural areas. The tobacco industry was given as an example, with farm owners retaining 90% of the profits and their tenants, who actually grew the tobacco, getting very little in return. In addition, the law allows owners to pay tenants in food, which is charged at exorbitant prices. Hence inequality has become institutionalised, so that it does not allow some groups to graduate out of poverty. Instead these institutions/structures enable some groups to control and monopolize power over institutions that legitimize discrimination. By contrast, civil service and academic respondents emphasised a weak private sector, the behaviour of elites, land issues, and lack of political will as causes of poverty; and respondents from the media emphasised lack of political will, whilst private sector respondents emphasised lack of entrepreneurial spirit and global factors.

Despite these divergent views on the causes of poverty, respondents' views show that there was consensus on illiteracy as the most prominent cause. A majority of interviewees in each category argued that it was meaningless to implement pro-poor policies if the recipients were uneducated. Education is what determines the extent to which the poor will use the resources made available to them and their attitude towards development. Therefore, respondents considered education to be key to development, particularly poverty reduction, as it enabled reasoning and innovativeness. As this respondent noted,

If educational levels are so low, the thinking capacity is low and when you go into a community with your interventions, nothing changes. We need to emphasise a change in poor people's perception towards development; otherwise they just get development resources and do not use them to their benefit. Most of the time they misuse the resources (National Secretary, CSO, 7/05/08).

The education referred to here is not only higher education but also primary, secondary and entrepreneurial training that would enable the poor to develop innovative ideas as to the use of available resources. However, more emphasis was placed on primary and entrepreneurial education.

These are seen to be essential for developing human resources necessary for growth and poverty reduction.

Perhaps Malawian elites agree on education as a solution because it is perceived as a factor that distinguishes elites from the poor. Since colonial times, education has played a key role in social mobility, as those who received missionary education were employed in the colonial administration or as farm managers. Thus current members of the elites, or their families, have escaped rural life through access to education, and so they believe that education can change the life of the poor: 'Education is what separates the haves from the have-nots' (Minister, Civil Service, 30/04/08). There is a perception amongst the respondents that the condition of the poor is something within their means to change through education.

7.3 Elite Views on the Structural Causes of Poverty

This section discusses the structural causes of poverty, as indicated by respondents during face-to-face interviews. There was awareness amongst the respondents that poverty was a complex and multidimensional problem; and the causes of poverty in Malawi were considered to be vast and varied. These responses reveal a perception that the causes of poverty are closely linked to insufficient development, which necessitates attention to broader national development strategies, rather than redistribution or direct welfare transfers.

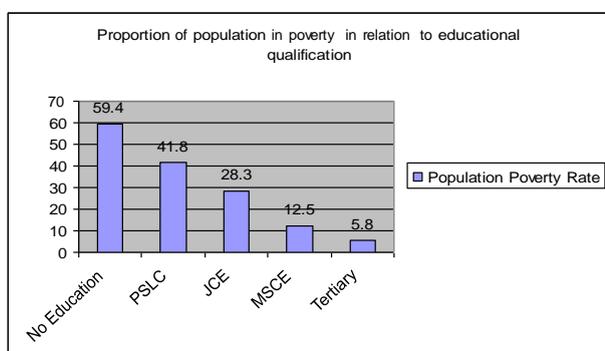
7.3.1 Education and Poverty

Education is the key for attaining prosperity. It is a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless. Education enhances group solidarity, national consciousness and tolerance of diversity (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, 2007:51).

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy states that the emphasis in the education sector is on equipping students, especially at primary school level, with the basic knowledge and skills to enable them to function as competent and productive citizens. Education also provides the academic basis for gainful employment in the informal, private and public sectors, and produces high quality professionals with relevant knowledge. Achievement in education is associated with increased agricultural productivity, higher incomes, lower fertility rates and improved nutrition and health. The overall goal of education is, therefore, to develop human capital to enable full participation in the socio-economic and political development of the country. The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper also put education at the centre of poverty alleviation, believing that this would yield 'broad economic and social benefits'.

Correspondingly, the Malawian national budget has seen a steady increase in expenditure on education. By the 2008-2009 budget, education was receiving the third largest allocation, with an increase of MK3.9 billion over 2007-2008. Poverty research in Malawi has also given prominence to education as a determinant of household or individual poverty. The Integrated Household Survey of 2004-2005 showed that poverty was highest amongst those with no educational qualifications and lowest amongst those with some educational qualifications (see Figure 7.1).

Fig 7.1: Population in Poverty in Relation to Educational Qualifications⁹¹



*Source: National Statistics Office (Malawi), 2005

⁹¹ PSLC = Primary School Leaving Certificate; JCE = Junior Certificate of Examination; MSCE = Malawi School Certificate of Education (equivalent to GCSE).

.Respondents' conceptualisation of education was similar: they cited it as the cure for all the causes of poverty in Malawi. Elites believe that the low educational level is the reason why poverty in Malawi is increasing, and why society has not developed attitudes and values conducive to the implementation of pro-poor policies and the skills to enhance productivity. As this respondent argued, 'Education is the key, as it impacts on the attitudes of the poor. If all people were educated, then they would have a positive attitude towards development' (PS, Civil Service, 11/4/08). What an education does is 'to make you see doors where there are no doors or to sense opportunities' (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08). One respondent argued that an educated workforce would attract foreign companies seeking labour reserves:

If people are educated as a country you attract employers. The UK is using customer service people from India because they have a large number of educated people. Yet they do not have mineral resources or tourism. You cannot cry foul about growing poverty if you are not investing in education (Minister, Civil Service, 7/5/08)⁹².

To most CSO respondents, education is what separates the haves from the have-nots and widens the gap between elites and the poor. They believe that, 'as the education gap gets wider, that in itself creates a barrier between elites and the poor. There are certain things that cannot be communicated to the uneducated poor as to someone who is educated' (Managing Director, CSO, 6/05/08). The fact that many respondents had emerged from rural poverty through education was seen as an example of the possibility for social mobility that education could open up. Therefore, 'If one is not educated, it is more or less that you have made a decision of which grouping in society you are going to belong to' (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/05/08). Emerging from this view is the assumption that individuals

⁹² The perception by this respondent about mineral resources and tourism in India is not accurate as India has a rich accumulation of minerals such as coal, copper, gold, zinc and diamonds among others and its rich cultural and historical past attracts tourists from around the world (Fazili and Ashraf, 2006). Although India has 74% literacy rate, it still holds the largest number of illiterate people in the world, and when you compare with China's literacy rate of 96%, India's literacy rate is much lower (www.unesco.org; HDR, 2009). This shows how literacy impacts development when you compare different states, which makes this statement valid overall.

choose to be uneducated, rather than being inhibited by limited opportunities for a good education. This point will be developed in some detail in Chapter 8.

The failure of the agricultural sector was also identified with lack of education, resulting in the failure to utilise land productively and use markets effectively. One respondent stated:

If you gave land to a person who has at least received secondary school education and one that has not, it is the one with some form of education that will make better use of the land. Our main problem has been the lack of education, which has impacted our production, and production has three elements, which are land, capital and labour. The quality of labour impacts how you use the land and capital available to you (Country Director, INGO, 27/5/08).

Coupled with this is the idea that illiteracy has meant lack of technological advances that could have helped Malawi increase its agricultural production.

The use of the hoe also takes people's time. A person will be digging the whole day on a small piece of land when we could have been using other methods (PS, Civil Service, 23/4/08; similar views were expressed by MP, Parliament, 28/03/2008).

Some respondents argued that illiteracy had perpetuated personality politics. Parties did not espouse any ideology; rather they aimed to appeal to supporters through patronage. As this respondent argued, 'If the population was fairly literate, then we would be electing members of parliament based on what they can offer Malawians and the strength of their policies and be able to hold them to account' (National Coordinator, Civil Service, 2/05/08). A CSO leader blamed the increasing corruption itself on illiteracy, arguing that it was because of lack of education that poor Malawians allowed corruption to thrive, because they did not comprehend how to fulfil their citizenship duties by contributing to social, economic and political processes (Managing Director, CSO, 6/05/08).

My analysis of debates in the National Assembly from 1965 to 2008 also shows that education has been emphasised in discussions on poverty. The former president, Dr Muluzi, in his various state

addresses to Parliament often indicated that, 'The one cause of poverty is ignorance, and it holds the key to changing the lives and attitudes of our people for the better' (State of the Nation Address, 1997).

Other comments on education came from Members of Parliament:

An illiterate person is economically less productive' (Shawa, 1991).

The leader of the Opposition once stated:

Education is important if Malawi is to improve the skills of its labour force. For Malawi to achieve economic growth, it needs a productive human resource. A well educated labour force can have a maximum impact on poverty and meet the challenges of globalisation (Tembo, 2000).

Although respondents agreed that illiteracy was a problem for Malawi, they acknowledged that the education system was fraught with problems caused by management, monopolisation of educational resources and poor planning.

Although the Government has introduced free primary education, poverty deters the poor from sending their children to school. Children from poor households cannot go to school because they are hungry and do not have proper clothing. In addition to this, education is not equally accessible, as the areas in which poor people live have few schools, and these are normally located far from their communities.

Below is an excerpt from a face-to-face interview that captures some of the problems facing education in Malawi:

The free primary education was a political decision to gain a popular vote without assessing the situation on the ground. They could have used a phased approach, but instead fully implemented this policy. Yet many areas had no infrastructures such as classrooms. The problem is not that we do not have teachers: we do, but the problem is distribution of these teachers. You have teachers running away from rural areas because there are no facilities such as good teachers' houses or classrooms. The Government should find a way of keeping

teachers in the rural areas, because you find a school in the rural areas where enrolment is 1000 students and there are only three teachers. Most of the time these teachers are not fully qualified, therefore poor people become even more disadvantaged. In the rural areas there is need for incentives that would keep people in these areas where there is no electricity or running water. Most of the time, teachers in the rural areas only have a diploma and not a degree. This just needs proper planning and distribution. The other problem with our education is that, since 1964, the curriculum has been tailored at people getting employment. The curriculum has not changed to the current challenges as needs for Malawi have changed. The management of education is poor, the ministry is too big, and they need to separate it in three: early education between primary and nursery, and secondary, then tertiary education. There is no proper early education system, and that is where the disparity starts, because a child of an elite will be sent to a nursery school whilst a poor child will not attend nursery school. When they meet in standard eight, they cannot compete, because one has a better foundation (Programme Manager, Donor, 16/06/2008).

Other respondents felt that elites and their networks monopolised opportunities through preferential access to higher education, to the detriment of poor people, who were deterred from going to school.

One respondent gave an example of a small village on the outskirts of the city of Lilongwe where.

The residents do not encourage their children to go to school because there is no benefit in it. This is because there was a boy who passed his GCSE with eighteen points, which should have earned him an automatic place at the university, but he was unable to go. Nine years have gone by and he is still farming. Everyone uses him as an example to discourage people from going to school; at the moment a girl from this same village has gotten twenty-five points and she has been told by the community not to expect anything. They tell her 'inu ndinu ayani'⁹³' (PS, Civil Service, 17/4/08).

Maybe it is not illiteracy alone but also the fact that 'the environment provided to the poor to uplift themselves out of poverty is not conducive enough' (Regional Manager, Media, 16/5/08).

Emerging from respondents' views is the idea that low educational levels have negatively impacted each sector of development in Malawi. One respondent said: 'If I was president of Malawi, I would stop all projects and just educate Malawians, because people with an education are more open to programmes, assimilate them faster and use resources effectively' (Country Director, INGO, 27/5/08).

⁹³ 'Who are you to want anything better than this? This is how your life is meant to be'.

However, inherent in this discussion of education is an attempt by respondents to blame the poor and justify the presence of poverty. Whilst some did not explicitly blame the poor directly as a cause of their own poverty, others, like this respondent, were more open:

Most poor people who are not educated just fold their hands and do nothing all day. They are resigned to their fate. If a person is educated, they are ambitious to progress and do things better. You work hard to equal those at your level, and education makes you think wider. There are those who can develop without an education, but they are not many (Country Director, INGO, 27/5/08).

It is important to understand the type of education elites advocate for the poor masses, which leads to questions about genuine commitment to education as the main means of reducing poverty. The returns from primary education are seen as beneficial to society because primary education enhances and sustains the ability of the poor to deliver the productive labour required in a market economy (Cammack, 2003; Harber, 2002). However, the return from higher education is viewed as accruing to the individual. This distinction is important for understanding elites' support for policies with wider benefits to society, and this will be further explored in Chapter 8.

7.3.2 Land and Overpopulation

Some respondents argued that in order to understand poverty there is a need to understand the structures that generate it. According to Table 7.2, academic (100%), political (50%), CSO (55%) and other respondents from the media, Civil Service and INGO/donor categories believe that land is a cause of poverty in Malawi. As indicated in Chapter 5, in an agrarian economy like Malawi, land is the major productive resource, and poverty can be explained by people's failure to have access to land or make an adequate living out of their land. In addition, in Chapter 5 it was suggested that access to land is a major source of inequality, and most respondents stated that the land distribution package in the

1960s transferred large amounts of land from the traditional sector to the commercial sector, leaving people without adequate land for subsistence. This had been made worse by an increase in population, which respondents argued made 'the ability to own land a safety net' (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/05/2008)⁹⁴. Those that do not have land are left seeking a livelihood in an environment where sources of livelihood are scarce. Respondents noted that lack of access to land or failure to use land productively meant that the poor could not produce enough to feed themselves or generate income to buy other necessities. The fact that there has been slow progress in formalising individual rights to customary land since the proposed 2002 land reforms means that the majority of poor people have no legal access to land, and therefore cannot use their land as collateral to access credit.

However, respondents were aware that access to land alone is not an immediate route out of poverty. As this respondent noted: 'The poor in the rural areas do have access to land, but this is not an immediate passport to graduate out of poverty. It is what one is able to do with that land that helps them escape poverty, which is related to access to inputs such as fertiliser as well as irrigation schemes' (National Coordinator, CSO, 21/5/08). Hence, access to land needs to be accompanied by non-land assets such as credit, which enables land holders to access fertilisers and seeds, access to extension services, and training in modern farming techniques (Chinsinga et al, 2008).

7.3.3 Overdependence on Agriculture, Lack of Technological Advancement, and the Global Impact on Poverty

Respondents noted that Malawi had been heavily dependent on agriculture for decades, but still used primitive methods of farming that resulted in poor yields:

⁹⁴ Similar views were expressed in the 2004-2005 budget statement delivered to Parliament by Hon G. Gongwe. In addition, during the 37th Session of 19th March, 2004, where political elites discussed Malawi's Land Bill, it was acknowledged that the land bill was very important as it addressed the issue of poverty and gave a sense of ownership to Malawians. Thus, legal instruments such as title deeds would enable rural Malawians to acquire credit from financial institutions and access farming inputs, such as fertiliser (Hon, Mwenifumbo; Hon Bwanali and Hon Mdala).

We are still using a hoe, we have not mechanized, and we have huge sources of water but we have not gone into massive irrigation schemes. We still wait for the rain and hence only plant once a year (MP, Parliament, 28/3/08).

Thus lack of investment in agriculture was seen to have left Malawians in a downward spiral of poverty from one year to the next. The main problems, according to this CEO, are the impact of global forces, lack of resources and illiteracy. He argued that,

Farmers have to take care of their own production costs but are susceptible to market factors. Those that are doing well in farming have combined good business acumen with education (CEO, Private sector, 13/05/08).

Furthermore, Malawi exports raw materials with unfair terms of trade, and the country is given poor prices on the international market for its goods. Then again, the imposition of structural adjustment programmes by the Bretton Woods Institutions is considered to have removed development strategies that were beneficial for the poor. For instance,

Malawi was asked to remove agricultural subsidies when developed countries are still using these. Therefore, Malawi ended up closing food distribution centres, such as ADMARC, and that curtailed food distribution to the poor, resulting in perpetual food shortages. The reduction of staff within the Civil Service meant that low paid staff were laid off, creating a poverty trap. SAPs created a bigger poverty trap because services were not being delivered to the masses (PS, Civil Service, 17/4/08).

Other respondents (see Table 7.2 - Donor, 25%; CSO, 36% and Political, 20%) argued that it was Malawi's over-dependence on aid that exacerbated the poverty situation. Foreign aid is seen to have made the country vulnerable to donor pressure and the conditionalities that lead to the implementation of donor policies rather than locally designed policies. As this respondent from the donor community argued, there is no recognition by the leaders in Malawi that aid is meant to be transitional and needs to be spent effectively at the time that one has access to it (Resident Representative, Donor, 25/05/08). Agreeing with this view, other respondents argued that Malawi had failed to develop a plan for reducing aid dependence or an aid exit strategy. As these two respondents argued,

Malawi should take Zimbabwe as an example of what happens when donors stop their support. A country collapses and we need to make hay whilst the sun shines. Any time aid to Africa can stop or be reduced significantly (Director, CSO, 7/4/08).

We concentrate too much on what the donor can do. This is not sustainable. We need to start doing things ourselves (MP, 28/4/08)⁹⁵.

The Malawian media also picked up on the issue of Malawi's dependency on foreign aid. On 2nd February, 1996, *The Nation* ran an article that emphasised that Malawi had been 'begging' for a long time. The article cautioned that,

No country has developed by begging as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end. Therefore, the Government should be committed to managing foreign assistance effectively and seek to make the best use of local resources (Dzilankhulani, 1996).

Similarly in March 2008, the *Daily Times* and *The Nation* ran an article where the Chinese Ambassador, Fan Guijin, told the Government of Malawi that no country had developed through foreign aid. This followed an avalanche of requests for financial support to the newly opened Chinese High Commission from government agencies, CSOs and parastatals. Although the envoy was condemned by the ruling party⁹⁶ for his remarks, the media proceeded to discuss Malawi's dependence on aid, cautioning both the Government and citizens.

7.3.4 Weak Private and Manufacturing Sector

As Table 7.2 shows, some respondents (academic, civil service, political and CSO) indicated that lack of private sector development was another cause of poverty, as a strong private sector was needed for

⁹⁵ On 14th July, 2011, DFID announced the suspension of budget support to Malawi. This is the support that allows the Government to implement pro-poor strategies: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Press-releases/2011/Government-to-suspend-general-budget-support-to-Malawi/>. The suspension has forced the Government to implement a zero-deficit budget, with serious implications for social and economic development, particularly poverty reduction.

⁹⁶ Following the remarks made by Guijin, government spokesperson, Patricia Kaliati (Minister of Information at the time) asked the envoy to respect Malawians and use the proper channels for complaints: <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/a-13-2008-03-28-voa36.html>

job creation and raising people's incomes. (Project Coordinator, Civil Service, 28/04/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08). In addition to this, respondents spoke of the lack of microfinance for the poor, which meant that the poor not only lacked access to sources of employment but also to opportunities to better themselves on their own initiative. It was considered urgent that, 'Government make an effort to create industries and opportunities, especially in rural communities, which would serve as markets and sources of employment' (Minister, Civil Service, 6/6/08). One respondent noted that the private sector failed to thrive because,

Its survival relies on having close links with the state, because most of the lucrative contracts are given out by the state. Therefore you find that it is the very same politicians who are also businessmen and have ended up accumulating wealth at the expense of the poor majority (Academic, University of Malawi, 08/5/08).

The *African Economic Outlook* (2010) argues that private sector development is central to economic growth and its limited development in Malawi is detrimental to growth. However, they acknowledge, as did some respondents (see Table 7.2), that high transport costs resulting from Malawi's landlocked position have constrained the growth of the private and manufacturing sector.

The discussion above shows that there is awareness of the multidimensional nature of poverty and the varied causes of poverty in Malawi. However, emerging from respondents' views is a perception that the character of the country's poor and of its elites contributes to the prevalence of poverty. This is discussed in the next section.

7.4 Elites on the Behavioural Causes of Poverty

This section discusses the behavioural causes of poverty as described by respondents during face-to-face interviews. These causes relate to the character and behaviour of individuals, such as the poor or

the elites themselves. In relation to the poor, behavioural causes are those that make them unable to be entrepreneurial and take full advantage of the market economy. The poor are generally considered to become dependent on welfare policies, especially those that involve cash or food transfers, which are seen to perpetuate poverty and lead to other social ills. As far as elites are concerned, aspects of their behaviour that cause poverty are those that make them unable and unwilling to ensure economic opportunities for the country, and their inability, where such opportunities do exist, to implement these to the benefit of the poor.

7.4.1 Elite Views of the Poor

Table 7.2 shows that there was a perception that certain behaviour and attitudes of the poor make them responsible for their own poverty. The respondents whose views the table represents argued that the poor were unproductive and lazy, preferring to drink and dance *gule wa mkulu* (a traditional dance) rather than farming or identifying opportunities in the market that could improve their welfare (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08; Acting Executive Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08; Head of Section, Civil Service, 28/04/08; Project Coordinator, Civil Service, 28/04/08; Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/08).

This produces a situation where a large percentage of unproductive Malawians depend on the small percentage of the population that is productive. As this respondent put it:

We have a small population that is productive, about 30%, and a larger group that is unproductive, about 70%. The 30% is feeding the 70%, and that is not going to work. The poor are unproductive and lazy and, therefore, their behaviour and attitudes contribute to levels of poverty in Malawi. We have one planting season here and once the crop fails, there is hunger and the country has to look for food. People are unproductive. There is HIV/Aids, and we are having more young people and older people. The productive ages between 18 and 30 are gone, and these are meant to be our future leaders. On the other hand, you find the youth that are in the rural areas, they sit around doing nothing, or they come into town to beg, literally unproductive. We have to get our people to work and keep them busy (MP, Parliament, 28/4/08).

Therefore, the poor were considered to be a drain on economic efficiency. Malawi was understood to be locked into a cycle of providing trivial things, like mosquito nets, instead of investing in economic growth: 'We are organising mosquito nets to give to poor people for free. Why do we do that? You mean people cannot afford to buy a MK300 (equivalent to GBP1.23) mosquito net?' (Director, Media, 16/4/08).

These views betray an attempt by respondents to separate the deserving from the undeserving poor, the deserving being those suffering from poverty not caused by themselves and the undeserving being the cause of their own poverty. This will be discussed further below, in relation to ideas about the character of the poor.

7.4.1.1 The Mindset of the Poor

In a study of elites and poverty in Bangladesh, Hossain notes that the attitude of the poor towards development and personal improvement was widely considered to be negative. Generally, respondents argued that these attitudes needed to change and that elites should ensure such a change. Not only did these attitudes determine behaviour, they separated the poor from the non-poor. The poor's attitudes towards savings, identifying opportunities, and work were considered to be negative as compared to those of the non-poor (Hossain, 2003:46).

Similarly, the Malawian respondents in this study refused to describe the poor as lazy, except for the few mentioned above, and where they mentioned laziness, it was quickly qualified with a more positive statement. For instance, during observations of elite-level discussions on social protection policy, specifically the cash transfer component of this, a former Minister of Finance and sitting Member of Parliament stated:

I do not want to be seen as inhumane, that I don't want to support poor people, but I do not understand why we should be supporting lazy people and drunkards with cash transfers. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying we should not be supporting them (28th March, 2008).

Those respondents who were requested to fill in the questionnaire in addition to a face-to-face interview were quick to admonish my use of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor in the questionnaire. They normally took a moral position, arguing that Malawians were hardworking people, and that it was the elites' failure to implement appropriate policies that had led to dependency. One respondent indicated that,

It could be that people are lazy because our policies have been misdirected, and people no longer have the opportunities that they once had, or alternatives. It is difficult to say someone is poor because they are not industrious. It could be our own bad policies that lead to laziness or lack of initiative. It is our failure to educate the masses that is the problem" (Executive Director, CSO, 15/4/08).

Other participants at a social protection workshop (28th March, 2008) were not so subtle in their preference for the active rather than the inactive poor. This workshop was only for Members of Parliament and some of the comments highlighted here are interesting in this regard.

Let us inject funds towards the energetic poor.

The poor bring poverty on themselves. For instance they will sell their subsidised fertiliser coupons and sit in the bar to drink.

Let us put money on poor, energetic and sober Malawians. Let us not put money on mad and useless people.

We should be concentrating on production to build the country rather than these handouts [cash transfers].

Social protection policy will destroy the ethics of working hard.

These statements correspond with the issue of the poor's fatalistic and dependent mindset that was much discussed during face-to-face interviews. Many respondents argued that mindset determines the likelihood of someone getting up and working hard or doing the opposite. Reflected in the above statements is the notion that some policies aimed at reducing the inequality and structural impediments stimulate negative attributes, such as dependence, lack of entrepreneurial spirit and motivation. Inequality was justified by one respondent on the basis that it was difficult to uplift all poor people because different poor people had different priorities and ambitions:

Although in the rural areas there are few opportunities, a man can go into the river or stream nearby and get some bamboo shoots to make baskets or sleeping mats and sell in town, or go to the forest, cut down some trees, make a hoe and sell it. On the other hand, he can tell his wife that together they should collect water and soil to mould bricks to sell. These are all activities that can bring some income into the family, but for some reason there is no incentive for the poor to work hard and uplift themselves out of poverty. They just wake up in the morning and sit all day playing one game after the other, and they do nothing productive. There is lack of drive to improve oneself, and there is need to deal with our people's mindset (PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08).

The idea of changing mindsets was taken up by several respondents (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08; MP, 28/03/08; Minister, Civil Service, 7/05/08; PS, 23/04/08; National Coordinator, Civil Service, 2/05/08; National Director, Media, 16/04/08; Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08; General Manager, Media, 15/05/08; Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08), who believed that the mindset of the poor needed to be changed as it was the main cause of poverty. As this respondent argued:

If the poor believed that there was a solution to their problem and that their lives could change, their attitudes and mindset would also change. This is the role that the elites have – changing people's mindset and providing opportunities (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08).

The ideas about the poor indicated in these statements are similar to elite views on the causes of poverty in nineteenth century Europe and the USA (as discussed in Chapter 3). There was a belief that

the exercise of the virtues of diligence, prudence, sobriety, thrift and initiative was the pathway to affluence. Therefore, poverty was caused by idleness, improvidence, and intemperance – defects of character which the individual could, if she or he chose, overcome. Although hazards of life such as unemployment, sickness, old age, and death of the breadwinner were acknowledged, it was the mark of a provident man that he set aside savings to cover these risks (Berthoud et al, 1981:7). In this case, Malawian elites are arguing that even though the opportunities are few, it is the mark of a provident man to be creative with what is available to earn a living. As one respondent asked, 'If government is providing free primary education, what is stopping the parents from looking for food so the child can go to school?' (PS, Civil Service, 28/4/08).

In addition, in situations where the poor had worked on their land and had produced something, the respondents believed the poor squandered this opportunity by failing to invest, or they invested in unproductive areas.

Some people even make money from growing of tobacco, but they will decide to marry another wife rather than building a house with the proper roofing. Those that work in our houses choose to use their money on beer instead of buying a bag of fertiliser, which would help them in the planting season. It is the way they use the meagre resources they earn. It is usually on unproductive activities (PS, Civil Service, 02/05/08).

7.4.1.2 Culture of Dependency

Respondents indicated that the culture of dependency or over-reliance on handouts was what determined the poor's failure to search for solutions to their poverty. Under Kamuzu Banda, it was argued, the poor were seen as self-sufficient: although they relied on the non-poor in urban areas, the relationship was seen as reciprocal. There was some nostalgia for the 'old times', when they took second hand clothes to relatives in the rural areas in exchange for food, because the poor then grew plenty of food. There was a widespread belief that this self-sufficient mentality had been replaced by a belief that someone else would take care and provide for them:

That mentality, that donors and government will help us, reduces the zeal to work hard, and they sit idle waiting for handouts or they start to beg. People no longer ask for work but for alms (Member, Parliamentary Committee, 31/03/08).

People think manna will fall from heaven. People cannot think of what to do to escape poverty (PS, 2/5/08).

A national coordinator for an agricultural CSO told a story of a study that his organisation had carried out on food and nutrition. They had found that the poor would like to remain poor to continue receiving aid, and, 'They know that if they do not work someone will come to help them. Some of the poor are satisfied with poverty levels; therefore they cannot break out of the poverty cycle' (13/5/08).

The poor were described as having a slave mentality and paralysis of analysis. (Poverty has made the poor unable to think beyond their poverty or in terms of long-term benefit. Rather, they opt for short-term relief). One respondent indicated that:

Malawians have shifted their interest in ethical work and responsible and accountable living to an attitude of 'tidye nawo' [reaping where they have not sown], or to support those in power to benefit financially. We are unable to question how a member of parliament can manage to have five vehicles, buy houses or run businesses on their salaries. The poor are only thinking 'give me today my daily bread' and do not think about tomorrow. When people are trapped in a system of hand to mouth, they cannot think beyond that (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/5/08).

The poor were considered to have failed to develop a sense of active participation, to have failed to fulfil their duty as citizens. The concept of *Boma* (government) was seen as having encouraged passivity in them. Since colonial times, *Boma* has been a powerful concept for ordinary people – one to be feared and respected. '*Boma* is not something that is approachable. It is very removed from society and democracy, and does not mean anything to many Malawians' (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/5/08). Generally, the poor's fatalistic and passive attitudes mean that their poverty is not a threat to elites, as the poor are polite and submissive. As this respondent noted: 'Malawians are only peaceful because they are poor' (PS, 28/4/08).

These views on the slave mentality and passivity of the poor can be traced back to the time of Dr

Banda (see Chapter 5), who called on Malawians to be disciplined, obedient, not argumentative or contradictory. He would often say, 'Don't go this way when you are told to go that way, don't ask why, and don't ask if it is necessary' (Hirshmann 1995). According to Booth et al. (2006), this culture of silence and unquestioning loyalty has impacted on Malawians in such a way that they remain passive onlookers in their country's development. The nature of Malawi's traditional society, in which social relationships were characterized by inequality and a large power gap, meant that inequality was generally accepted, and citizens gladly deferred to authority. This helps to explain why abuses by big men are tolerated, even when very few benefits trickle down to poor people.

It can therefore be argued that the culture of docility and passivity, created particularly by the one-party system, explains a lack of civic tradition of engagement between various social forces. This lack of civic engagement has cemented the distance between elites and the poor:

Compare the situation in Malawi to South Africa, where despite the human rights issues they went through they have the most vibrant civic engagement in Africa, and elites listen to the demands of the people, especially on HIV/AIDS. In Malawi, we do not have alternative means of engaging with the elites and, as a result, the elites get away with anything. There are some things that have happened in Malawi that could have ended in civil strife in other countries, because people do not want to be taken for granted (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08).

7.4.1.3 Poverty as Fate and God-given

Another view of the poor is that they are resigned to their fate, tending to view poverty as bad luck or misfortune. The poor were seen to be using their situation as an excuse not to be industrious, nor to get involved in development projects such as food-for-work programmes. As this respondent argued,

People need to be preoccupied with creating wealth and how to improve one's life. But they are busy living day to day, arguing that 'my parents were poor so I will also end up poor no matter what I try'. There is no generational improvement; the parents of today are still living in the thatched roofed house just like their predecessors (PS, Civil Service, 6/6/08).

In 2002, former president Muluzi stated that poor people needed to change their mindsets and understand that living in a mud house with a grass thatched roof was not the status quo.⁹⁷ This perception shows that the character of poor people rather than the social and economic structures is considered a cause of poverty.

There was some agreement amongst the respondents in this study that the poor in Malawi were respected by society as a moral symbol and a repository of integrity, whereas society depicted the rich as evil. For example, if someone opens a business, people assume that they have killed someone. In Malawi, the rich are considered 'witches', who have become rich by practicing witchcraft or through immoral acts, such as corruption (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08; Regional Manager, Media, 16/05/08; Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; MP, Parliament, 28/03/08). .

In his book, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*, Chabal discusses the concept of witchcraft as serving three purposes in African life: healing, accountability and social leveller. It offers solutions to everyday problems, such as sickness, death or bad luck; it can be used to force politicians to fulfil their obligations; and it can be used to force the wealthy to distribute their wealth to the poor (2009: 76). In this case, the idea that witchcraft is present among the rich is used by the poor to idealise and normalise poverty. Religion was considered the main contributor to this thinking, with its teaching that entering heaven is harder for a rich man than a poor man (Matthew 19: 24).

The poor tend to think there is something holy about being poor, that we start coming up with anecdotes that depict the rich as not worthy of entering the kingdom of God. Somehow if you are in the village people sneer at the well to do, not the poor, and there is a consensus that we should not laugh at poor people. But is it not the wish of the poor to be food self-sufficient? (PS, Civil Service, 6/6/08).

⁹⁷ Speech by President Bakili Muluzi at the launch of the village housing scheme in Mzimba, in the northern region of Malawi, held on 07/10/2002.

7.4.1.4 Traditional and Cultural Practices

Another common view was that the poor's harmful traditional and cultural practices played a role in increasing poverty. One respondent mentioned *kupimbira*, a practice in which a poor family takes their daughter to a rich family in exchange for money. The child becomes a slave to that family, carrying out all domestic chores and is often sexually abused by the men in that household (Minister, Civil Service, 15/04/08). Other cultural traditions, such as *chikamwini* (where a man leaves his home village to settle at his wife's village upon marriage) have led to insecurity, because the man lives in fear that if something goes wrong with his marriage, he will be chased from the village and have to leave behind his investments. Therefore, they find it better to sit idle and not to invest in any enterprise, as they have no sense of permanence. In many of his speeches, former president Dr Bakili Muluzi talked about the impact of cultural traditions on poverty. On 17th August 2008, during the enthronement of chiefs in Mangochi, Muluzi told those gathered that cultural beliefs such as *kuchotsa fumbi* (which means 'to remove dust', an initiation ceremony that may include unprotected inter-generational sex) will spread diseases such as HIV/AIDS and kill Malawians, and others such as *chinamwali* (preparing a girl for marriage) deter children, especially girls, from going to school, increasing gender inequality.

It was generally believed that these behavioural causes of poverty were inherent in individuals, sustained, and transmitted to future generations, thus creating a culture of poverty amongst future generations that reinforced these negative social and behavioural deficiencies (Jordan, 2004).

7.4.2 Lack of Visionary Leaders and Political Will

In discussing the behavioural causes of poverty, some respondents refused to declare overtly that the poor were lazy. Rather, they stressed that if the poor were to be considered lazy, it would be because of the social and economic structures that militated against their movement out of poverty.

People need opportunities to strive. They are not lazy (Minister, Civil Service, 21/04/08).

It is the environment. Why were poor people not lazy during the Banda years? (General Manager, Media, 15/05/08)

There is no justification to say poor people are lazy unless they have been empowered and educated (Programme Director, CSO, 13/05/08).

Some respondents across all categories (see Table 7.2) went further, saying that the behaviour of the poor was moulded by the behaviour of the elites, thus the poor's behaviour and attitudes were, by default, a result of the elites' corruption, self-interest, and failure to implement policy, ensure growth, and ensure markets for agricultural products. As one PS elaborated:

During the time of Muluzi there was one Minister (Aleke Banda) that always used to say that Malawians are lazy and always drinking instead of working. But I have always disagreed with that, because I believe Malawians are very rational beings such that if you explain to him/her the benefits of a particular course of action they will patronise that. But if 'Capitol Hill'⁹⁸ lets him down and frustrates him then he will fold his arms and do nothing. That is why I believe that if we say Malawians are lazy then what we are saying is that Capitol Hill is lazy, because we are not guiding the poor, telling them where the opportunities are, and we are not empowering them economically. The poor look to us to give them ideas and guide them, but every time we tell them that they should produce a lot of goods, and when they harvest there are no markets, do you expect them to do it again? Then when they stop you call them lazy. That is not true. How come when they go to South Africa they do well? (PS, Civil Service, 5/5/08).

Another respondent argued that the perceived behaviour of the poor should be taken in context:

What if the time you find a poor person drunk or lounging about doing nothing, it is because they were celebrating something? We do have poor people that are lazy and drunkards, just like we have elites that are lazy and drunkards. This is not characteristic of the poor only, but it is a human characteristic (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/4/08).

Therefore, lack of political will to implement much needed pro-poor policies and lack of visionary leaders who could identify opportunities for the country were seen to be exacerbating the poverty situation. Most respondents agreed that the environment the elites had created contributed to the behaviour and attitudes of the poor. Hence, although some respondents accepted behavioural

⁹⁸ Capitol Hill is where government offices are located.

explanations for persistent poverty, they also acknowledged that these interacted with structural causes and conditioned behavioural outcomes. As a result, the poor developed attitudes and behaviours in response to the environment (Edgerton, 2000).

In other words, it was argued that elites should bear some responsibility for laziness, lack of industriousness, passivity, and drinking amongst the poor. Respondents singled out the nature of politics in Malawi – personalistic and populist – as having contributed to the behaviour of the poor. As the literature⁹⁹ on Malawian politics shows, the advancement of political parties has been based on what individual politicians and political parties can offer to the electorates in terms of money, food items and so on. Thus,

Most of the major poverty reduction initiatives have been launched in the wake of general elections, and there is hype over these initiatives before the elections, which dies down after the elections. Most initiatives have ended up serving the instruments of patronage; for instance, following the 1994 elections, the government set up funds as revolving funds for the poor, but they never survived the initial phase (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/05/08).

During his term in office, former president Muluzi would often distribute food items at political rallies: *'I have brought with me 2000 bags of maize to distribute. I just don't move with nothing. The MP for your area told me some people have not harvested enough'*¹⁰⁰. Respondents were therefore insistent that the attitudes of the poor were driven by Malawi's brand of politics, which had ensured that the poor were lazy, unenlightened or fighting for handouts, and passive, so that they did not realise that they could change their situation.

In addition to politicians, faith-based groups and local leaders were also seen to have failed to inculcate an attitude of industriousness and self-reliance amongst the poor.

The politicians say beg and it shall be given; the faith-based leaders say pray and wait for manna to come from heaven; and the local leaders say look to us for support and

⁹⁹ For a discussion on neopatrimonial politics and its impact on patronage and populism in Malawi, see Cammack and Kelsall, 2011; Booth et al., 2006; Gilman, 2001; and Cammack, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Bakili Muluzi, Speech at the Launch of MASAF 3 in Mangochi on 28/10/03.

innovativeness. This has not helped people to come out of poverty and has affected the mindset of many Malawians (CEO, Private Sector, 6/6/08).

A prominent academic intimated that: *'Elites love poverty, creating unnecessary roadblocks to make sure the poor are not enlightened and perpetuate the culture of dependency'* (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08). The transition to democracy in 1994 was considered to have worsened the dependency situation because people were told that under a democracy, government would do everything:

Even those with land or the energy to produce were just hanging around waiting to be given. Youth week¹⁰¹ programmes, where communities used to work together to fix roads, schools, hospitals and bridges, died. You find that people within a community would rather be walking through a bush rather than coming together as a community to clear the road, just because someone told them to do so is 'thangata' [slavery] (National coordinator, Media, 16/4/08).

Again there was recognition that elites had failed to implement appropriate policies that targeted the poor in Malawi, because there was no real understanding of what poverty was:

Elites can discuss poverty as an academic subject but fail to put a human face to poverty. They can even quote statistics on the level of poverty and talk about the number of Malawians living below a dollar a day, but most of them do not understand what these mean. They are talking about someone who is struggling to survive. There are those that can talk about figures and provide theories for dealing with poverty but nothing is really done (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/5/08).

The Government is offering fertiliser subsidies, yet some people do not have land; and if they do plant and harvest, they are provided poor prices for their products, or there are no markets available, which discourages people from doing anything. If the poor could see the benefit of being involved in development programmes, their attitudes would change (National Secretary, CSO, 7/5/08).

Some respondents argued that most policies were designed to please donors rather than the Malawian people, making them a failure from the planning stage:

Poverty reduction on policy papers is a priority, but this is driven by outside influence. Donors dictate what Malawians need; it is not the Government that is influencing the direction of policy (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/5/08).

¹⁰¹ Youth Week was an annual event during the rule of Kamuzu Banda where the youth took part in community activities such as road clearing, cleaning of public places, mending bridges and boundaries around graveyards, construction of bus shelters etc.

Our policies have been donor driven. We have failed to generate our own policies. All our policies come from donors, and they keep coming from donors and from the Bretton Woods Institutions. For example, we have tried for years to have a subsidy programme for our farmers, but these donors have refused. They keep coming up with different projects/programmes. Mchinji alone has 30 or more projects by donors. We are seen as guinea pigs. Malawi is where people carry out experiments and nothing is home grown. At least we should be making our own mistakes. All the time we have consultants and experts coming to Malawi and telling us what to do (MP, Parliament, 28/3/08).

Others noted that the donor argument was just an excuse to divert attention from the source of the problem: the elites. They argued that the amount of development that one saw on the ground was not proportionate to the amount of money Malawi received from donors.

Donors are not responsible for our poverty; the Government has implemented structural adjustment programmes, poverty alleviation policy, MPRSP, MDGs and the Malawi Growth Development Strategy with no real impact on poverty. Instead of developing policy based on these previous policies, elites are requesting to travel to Brazil and South Africa, to study their social protection policy (MP, 8/4/08).

However, the most common response was that Malawi was over-reliant on donor funding, reducing elites' incentive to implement pro-poor policies. As these respondents explained: *'Look at HIV/AIDs. Malawi is so dependent on global funds, there is no effort on the Government's part'* (Director of Programmes and Development, CSO, 7/4/08); and, *'If we talk of the cash transfers and MASAF, they are donor driven'* (MP, Parliament, 28/3/08).

It has been argued by Moore (2010) that an inevitable outcome of aid is that it creates incentives that influence the priority elites give to poverty reduction. These perverse incentives lead to the perpetuation of fragile states unable to ensure development and growth or respond effectively to citizen needs because of access to unearned sources of income (p.70). Thus elites are unresponsive to the needs of the poor and wait for growth or education to sort out their problems (see Chapter 8). As Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show, insufficient growth and education were considered key by a majority of the respondents.

Lack of political will was seen as evident in the lack of democratisation and empowerment of the poor. Respondents, mostly from the INGO category, believed that poverty could not be reduced if the poor did not have power. It was argued that the presence of political will would mean access to water, qualified teachers, better quality education, a population with information on how to uplift themselves, and less corrupt leaders. As this respondent noted, *'If the poor had power they would be able to demand sharing, bridging the gap between the haves and have nots. The solution to poverty is about giving power to the poor'* (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08). Thus, the failure to incorporate the poor into policy planning, decisions and implementation meant that resources were spent on planning meetings and workshops, or on purchasing vehicles, and very little went towards the poor (CEO, Private Sector, 13/05/08). However, most respondents did not believe that spending donor funds on planning meetings constituted lack of awareness of poverty, arguing that they understood what it meant to be poor because they came from similar backgrounds to the poor (see Chapter 6). As one respondent noted, *'Elites come from humble beginnings in the rural areas'* (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08).

Interestingly, similar to the data in Table 7.1, a significant number of political and civil service respondents mentioned lack of political will as a cause of poverty during face-to-face interviews. This is interesting as political and civil service respondents are in a position to implement effectively, or influence the effective implementation of, pro-poor policy. These respondents mentioned corrupt leaders (usually comparing the three regimes in Malawi since 1964) who had no clear ideas on how to develop Malawi, arguing that:

If the leadership has no vision, is not educated and is corrupt, the country's development is affected. Despite the negative human rights abuses under Kamuzu, Malawians were better off in terms of livelihoods. Under the rule of Bakili, we went backwards and Malawi was the third poorest country, but with Bingu Malawi is improving from a point where we had only 0.2 percent growth to the present growth of 7 percent (Minister, Civil Service, 30/4/08).

In their discussion of the attitudes and behaviour of the elites, the respondents appeared to draw distinctions between different categories of elites. It was a common perception of the other categories

that the political elite's behaviour was aimed at keeping the poor uneducated and dependant, a situation that enabled them to reap the most benefit from poverty by using the poor to retain power.

Elites do not really benefit from the existence of poverty, but political elites do benefit. The political elites manipulate the thinking of the poor to translate the ignorance into blind following and get votes from them by bribing them with very useless materials which do not match the vote (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08).

Elites benefit because then the poor will not challenge them and they rely on the poor to keep themselves in power (PS/ Civil Service, 11/04/08).

The political elites give little handouts to the poor in exchange for votes (Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; CEO, Private Sector, 13/05/08).

Elites do benefit from the existence of poverty because they are the people involved in businesses and politics. They find labour cheap and give people handouts in exchange for political votes, and they become richer than ever before at the expense of the poor masses (General Manager, Media, 15/05/08).

By contrast, most political respondents claimed that the behaviour of bureaucratic elites was causing poverty in Malawi, especially through corrupt acts, whilst private sector respondents also considered the bureaucratic elite to be self-interested.

The civil service is very corrupt, especially through the awarding of contracts; this is the biggest area where corruption goes on. They receive kickbacks from the private sector for contracts. Therefore we need to strengthen accountability institutions such as the Anti-corruption Bureau, public procurement, and the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (MP, Parliament, 23/03/08).

Corruption is making us lose a third of the funds allocated in the budget. These are mainly misappropriated by the bureaucratic elites because members of parliament do not have direct access to these funds. This makes us lose resources that can be spent on the poor (MP, Parliament, 6/05/08).

Policy makers are selfish because they do not look at poverty in its context. They only look at personal gains and professional satisfaction. If you are a trained policy maker then you are satisfied if one of your policies is accepted and you are not concerned with the impact this policy has on poor people (Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08).

The CSO and INGO respondents accused the private sector of failing to play their role in development and only being interested in making profits.

More private sector organisations need to carry out social responsibility programmes, not the short-term ones such as supporting a football match. These are not at the core of reducing poverty, and social responsibility should have an element of empowerment through grants for businesses (National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08).

The private sector needs to play a more visible role in assisting government to reduce poverty (Country Director, INGO, 24/04/08).

The private sector is interested in making profits not assisting the poor. There needs to be a law that instructs the private sector to reinvest back into the community (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/05/08).

The responses in this section demonstrate that the respondents did not solely blame the poor for the presence of poverty. Rather, respondents' views on the causes of poverty reflected a realization that they themselves bore some responsibility for the plight of the poor because of their failure to provide an environment conducive to effort or to implement policies that would reduce poverty. Respondents were able to draw a causal link between their action or inaction and the levels of poverty. One example given was that in Malawi,

Allocation is nepotistic and regions that can help the economy grow are sidelined because leaders will not get votes from those regions. If these regions are developed then you are creating wealth and reducing poverty, but because of these nepotistic attitudes in allocation of resources, even the Rural Development Growth programmes have died. These programmes were meant to reduce inequality, reduce urbanisation and ensure that services are available at the rural level (Head of Section, Civil Service, 28/4/08).

Therefore, one can conclude that respondents across the different elite categories were aware that their action or inaction had a strong bearing on the levels of poverty in the country.

7.5 Strong Ties, Unequal Relationship

The idea held by some respondents that the poor were ignorant, unaware, dependant, fatalistic and passive correlated with respondents' views of their relationship or contact with the poor. Thus, these characteristics of the poor not only separated them from elites but put them in an unequal position. According to the respondents, this inequality dictated and created a relationship of master and servant,

with elites as the saviours of the poor. As one respondent pointed out: *'Elites have a say in everything. They are said to be the wisest, to have all the knowledge and to hold the key to ending poverty'* (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/4/8). Therefore, when the poor meet members of the elites, they are quick to greet them as *'Bwana'* (Boss), which cements the unequal relationship that ensues:

As elites, we expect the poor to clap hands for us, kneeling down for us, and we want to be gods for them. If we could empower them they would not treat us like gods, but we do not want to empower them so that they can be coming to our houses to beg for goods. When they come to our houses they kneel for us and they think they cannot be given unless they are kneeling (Minister, Civil Service, 30/4/08).

The relationship between elites and the poor was described as opportunistic, exploitative, and functional, with elites benefiting from the presence of the poor by getting cheap labour, buying votes during elections, and the opportunity to buy the poor's products cheaply.

Respondents described their link to poor people as encompassing both personal and professional links. Personal links were those with extended family, with the poor who worked in their households or their farms. Through these links elites said they were expected to provide financial resources, such as paying school fees for relatives' children, especially those that had lost their parents from HIV/AIDs. For Members of Parliament, this also involved paying fees for children in the constituency, paying for funeral costs, and providing personal financial assistance towards development projects such as the construction of boreholes. Professionally, there is the link as the poor's representatives in parliament (Members of Parliament), as someone having influence on pro-poor policy (those working in the civil service), and as someone who can provide goods and services (especially the members of civil society). There was consensus that respondents had strong connections with the poor because each one had links with their home village and had experienced poverty at some point in their lives.

In Malawi, we all have very strong links with the rural poor through extended families. The whole village is related in one way or another, and what happens in one household affects the other households. For us in these positions, people have evidence that you are employed and earn something at the end of the day. You become more of a central person from whom people can seek for financial assistance, and you are therefore in direct contact with the poor all the

time. Whether you like it or not, by virtue of your position everybody who has less than you feels they are entitled to your help. Whether directly or indirectly we have contact with the poor; for instance, houseboys, those working at my farm, extended family. Most of the time 50% of what we earn goes out towards supporting the poor. You spend money towards extended family, pay wages, people's school fees, those asking for alms – our lives really revolve around providing for the poor (Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/4/08).

Although these links between elites and the poor do exist, some respondents felt they were minimal and superficial:

Elites do have contact with the poor, but this is one-way contact where the elites are masters. When the elites come into contact with the poor, they have an agenda and the poor people's only response is, 'Yes, bwana' (Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08).

Mostly the contact between elites and the poor is exploitative (Executive Director, CSO, 12/05/08).

The contact between elites and the poor is minimal. We are not doing enough (Minister, Civil Service, 15/04/08).

There is no real contact between the poor and elites because the poor do not know their role in development (Resident Representative, Donor, 25/05/08).

There is always an agenda for interacting with the poor, such as votes or visits to rural areas that are receiving support from NGOs, donors and government. During meetings with the poor, the poor usually sit on the floor, and visitors from these agencies sit on chairs, which is indicative of the power distance that exists. Therefore, there is no real engagement with the poor that can lead to a better understanding of their situation (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08; Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/080). In addition, one respondent spoke of,

The way elites dress when they go to meet the poor. For instance, MPs like to dress immaculately in tailor-made suits, and this scares the poor from fully participating in developing solutions to their problems. The poor feel that the elites should provide all the solutions to their problems and provide them with finances as well (Director, CSO, 17/6/08).

Thus, the elites' failure to understand the situation of the poor is arguably because contact between them and the poor is event-oriented or functional. For instance:

Members of Parliament interact with their constituents based on a political agenda. The purpose for interaction is political. Sometimes Executive Directors of NGOs carry out visits to rural areas that they support; but the poor start giving respect that defines the power structures and therefore real interaction is not there. Therefore the engagement with the poor in order to understand them is minimal. Sometimes we interact with the poor, for instance, when we meet them on the streets as beggars, or from buying their produce or our visits to the village. That is why some elites when the poor tell them about their situation, it becomes news because they do not really know the condition of the poor. They start talking about 'I went to the village, I met so and so, and they were telling me their condition. This is an important issue that requires attention'. But elites should understand poverty issues because this is visible on a daily basis (Coordinator, CSO, 15/4/8).

One respondent argued that the divide between elites and the poor resulted in their analysing poverty in theoretical terms, not as a lived experience (Country Director, INGO, 24/04/08). However, other respondents felt that their extended family relations and traditional contacts through the church enhanced their understanding of poverty and the poor, arguing that: 'There is no single person that does not come from the village, therefore we are all attached to poverty. You will be hard pressed to find someone who has not experienced poverty in one form or another' (MP, Parliament, 28/3/08).

In contrast, there were those respondents who believed that, just as the elite used the poor for labour and votes, the poor used the elites as their benefactors. As these respondents stated:

Elites take advantage of the poor by offering them poor pay for their services, knowing that there is unemployment; and the poor are used for votes into parliament by making promises that the elites never keep. But the poor can also abuse elites, using them for their daily needs (Donor, 16/6/08).

Do not underestimate the poor because they also have a motive for associating with the elite. They can also be exploitative (Principal Secretary, 2/5/08).

For others, there was a view that the poor felt entitled to share the elites' wealth and take offence when the elites tell them to work hard and uplift themselves.

Sadly if you tell them to stop begging and uplift themselves, they think 'ukuwalalaira' (laughing at their poor status). The poor don't go to the rich to offer a service in order to be paid, but they are always begging. No one in my village has ever told me that they have something to sell me that would earn them some money. But they simply come and say that they have a child in school therefore want my assistance (PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08).

Whether you like it or not, by virtue of your position everybody who has less than you feels they are entitled to your help (Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08).

It could be that despite the unequal nature of their relationship, respondents felt close to the poor because of the kinship that linked rich with poor, powerful with powerless, and urban with rural. Even though the respondents felt encumbered by the claims of kinship on their own resources (as we shall see in Chapter 8), kinship contributed to a sense of belonging. Therefore, elites and the poor are 'Inextricably linked in a relation of unequal dependence by which they relate to each other within the framework of the extended kin networks to which they belong' (Chabal, 2009:46- 47). In addition, Malawi's economy, which has been dominated by a dual agricultural development strategy since the colonial period (promotion of estate over smallholder farming) has had a significant influence on social relations, so that the poor have depended on the elite (see Chapter 5). Therefore, elites cannot live in a community detached from the poor, and it is this sense of belonging and obligation towards the poor that makes them human and social. As these respondents argued,

Direct assistance towards extended family is a moral obligation for elites to give back to society (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08).

The charitable activities that elites are involved in are not solely out of moral obligation because it has gone beyond this. It has come to a situation where if elites do not do anything then someone will die, therefore we are helping people to survive (Governance Specialist, Donor, 6/06/08).

As much as elites may be seen as exploiting the poor, this is one form of welfare the poor can rely on in the absence of social services from government.

7.6 Conclusion

Analysis of elite perceptions of the causes of poverty produces information that contributes to the wider theoretical objectives of this thesis. For the theory of "social consciousness", this relates to the extent to which elites feel responsibility towards the poor and for the existence of poverty. Thus it involves an

analysis of elite moral evaluations of a causal chain between their action or inaction and the levels of poverty in Malawi.

As evidenced through questionnaires, interviews, observations and analysis of speeches, newspapers and parliamentary debates, members of the Malawian elite have strong views about the causes of poverty. The research for this study indicates that poverty is seen as primarily a problem of underdevelopment, thus respondents emphasised structural causes, especially the lack of economic growth, education, industrialisation, democratisation and diversification of sources of growth. Some refused to adopt individualistic explanations that apportion blame for poverty to the poor. Rather, they fully acknowledge the elites' responsibility towards the poor, indicating that their lack of action is what causes the poor to be poor. Failure to provide resources, services and an environment that would encourage the poor to help themselves has left the poor helpless and dependant. Some respondents described poverty as a political problem, caused by inequitable distribution of resources, corruption and the persistence of personalistic politics and patronage. Although respondents blamed elites for these political problems, they tended to dissociate themselves from this blame, thus denying their influence. Mostly, respondents blamed other elite groups: for instance, MPs blamed bureaucratic elites for corruption; CSOs and private sector elites blamed political elites for allowing their need for votes to influence policy; CSO and INGO elites blamed the private sector for not ploughing their gains back into society; and private sector elites blamed bureaucratic elites for valuing personal gain and professional satisfaction over the impact of policies on the poor¹⁰².

Nevertheless, respondents indicated that they believed that the poor had developed a culture of poverty, accepting their poverty as normal and resigned to it as a way of life. The poor are seen to be

¹⁰² See Marquette (2011) who discusses this kind of attitude as 'selective moral disengagement', where individuals are involved in moral disengagement practices such as displacement of responsibility. Thus individuals will minimize their role in contributing to issues such as corruption or poverty in this case. Rather, individuals will talk about corruption or poverty as a collective action problem as opposed to being personally responsible (see also Bandura, 2002).

passive and distant from government, marginalised and unable to demand the services they need. Hence, their relationship with elites is unequal, although respondents viewed it as in some ways beneficial to both sides.

It is important to note that, despite identifying a number of causes of poverty, elites see a lack of education as the most important cause of all. It is because the poor are illiterate and cannot formulate their demands properly that elites take advantage of them and do not provide them with the development initiatives and services they have promised. It is therefore the view of the elite that the various causes of poverty can be resolved through education (see Chapter 8). However, it has been pointed out that:

Claiming education to be the best solution to poverty effectively diverts attention away from inequality, and onto less political issues, like the mentality of the poor. Implicitly, if education is the best solution to poverty, the causes of poverty – although not the fault of the poor – must be inherent within the poor, rather than in socio-economic relations or patterns of inequality (Hossain and Moore, 1999:112).

Such thinking begins to reduce the elites' sense of responsibility towards poverty and the poor in Malawi. For instance, although respondents emphasised structural causes and their own responsibility for persistent poverty, elites obviously believe that these causes can be reduced by changes in the behaviour and attitudes of the poor, which can considerably reduce their own incentive to take action. For instance, implementation of pro-poor policies might slide down the agenda, due to elite perceptions that such implementation could lead to laziness or dependency on the part of the poor. By contrast, respondents' views on the structural and behavioural causes of poverty should not be seen as contradictory, as they demonstrate the elites' awareness of the enormity of the poverty problem and inequality, but also their awareness of their own monopoly of privilege (Reis, 2010).

The observation that emerges from this chapter is that elites perceive the causes of poverty to be varied, and entrenched in Malawi's general under-development. The poor are seen as passive, dependent and resigned to their fate, thus presenting no threat to the elites. This should be borne in mind during the discussion in the next chapter of the solutions elites suggest for poverty reduction and their views on the impact that poverty has on their own welfare.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ELITES ON ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES AND THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY AND THE POOR ON ELITE WELFARE

8.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses respondents' attitudes towards anti-poverty strategies. The chapter shows that respondents' believe that poverty reduction cannot happen except through economic growth. Although some respondents argued that there should be a distributional shift towards the poor during the growth process, their value orientation was revealed in their preference for policies with a strong bias towards the economically active poor. In particular, education was preferred as a solution that would complement economic growth, providing the stimulus for the poor to take advantage of growth. Respondents' believed that innovativeness, hard work, diligence and honesty, combined with economic growth, would provide the recipe for the poor to pull themselves out of poverty. This chapter also examines the extent to which Malawian respondents were conscious of three potential threats, insurrection, crime and health hazards, which have, in other contexts, led elites to believe that their welfare was at risk from the threat that poverty and the poor presented. Malawian respondents did not appear overly concerned about these threats, and where potential threats were present, individualised responses are adopted. Although they felt that there was a strong correlation between poverty and disease as well as crime, this was never discussed as presenting a threat to elite welfare. The potential for social insurrection elicited the least concern from respondents, who saw the nature of Malawians (see Chapter 7) as making a rebellion or revolution impossible. This was also partly explained by a fourth phenomenon: the extended family and patronage networks. These ties ensured social harmony, which made it impossible for the poor to foment any sort of rebellion.

These arguments are developed in four major sections. In Section 8.1, the chapter discusses respondents' attitudes to the relationship between poverty reduction and economic growth. Section 8.2 assesses respondents' attitudes towards various strategies for poverty reduction and their pro-poor

policy preferences. Section 8.3 analyses respondents' views on the effect of poverty and the poor on their own welfare. Section 8.4 discusses respondents' views on which institutions they believe should be responsible for poverty reduction, which reveals a preference for state-led rather than civil-society-led poverty reduction.

8.1 Elite Priorities: Poverty Reduction or Economic Growth?

The data presented in Table 8.1 are derived from questionnaires regarding respondents' views on what Malawi's main policy objectives should be. Respondents were presented with ten choices with which they had to indicate agreement or disagreement, and these data have been organised to enable comparison amongst different categories of elite. The data reveal that respondents' policy preferences are related to their understanding of poverty and their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

A significant number of respondents listed poverty and inequality (87%) first, with education (86%) and economic growth (74%) ranked second and third respectively, as the main policy objectives for Malawi. A preference for these options was significant across all the categories of elite, whereas preserving democracy was more popular amongst civil society, civil service, media and political respondents, whose ability to influence policy is dependent on democratic institutions. Interestingly, a smaller number of political respondents believed that increasing participation in decision-making should be a priority, which seems to support the view in the literature, that Malawian political elites have failed to ensure that the structures required for meaningful participation are available. This was evident in the PRSP and decentralisation processes (Bwalya et al, 2004; Chinsinga, 2003). Conversely, the table shows significant support for social protection policy amongst academic, civil society, donor, civil service, INGO and private sector respondents, perhaps because some members of these groups had been

closely involved in the planning and implementation of subsidies and cash transfers, or they may generally be left-leaning individuals with a concern for disadvantaged members of society.

Table 8.1: Respondents on Malawi's Policy Objectives

| Category | Academic | CSO | Donor | Civil Service | Media | INGO | Political | Private Sector | Missing Value | Total |
|---|----------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|----------------|---------------|-------|
| | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes |
| Eliminate poverty and reduce inequality | 100 | 81 | 80 | 95 | 75 | 60 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 87 |
| Increase educational levels | 0 | 63 | 100 | 95 | 100 | 60 | 94 | 100 | 0 | 86 |
| Guarantee economic growth | 100 | 75 | 87 | 68 | 86 | 60 | 65 | 100 | 100 | 74 |
| Preserve democracy | 0 | 56 | 40 | 77 | 86 | 0 | 71 | 100 | 0 | 60 |
| Implement a social protection policy | 100 | 50 | 53 | 77 | 38 | 80 | 47 | 100 | 100 | 59 |
| Increase popular participation in decision making | 0 | 63 | 40 | 77 | 63 | 80 | 35 | 100 | 0 | 57 |
| Protect the environment | 100 | 56 | 53 | 77 | 38 | 0 | 59 | 100 | 0 | 57 |
| Integrate the economy into the international market | 0 | 40 | 40 | 55 | 38 | 20 | 47 | 100 | 0 | 43 |
| Keep order | 0 | 19 | 27 | 59 | 25 | 20 | 47 | 100 | 0 | 37 |
| Reduce the size of the state | 0 | 31 | 20 | 45 | 13 | 0 | 12 | 100 | 0 | 26 |

*Data derived from questionnaires. Total respondents = 86. All the percentages for each category are calculated based on the total of interviewees in each category.

Table 8.2 looks at the respondents' views on the main means of reducing poverty. The respondents were presented with eight choices with which they indicated their agreement or disagreement.

Education was rated highly across all categories, and was by far the most popular response as a policy objective (Table 8.1). More than 50% of the respondents within the civil service, media, political, CSO and private sectors agreed that it was important to increase the efficiency of public social services. Promoting agriculture was ranked third, and was more popular amongst donor, academic, private sector and INGO respondents, whilst the CSO respondents were split equally. Ideally, the overall support (56%) for land reform appears contrary to popular belief that elites are not supportive of these reforms (see Chinsinga et al, 2008). However, looking at the data there is less support from civil service and political respondents, who are state actors responsible for implementing the initiative. To a certain extent this also shows that land reform is a political process, as it addresses issues of inequality.

Table 8.2: Respondents on the Main Means of Reducing Poverty

| Category | Academic | CSO | Donor | Civil Service | Media | INGO | Political | Private Sector | Missing Value | Total |
|--|----------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|----------------|---------------|-------|
| | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes | % Yes |
| Increase spending on education and educational reforms | 0 | 50 | 60 | 68 | 63 | 80 | 88 | 100 | 0 | 66 |
| Increase the efficiency of public social services | 0 | 50 | 47 | 68 | 75 | 40 | 53 | 100 | 100 | 57 |
| Promote agrarian reforms | 100 | 50 | 73 | 39 | 33 | 80 | 47 | 100 | 0 | 56 |
| Introduce social protection policy for the poor | 0 | 56 | 53 | 45 | 33 | 80 | 41 | 100 | 0 | 48 |
| Increase social spending | 0 | 44 | 27 | 45 | 0 | 40 | 29 | 100 | 0 | 34 |
| Control population growth | 0 | 38 | 13 | 27 | 38 | 0 | 29 | 100 | 0 | 27 |
| Deregulate the economy | 0 | 6 | 27 | 23 | 13 | 20 | 18 | 100 | 0 | 19 |
| Increase Income Tax | 0 | 13 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 100 | 0 | 10 |

*Data derived from questionnaires. Total respondents = 86. All the percentages for each category are calculated based on the total of interviewees in each category.

Though there is some support for social protection policies, especially amongst CSO, donor, private sector and INGO respondents, there is minimal support for increasing social spending, population control and deregulating the market. Considering Malawi's failure to raise revenues has resulted in aid dependence in order to finance the budget deficit (Chipeta, 1998), increasing income tax does not strike respondents as the best means of reducing poverty. The reasons for the lack of support for these initiatives became obvious during face-to-face interviews, where respondents indicated their support for initiatives that address underdevelopment generally.

Table 8.3 shows respondents' views on whether they believed that economic growth alone could reduce poverty in Malawi. This data was obtained through face-to-face interviews, and has been organised according to the divergent views amongst the respondents.

Table 8.3: Respondents on Economic Growth and Pro-Poor Growth as Solutions for Poverty

| Response | Academic | CSO | Donor | Civil service | Media | INGO | Parliament | Private Sector | Total |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| Yes | 1 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 31 |
| % | 100 | 72 | 60 | 53 | 29 | 75 | 50 | 100 | 60 |
| <i>Yes but needs to be pro-poor</i> | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 21 |
| % | 0 | 28 | 40 | 47 | 71 | 25 | 50 | 0 | 40 |
| Total Respondents | 1 | 11 | 5 | 15 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 52 |

*Derived from face-to-face interviews with respondents.

There was some confidence in the potential of economic growth as the best means for reducing poverty, although this optimism was not universal. The majority (60%) of respondents identified economic growth as the best means of reducing poverty in Malawi, while others (40%) questioned the

efficacy of growth alone, showing a preference for pro-poor growth. It was amongst the media category of respondents that more respondents (71%) opted for pro-poor growth, and amongst members of parliament (50%) that responses were equally split. During interviews, these two categories often presented themselves as representing the interests of the poor, as they worked at the local level. Most of the respondents indicated that they had observed families receiving cash transfers and acknowledged the benefits of these in the lives of the poor. Although they questioned their sustainability and perceived a negative impact on the poor (see Chapter 7), the respondents' views reflected a growing awareness of the potential value of direct welfare transfers in reducing poverty, especially in situations where resources for more comprehensive support were not available. Generally, respondents believed that growth was at least necessary to tackle poverty in the long term, and confidence in growth extended across different categories of respondents.

There are two possible explanations for respondents' widespread belief in growth as a solution for poverty. First, Malawi's development policy has emphasised economic growth, except between 1994 and 2004, where poverty was emphasised, and this has increased preference for growth. Growth provides opportunities to which the poor can contribute, and from which they can benefit. Second, in many ways, the categories are blurred, with many respondents straddling both the public and private sectors. This potentially leads to a convergence in respondents' beliefs and values, which may be an asset for influencing pro-poor policy.

Looking back at Table 8.1 (p. 227), 74% of the respondents selected economic growth as one of the main policy objectives for Malawi. Documentary evidence also suggests that economic growth is considered necessary for poverty reduction in Malawi:

Unfortunately the situation in the villages does not reflect any sign of economic improvement. People in the villages remain poor; per capita income has fallen and is continuing to fall. Basic essentials are scarce – people can hardly afford to buy soap, clothes, sugar, salt and food (Tembo, 2000).

In 2004 the Minister of Finance also made a clear link between growth and poverty, noting that, 'In 2003 the Malawi economy grew only by 4.4%, which is below the 6% required to make an impact on poverty reduction' (Gondwe, 2004).

For some respondents, growth was essential for keeping the rural poor from migrating into urban areas by investing in the areas where the poor lived:

Integrated rural development where economic hubs are created is the starting point for poverty reduction. Because you are creating a place where the poor can market their goods and sell them. Create local industries where they can sell their mangoes, apples, tomatoes, and we also need to ensure that the rural areas are electrified. It is depressing to see the number of fruits such as mangoes, tangerines that lie rotten because we do not have a way of preserving them. I meet so many people with cassava on their bicycles coming to town to sell their products and if they had markets in their own areas, imagine how much can be achieved (PS, Civil Service, 7/05/08).

To reduce migration, the government is attempting to revive rural growth centres and ensure food security. We need to create jobs in the rural areas (Minister, Civil Service, 30/04/08).

One good example is the infrastructural programmes supported by the World Bank; and a number of donors are also supporting rural development, so that we are on an equal footing in terms of access to basic necessities such as water, roads, telecommunications and health services. The aim is to spur economic growth and development in the rural areas and jobs can be created in their own areas and stop urbanization (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

Other respondents believed that growth was essential because previous attempts that prioritised poverty reduction without growth did not have the desired impact.

Poverty reduction is a priority for government, nothing else. We might be paying attention to economic growth but that is important for sustainable poverty reduction. In the past the government used to provide bridges or boreholes to reduce poverty, but there was no improvement in the lives of the poor. We need to grow the economy, create more wealth and employment opportunities. Economic growth is important because there must be something to

share. In this government we are talking about social protection policy and that needs growth (PS, 7/5/08).

We need to balance poverty reduction and economic growth; we took a wrong turn in our implementation of the MPRSP because we ignored economic growth and fully concentrated on poverty reduction (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

In Malawi where we have poverty, where we want to reduce it and at the same time escape from it, we cannot just concentrate on growth alone or pro-poor policy. In government, the elite do agree that we need to introduce strong macroeconomic policies that spur growth. They believe that there will be a trickledown effect, but ironically they do recognise that they are in a situation where they cannot ignore poverty reduction programmes (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08).

However, some respondents questioned how growth would best be achieved and who would benefit from it. Are the interventions targeting the active poor, the inactive poor, or elites? As these respondents argued:

Although you cannot have social spending without economic growth, the issue is how we achieve this growth. Do we support elites who have the means of production, and they will be cheaper to invest in for a faster growth? Or do we target the productive poor who have land and all they need are inputs? Or do we go to the poorest of the poor and pick them up and therefore spend more? These are things that Malawians have not debated about to find the faster way to achieve growth. The argument is that if we invest in the productive poor then we shoot up production and the economy will grow which will provide for the needs of the poorest. But that argument has difficulties because evidence from the input subsidy of 2004/2005 shows that support towards the poorest of the poor can also result in good yields (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/5/08).

If we only grow the economy without the poor accessing social services, then only the elites benefit (Executive Director, CSO, 12/05/08).

Accordingly, there was acknowledgement amongst some respondents that growth did not always have the greatest payoff to the poor unless there were special interventions. Thus a purely growth agenda was seen as absolving elites of responsibility, because lack of effective poverty reduction could always be blamed on lack of economic growth (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08). Others considered economic growth a capitalistic way of tackling poverty, which took from the poor without focusing on social sectors (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; Executive Director, CSO, 11/06/08). Some highlighted issues of resource accumulation and social justice:

We spend a lot of time dealing with growth and we ignore social justice. We need special interventions for the poor (Project Coordinator, Civil Service, 28/04/08)

In the past year we have had good numbers in terms of economic growth; and, if we can ensure equitable redistribution of resources, then poverty would be reduced (CEO, Private Sector, 13/05/08)

The economy needs to grow so that we can supply and implement pro-poor strategies (Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08; Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08)

Therefore, growth should ensure access to productive assets and economic opportunities for the poor through effective allocation of the benefits of growth to the poor (Ward, 1999:26). As this academic noted: 'I think the people out there know what to do in order to get out of poverty, but they lack the means. This is because they do not have the power to do anything meaningful on their own accord to confront the structures that perpetuate poverty' (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08). Despite emphasising pro-poor growth, some respondents' solution is to invest in education, employment creation, subsidies, rural development and health, so that the poor contribute to and benefit from growth (Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08; Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; Executive Director, Civil Service, 5/05/08; and Regional Manager, Media, 9/04/08).

Most respondents appear to generally support policies aimed at the active and industrious poor, or those that raise such human resource potential. As this respondent stated: 'We need to invest in technical education so that people can get skills to help themselves, and also to invest in micro financing' (Project Coordinator, Civil Service, 28/04/08). Moore and Hossain (2002) consider these views a 'human resource' definition of development. Therefore education is promoted not for its intrinsic value but its instrumental value, in that it contributes to economic growth, as well as opening up minds, increasing awareness and realising human potential. This can be interpreted as 'a matter of people who are physically fit enough to work regularly, dextrously and efficiently; psychologically adapted to the routines and procedures of modern organisations; emotionally attuned to self-seeking enterprise; and

intellectually skilled in terms of both basic literacy and numeracy and more demanding and creative abilities' (Hossain and Moore, 2002:15).

Some respondents condemned Malawi for failing to use its human resource to ensure growth, as the Asian Tigers did:

We hear that Malawi in 1964 was at par with Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan in their development level, but these days South Korea is making Samsung when Malawians cannot even make a sewing needle. This shows that there is something intrinsically wrong with Malawians and we are not doing well. Some people say we do not have a mineral resource, that is why we are not developing, but you do not require this to develop. The Asian Tigers barely had natural resources, but they have developed by using their manpower (MP, 6/5/8).

Some people say this labour we have is not educated, but look at what the Asian Tigers were able to achieve. It also depends on the type of industry you are bringing in; for instance, making mobile phones requires a production line, and what is needed is to train that person on what they are supposed to do on that line (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

The respondents' 'human resource' stance resonates with their lack of support for policies that essentially mean taking from the well-off to provide for the poor, such as increasing income tax, cash transfers and food distribution. Thus one would be hard pressed to find support for a poverty reduction strategy that exclusively relied on redistribution from the rich or the middle class (Rodrik, 2000:1). Rather, an educated nation is seen as important for meeting the objectives of growth and poverty reduction, which also enables the poor to take advantage of growth. Therefore, social policies are palatable if they conform to this 'human resource' notion of development (Moore and Hossain, 2002).

8.2 Elites on the Main Means of Reducing Poverty

This section examines what policy strategies respondents considered to be feasible for reducing poverty in Malawi.

8.2.1 Strategies Targeting the Industrious Poor

The data in Table 8.4 are derived from questionnaires and present elite views regarding the viability and desirability of particular social policies. The respondents were presented with fourteen strategies and had to indicate whether they felt each strategy was viable or desirable. The question attempted to understand whether respondents believed that feasible means existed to reduce poverty and would support these means.

Table 8.4: Viability and Desirability of Particular Social Policies

| | Viable and desirable | Desirable but not viable | Viable but not desirable | Neither viable nor desirable |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Micro finance | 77 | 10 | 5 | 8 |
| Public works programme | 71 | 14 | 10 | 5 |
| Free and universal primary education | 70 | 27 | 1 | 2 |
| Fertiliser subsidies | 59 | 33 | 3 | 5 |
| Free and universal primary health services | 59 | 34 | 2 | 5 |
| National safety nets programme | 48 | 27 | 15 | 10 |
| Old age pensions | 43 | 36 | 7 | 14 |
| Cash transfers/ direct welfare transfers | 31 | 34 | 14 | 21 |
| Popular housing programmes | 30 | 50 | 2 | 18 |
| Child benefits | 29 | 17 | 2 | 52 |
| Free university education | 21 | 51 | 5 | 23 |
| Minimum income for different age groups | 21 | 35 | 7 | 37 |
| Food distribution programmes | 20 | 40 | 16 | 24 |
| Unemployment insurance | 15 | 38 | 13 | 34 |

*Data derived from questionnaires. Total respondents = 86.

The data (Table 8.4) show that despite respondents' attempts to conceal their view of the poor as lazy (see Chapter 7), their policy choices revealed a preference for policies that would target the productive, industrious and active poor, such as fertiliser subsidies, public works and micro-finance programs. Other strategies, such as free and universal primary education and health care, are instrumental policies that support growth generally. However, there appeared to be some considerable support for the national safety nets programme, which in Malawi has concentrated on food distribution when disasters have struck. This is in some ways similar to food distribution programmes, which received minimal support. During the interviews, respondents indicated that safety nets were desirable because they targeted those who had suffered from floods or droughts. Respondents were more sympathetic towards these types of safety net, even though they might be considered handouts, because they supported people during a crisis and required a short-term investment. However, this could also reflect the fact that safety nets safeguard elites' legitimacy. The neo-patrimonial nature of Malawi's society (see Chapter 5) means that elites are judged on their ability to feed the masses, and this responsibility becomes more important during periods when interventions, such as agriculture subsidies, fail to ensure food security (Chinsinga, 2007b; Cammack, 2006). In my analysis of presidential speeches, I observed that Kamuzu Banda ensured food security through annual crop inspection tours; Bakili Muluzi distributed maize at public rallies and implemented a free seed and fertilizer programme; and Bingu WA Mutharika reinstated crop inspection tours and introduced the seed and fertilizer subsidy programme. At the launch of the 'feed the nation fund', Mutharika noted that, 'If some of our people go hungry, then we cannot have peace in our country (21/08/05). This shows that there is a practical basis to elite authority in Malawi: food security.

Other forms of safety nets, such as public works (71%) and fertiliser subsidies (51%), were considered more viable and desirable than strategies such as cash transfers (31%). In addition, other strategies such as unemployment benefits, minimum income, and child benefits were also not supported, with

34%, 37%, and 52% of respondents respectively, indicating that they were neither viable nor desirable. Despite this, however, there seems to be at least some conviction about the feasibility of most of these policies (Table 8.4), because the proportion of those who considered them viable and desirable was significant.

Possible reasons for lack of support for cash transfers or food distribution became clear during face-to-face interviews:

We cannot be giving the poor free food and expect them to graduate out of poverty, but we must give them opportunities to become productive members of society. Otherwise, we end up taking one group out of poverty and another back into poverty (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/5/08).

The solution therefore is to 'teach people to fish rather than giving them fish' (MP, 6/5/08). Otherwise, 'cash transfers are like manna from heaven' (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/4/08). Most respondents indicated that cash transfers were too costly, not necessary and were doomed to failure in the absence of aid. Some respondents argued that cash transfers, as opposed to education for example, required support from taxation and indicated that this was not desirable in Malawi. As these respondents stated:

Raising taxes is not ideal in Malawi. They are predatory and I would lead a revolution against them if they were implemented. Only if we could see roads being constructed and drugs available in all hospitals then people might be willing to pay higher taxes (Regional Manager, Media, 16/5/08).

We are not able to raise taxes to support the social protection policy with the numbers of poor people that we have at present unless poverty levels were lower (Programme Director, CSO, 13/05/08).

Raising of taxes to accommodate social protection policy, well, it could be affordable only if it's properly planned. You are giving money to unproductive sectors so people might prefer to raise taxes to support the subsidy program. Social protection is tricky because you are looking after the unproductive sectors of society (MP, Parliament, 28/03/08).

For others, the social protection policy presents a rent-seeking opportunity for political elites:

Social protection policy, I don't even want to think about it. You know there are members of parliament who have come into this office because they have heard of this initiative and are asking me to write a letter (which I have recently written) to donors asking for funds for these MPs to go to Brazil and South Africa to study their social protection policy. Not one MP but twelve of them plus two officials. What information of importance will they yield that we cannot pick from other policies we have implemented? These are MPs who have sat on designs monitoring donor flows and trying to see how effective aid mechanisms have been. One of them when I asked him (MP) how many people are accessing ARVs in Malawi, he said, 'Don't worry. I know what is happening in the nation on ARVs; but I will come back to you with exact figures'. He never came back with that figure which shows that to him he is not concerned and the issue is to go to Brazil to study social protection. I wish some of these initiatives were able to deliver, but at the rate we are going we will achieve nothing (MP, Parliament, 8/4/08).

Others compared the social protection policy to previous initiatives, like the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF): 'We had MASAF and loan facilities, like MARDEF, and none of these have had an impact on poverty. Where are the schools that MASAF built?' (Executive Director, Media, 16/4/08). A prominent religious leader was more scathing in his view of social protection policy, arguing that almost every Malawian is poor: 'The social protection policy is a non-starter because it is discriminatory. In Malawi it is very difficult to determine who is poor and needs what kind of support.' (13/5/08). Questions of viability and targeting were raised, as Malawi does not have identity cards or birth certificates that can substantiate people's ages. As this respondent argued:

As some critics say, most poor people look old because of poverty, and in a nation that does not have birth certificates, how do you identify seventy-year old people, which is the ceiling for receipt of old age pensions? (General Manager, Media, 15/5/08).

This summarises some central themes in the discussion of the main means of reducing poverty. Social protection may be necessary but is not seen as feasible, given that poverty affects nearly every Malawian. Education, public works, micro-credit, and subsidies are not only desirable and viable, they are essential for enhancing the productivity of the poor, thus enabling them to reduce their own poverty.

Respondents' policy preferences reveal a partiality towards the active rather than the inactive poor. During my fieldwork, I attended several meetings within the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, where plans were drawn up on how to implement a non-contributory old-age pension in Malawi as part of the strategies being implemented under the social protection policy. Despite spending time planning out the pensions and setting out the age limit (only those that are seventy years and above can receive), nothing was budgeted for in the 2008/2009 or the 2009/2010 budget. The fact that all the planning towards pensions has not resulted in actual implementation resonates with the perception of many respondents. An insight into these perceptions was given by a private sector official:

We need to be assisting people with producing crops or starting a business. It is better than cash transfers. Especially these universal pensions, even for people who have not been working are laughable. How and who is going to pay for these pensions? (Chief Executive Officer, Private Sector, 13/05/08).

The idea that cash or food transfers and pensions were handouts and led to dependency was prevalent amongst most of the respondents (see also Chapter 7). Thus, for some respondents, public works encouraged hard work, whilst cash transfers encouraged laziness and lack of planning by the poor.

Public works programmes are good because they ensure ownership, especially because you are doing things that improve your own area such as roads. The money earned can be used to buy food and farming inputs. We had received some funding of US\$1.1 million from EU during the food crisis of 2005, and one of the conditions was that those that are hungry but able to work were given public works to get food. These were asked to make manure, cultivate their land and they would receive some seeds. That is assisting that person to get food in the short term but also in the long term. With cash transfers someone can decide not to take a bath for three days, puts on torn clothes, come and present themselves as poor to receive this money, and do so the following month as long as the project is there. This is not sustainable and breeds laziness. When someone gives you money you have not planned for, you can't think of what you want to do with that money (National Secretary, CSO, 7/5/08).

What I am saying is that people have to work, they cannot just receive handouts. Yes, I am my brother's keeper, but the poor also have a responsibility towards poverty reduction. I am not saying all poor people are lazy (MP, 8/4/08).

Public works programme are more desirable than the cash transfer programmes. The concept and spirit of work is important; they are doing community work which keeps them busy. Cash

transfers are handouts, but to some extent, social protection can work if properly done. But the cash transfer aspect cannot work for Malawi. We have a different historical background to other countries where cash transfers have worked (MP, 28/03/08).

A minority of respondents (Country Director, INGO, 24/04/08; Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08; Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08; PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; Head of Section, Civil Service, 28/04/08; Minister, Civil Service, 7/05/08) believed that cash transfers were important for equalizing incomes in Malawi, supporting the poor's social development, empowering them to spearhead their own agenda and engage in economic activities. However, most respondents stated that when implemented, social protection strategies, including subsidies, should be a short-term measure with a clear exit strategy. As a respondent suggested, cash transfers should be conditional by requesting recipients to save some of the money received or send their children to school (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08). A respondent from the media became slightly receptive to the idea of cash transfers once I explained that these were targeting the elderly and orphaned children. This invoked a recollection of a particular experience of the benefit of cash transfers, although its negative impact on the poor was still paramount:

I observed the transferring of money to the elderly in Kasungu and when I asked them what they did with the money they said they bought food, paid school fees for grand children and bought inputs to enable them to farm. But I have a problem with the cash transfers in that although we are changing their lives we are creating a dependency syndrome. Because the poor would want to stay at that level because they know they will get something at the end of the day. With public works we are paying people to fix things that help them in their own lives such as roads that give them access to their own markets and so on. These are some of the interventions that are increasing the dependency culture and killing the hardworking culture in Malawi. Malawi on its own cannot manage to support the cash transfers and public works and whoever is pumping in money might decide to stop funding it. What happens then to these people that are used to receiving money? (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/5/08).

Respondents' policy preferences reflected nineteenth century Europe's categorization of the poor as deserving and undeserving, which provided moral grounds for helping some poor people but not others, and influenced the strategies targeted at each category of the poor (see Chapter 3). These distinctions among the poor are politically significant as they enable a process of sorting or ranking the poor

according to perceived worthiness, a kind of pre-policymaking arrangement of policy priorities (Hossain, 2005: 965). Therefore, the respondents' perception of the poor as having fatalistic attitudes and a captive, dependant and passive mentality or mindset has moral, social and political implications.

First, respondents might assume that these characteristics of the poor, which Berthoud et al. (1981) label 'defects of character', lead to missed or squandered opportunities and can be overcome only if the individual works hard; consequently poverty might be seen as deserved. Second, it could be assumed that most government action will not have the desired impact on the poor, resulting in further dependency and laziness. Thus the solution might be to stop direct welfare support, or implement it in such a way that it will not reach the less deserving. As this media leader indicated:

If you keep giving the poor programmes that involve giving cash, food or subsidies, you end up breaking the hardworking nature of Malawians. At the end of the day we will achieve laziness, and people will get used, and become dependent on handouts (Regional Manager, Media, 15/5/08).

Lastly, anti-poverty strategies might target the poor willing to work hard to get out of poverty rather than the 'less industrious' poor, such as the disabled, children or the elderly. For instance, Table 6.6 (Chapter 6, p176) shows that only 17%, 13%, 10% and 8% of the respondents viewed youth, child-headed households, the sick, and the disabled respectively, as vulnerable to poverty, and 52% considered child benefits as neither viable nor desirable (see table 8.4).

8.2.2 Prioritising and Investing in Education

If we add the first and second column together in table 8.4, education was by far the most prominent solution amongst Malawian respondents for reducing poverty in Malawi. Low educational levels are seen as the reason why poverty in Malawi is increasing, and why society has not developed attitudes and values conducive to the implementation of pro-poor policies and the skills to enhance productivity.

As these respondents note:

Education is the key as it impacts on the attitudes of the poor. If all people were educated then they would have a positive attitude towards development (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08).

What an education does is to make you see doors where there are no doors or to sense opportunities (Academic, 08/05/08).

Therefore, despite the problems associated with free primary education, such as quality and access (see Chapter 7), many respondents still trust in the efficacy of education to deal with poverty and ensure growth. As this respondent argued, increased spending on education is the main solution to sorting out the varied causes of poverty:

If I were asked to support reduced spending on defence, I would agree only if that money was put towards education. There is nothing better the government can do than support education, because education alone would improve child mortality rates and reduce population growth and cut down on the number of children a family has. It does not make sense when the rural poor have five or seven children in today's life" (MP, 6/5/08).

The alternative for those who cannot go back to school is technical education to make them functional members of society.

We need 'school ya kwacha' (basic education) for those who cannot go back to school, so that they are able to manage their resources (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/6/08).

We need to invest in technical education so that people can get skills to help themselves and also invest in micro financing (Project Coordinator, Civil Service, 28/04/08).

Thus, investing in education is seen as promoting productivity and an entrepreneurial spirit. This was related to the lack of diversity in agriculture and Malawi's dependence on tobacco and maize, which affects Malawi's comparative position in trade.

We have done really well with maize but why can't we diversify into other cash crops? Why do we import milk, meat and fruits? Why can't we be like the Asian Tigers and invest in high tech or entrepreneurship? It takes so many bags of maize to purchase a simple mobile phone, which our friends in Korea are making, and we were at the same development level at the time of independence. If our entrepreneurial spirit was harnessed and we were able to produce some of these gadgets where would Malawi be? Education is key (MP, 8/4/08).

Education is an important factor of production. The world is moving fast in terms of technology, and we need an educated Malawi in order to take advantage of these improvements (Executive Director, CSO, 11/06/08).

The importance respondents attached to education is not surprising as education has been viewed as playing an important pragmatic and instrumental role in Malawi's development. In the post-independence period, education was aimed at localising expertise in order to replace non-Africans, to contribute towards economic and social development, to facilitate national integration, to reduce regional and racial inequalities, and to pre-empt threats to social or political stability from the poor (Cooksey et al 1994; Ridell, 2003). Emerging from respondents' views is the idea that education would not only raise incomes, reduce inequality and increase employment, but would also transform the poor, a large drain on national resources, into an asset.

Education serves to 'legitimise social inequalities by providing, in theory, a channel for upward social mobility' (Hossain and Moore, 2002:24). Therefore, the poor who do not get an education can be blamed for their own poverty. This also serves to justify the value of hard work as a route out of poverty and a belief in the allocative efficiency of the economic system. Hence, elites' responsibility for ensuring poverty reduction and a growing economy is reduced (Halper, 1973). The respondents often pointed to themselves as an example of the fact that through education, upward social mobility was possible.

It is the duty of the poor to know that nothing is impossible, that things might change if they do something, that they can do everything in their means to change their condition. For instance, I was not always well off. I grew up in the village, learnt under a tree up to form two. When I started work nobody gave me anything and I struggled through and learnt how to manage my resources (National Director, Media, 16/4/08).

As a result, elites 'may be content to allow the longer processes of economic development to tackle poverty without any more immediate or direct intervention' (Hossain and Moore, 2002:25). As this respondent observes:

There is also a lot of illiteracy in Malawi, but in the north many northerners are very educated, such that if you go into the villages you find that there are retired teachers, professors and doctors. But poverty is still high and similar to that in other regions where illiteracy is high. The problem is not that they are unable to use the resources they have but that they do not have the opportunities or resources to actually do something (Regional Manager, Media 16/05/08).

What seems to emerge is that respondents believe that indirect strategies to reduce poverty are better than direct strategies, for a number of reasons: some practical (e.g. higher taxes are very unpopular) and some normative (e.g. the poor are not hardworking). Then again, some of the views suggest that respondents are looking to East Asia, rather than to other low developing countries, for a model of development.

8.3 The Impact of Poverty and the Poor on Elite Welfare

This section examines the extent to which respondents believed that the presence of poverty and the poor had an impact on their welfare. This is done by assessing the extent to which Malawian elites appear concerned or threatened by three potential hazards: crime, disease and uprisings or rebellions.

8.3.1 Minimal Health Threat from Poverty

Interviews with Malawian respondents suggested they were not concerned that poverty and the poor might present a threat to their health. There was awareness that poverty made the poor more prone to disease because of poor nutrition and poor sanitation, and that lack of food made the poor's immune systems weak and vulnerable to disease, whilst poor water sources and sanitation led to the spread of diarrhoea and cholera. In 2004 USAID noted that there were 17,100 diarrhoea related deaths in Malawi; and, in the year 2000, 18.5% of all child mortality cases were from diarrhoea (USAID, 2008: 1). These diseases are seen to be linked to poverty:

There is a link between poverty and disease or epidemics. For instance, orphans are more prone to get HIV/Aids because they are out on the streets and get into prostitution to earn money. There are other diseases, like cholera, which come about because of unsafe drinking water and spread through the overcrowding in slums such as Tsiliza/Kaliyeka. Even other diseases such as malaria come because people have no access to mosquito nets or pesticides (Managing Director, INGO, 5/6/08).

In nineteenth century Europe, health threats to their welfare stimulated elites to act and improve the living conditions of the poor. In particular, the threat of diseases such as cholera led to major municipal and public health, particularly sanitation, reforms (Moore and Hossain, 2005; de Swaan, 1988). Malawian respondents expressed serious concerns about overcrowding within the city slums, which they argued worsened the spread of disease. Some respondents (Regional Controller, Media, 19/05/08; Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/08; and Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08) argued that Malawi's overpopulation in urban areas was a time bomb that could escalate into a rebellion if the situation became unbearable. However, there was no indication in respondents' views that this might have an impact on their welfare. There was a sense amongst respondents that something was being done to address health issues. Therefore, there was no urgent threat to elite welfare similar to that which drove nineteenth century British elites to take action.

There was recognition that the poor's lack of income made it impossible to access medical care or purchase medicines, which sometimes led to their death. Such knowledge of the poor's vulnerability was mostly based on respondents' own experiences through extended family, as this respondent illustrated:

My mother was ill and I brought her to town, took her to the hospital and I have spent a lot of money on bills. She is out of hospital and I still have to keep buying the medicines that she requires. This made me think that if I had not been alive, my mother would be dead by now, because she would not have afforded to pay for the treatment. The poor do not have access to medical facilities and die from diseases that can easily be treated because they cannot afford medicine (Regional Manager, Media, 9/5/08).

I have my mother, a very sick old lady, and she must be in her late eighties. That is a lady that could have died a long time ago if I did not provide clean water, food, a good roof over her head and if I did not make sure that she has access to medical care (MP, Parliament, 8/04/08).

For some respondents, the link between poverty and diseases was similar to the 'chicken and egg' situation. As this respondent pointed out:

Poverty does affect disease and nutrition. When someone is so exposed to poverty then their ability to cope is affected, their nutrition level drops and they are exposed to disease. On the other hand, diseases also cause poverty, because there are other people who are able to work and fend for their families. They are still poor but have something to eat. But they get tuberculosis or HIV/Aids, malaria, and they can't work anymore and provide for their family. Hence the family becomes poorer than they were before. This is an egg or chicken situation – what comes first the disease and then poverty or poverty and then the disease? But of course you can expect high levels of diseases in poorer communities. For instance, in the case of cholera, this results from bad water because someone has not provided good water or a hospital to treat the disease or an education to avoid it, to take care of themselves and their bodies (Director, CSO, 7/4/08).

For this prominent CSO Director, the question was, what comes first, the health problem and then poverty; or poverty and then the health problem? Whilst agreeing that many health problems were a result of poverty, he rarely mentioned the impact it could have on elite welfare and seemed to be preoccupied with the causes of health problems, such as lack of clean water, hospitals and illiteracy. He reverted to the argument cited earlier in this chapter on the corrective role of education, and argued that if the poor were educated, then they could avoid some of the diseases, like cholera, by learning how to take care of themselves.

If the poor died from preventable diseases, it was because they 'lack awareness of timely interventions for diseases' (MP, Parliament, 8/04/08) and 'fail to immunize their children' (Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08). Thus the existence and spread of diseases amongst the poor was linked to the behaviour and attitudes of poor people towards hygiene or health in general and the lack of education. Low education meant that:

There is no appreciation of hygiene measures, and the poor may also skip immunization for children, resulting in preventable illness (Director, INGO, 27/5/08).

The poor do not adhere to hygiene practices, such as washing hands and wearing clean clothes (Donor, 5/6/08).

The poor will use the same streams to answer the call of nature, to wash their clothes, bath and draw water for drinking (Editor, Media, 16/5/08).

It was argued that education could change these attitudes and behaviour:

Poverty derived from lack of education does contribute to disease. Most of the times I have gone home (village), I have been told that a child is sick from malaria and has been given Panado¹⁰³ because they do not know any better. Therefore, this child will die because of ignorance and lack of sensitization. This is upsetting because they do not know that Panado is not a cure for malaria. They do it because of lack of knowledge, education and outreach programmes that can sensitize the poor (Minister, Civil Service, 7/5/08).

For instance, if your niece fails to go to school, marries early and does not believe there is HIV/Aids because education levels are low, and when she gets ill she believes that she has been bewitched, you are called all the way from town to take her to the hospital only to find that she is anaemic. If this person had enough education and resources, you would hear of her illness when she has been discharged from hospital and they would not wait for you to take them for medical treatment (Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08).

Respondents lacked fear from the impact these diseases might have on elite welfare for two reasons:

first, they believed that they were highly insulated from disease through access to private medical care nationally or abroad:

Since independence in 1964 and 44 years later, people still go to South Africa for major medical treatment. We have changed ministers and PSs in health, yet we have not been innovative enough to come up with our own state of the art hospital. Many poor people are dying because they cannot be flown out of the country for medical treatment (Country Director, INGO, 27/5/08).

Elites do not care because they have access to private hospitals and private education. This is of course a realisation on the part of the elite that something is wrong with our health system, but it does not translate into action (Regional Manager, Media, 16/5/08).

I cannot take my family to a hospital that I know is below standards, but that does not mean I am doing nothing to change the situation. The fact that you can afford medical assistance abroad does not mean you will ignore the situation in your own country. The issue here is about the system the country is using, whether we have the Marxist approach where we all wear the same type of clothes. But in our economy we have to understand that there will be differences and understand that the hospitals we have are because elites understood the importance of developing these institutions (Minister, Civil Service, 7/5/08).

¹⁰³ Panado is a painkiller that contains paracetamol and is recommended for relief of mild to moderate pain and fever such as headaches, toothache and pain associated with colds and flu (www.drugs.com).

Second, respondents believed that diseases were often concentrated in areas where the poor lived.

Therefore, reference was often made of the poor in the slums, as evidenced by these responses:

Many of the poor in the slums rely on unsafe water and poor sanitation that can result in outbreaks of diseases such as cholera (Manager, Media, 16/05/08).

There is a link between disease and poverty as poor people settle in squatter areas where social services such as water or sanitation are not readily available. These things lead to cholera (Executive Director, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

The people living in slums have to have money on a daily basis to buy water and firewood. When they do not have money to purchase water, they normally resort to the use of dirty streams, which leads to cholera (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08).

The poor live in crowded houses, therefore TB or coughs are easily transmitted (Governance Specialist, Donor, 5/06/08).

The urban poor live in congested areas that are filthy, and this is the breeding ground for the spread of diseases like cholera, tuberculosis and so on. Deaths and violence occur frequently, and when they return to their villages they continue with stealing and violence (MP, 6/05/08).

The urban poor have to pay for water on a daily basis in urban areas and on those days where they do not have money, they use the nearest stream, which results in diseases such as cholera (Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08).

Respondents' views portray a perception akin to what Lister (2004) terms 'othering' and show that diseases are considered to be something that affects them (the poor) and not us (elites). These views enable respondents to distance themselves from the social ills emanating from poverty such as disease. It is not surprising that respondents should feel a sense of 'untouchability' when it comes to the impact of diseases on their welfare. Findings from research carried out in Bangladesh, Haiti and South Africa seem to suggest that elites are either unaware or dismissive of the impact poverty might have on their own welfare (Reis and Moore, 2005). One reason offered for this is that in contemporary developing countries elites face circumstances that are considerably different from those faced by Europe's nineteenth century elites, which led to their support for pro-poor policies. In the nineteenth century, sewerage systems, centres for disease control, refrigeration, antibiotics and immunisation for various health problems did not exist, and so elites had to invent them, benefiting all (Turshen, 1989).

In modern developing countries, elites can just import existing technologies, negating any drive to find a collective solution.

This has both a positive and negative outcome in terms of pro-poor policy. On the one hand, a 'late development effect' affords contemporary elites some protection against the negative consequences of poverty feared by nineteenth century European elites, mainly through medical scientific improvements" (Hossain and Moore, 2002: 22). On the other hand, elites have adopted individualised responses to tackling disease, for instance, seeking private medical care; hence, they are not inclined to provide basic sanitation and water facilities with wider health, social and economic benefits for the poor (Hossain and Moore, 2002).

However, HIV/Aids is seen as different to other diseases like cholera, and as having a potential impact on elite welfare; so a quicker policy response has been seen (although this might also be due to donor funding). In 2001, Malawi put in place the National Aids Commission, which is responsible for coordinating the response to HIV. Malawi also introduced free HIV testing centres, a national free anti-retroviral programme and home-based care for patients (World Bank, 2003a).

Most respondents, except members of parliament and donors, believed that there was a link between poverty and prostitution that had an effect on the health of the elite. The respondents noted that many girls from poor households flocked into the cities in search of money but ended up in prostitution. As these respondents noted,

Diseases occur because people want to exchange sex for money. That is why we have deadly diseases like HIV/Aids. The poor are prone to HIV/Aids because the young girls are going into prostitution to make a living. As President Thabo Mbeki says, there is no HIV/Aids, just poverty (Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08).

When girls are poor and have no decent education, they turn to prostitution. Either way they die. It's a choice between dying from poverty or dying from HIV/Aids (Director, Media, 16/04/08). Consequently,

these young girls seek out the elite, thereby spreading the disease. In this sense, respondents are not insulated from the diseases that the poor have:

HIV/Aids has an impact on elites because elites are going after young girls who need financial support because of poverty. Therefore they get and contribute to the spread of HIV/Aids (MP, 16/4/08).

However, the potential impact of HIV/Aids on elite welfare was explained as affecting immoral elites who sought prostitutes.

8.3.2 Nonexistent Fear of Insurrection

In the survey, respondents were asked to choose what they considered to be the worst consequence of poverty. The survey data show that 56% percent of the respondents did not consider social conflict and chaos as the worst consequence of poverty. Social conflict and chaos is a threat that has collective consequences for elites, and would therefore require collective action by elites; but there appeared to be little belief that it had any bearing on elite welfare.

In an attempt to understand why respondents did not consider social conflict and chaos as the worst consequences of poverty, interview data were examined. The interview data showed that most respondents believed that poverty would not lead to any form of insurrection. This lack of fear of insurrection is perhaps unrealistic, considering that there are examples of rebellions in Malawi, however small or unsuccessful. In 1915, Reverend John Chilembwe led an uprising against the colonial masters and is hailed as the father of nationalism in Malawi. Although the uprising was unsuccessful, it laid the ground for the formation of native associations that fought for African representation in the colonial administration as well as for better quality services, such as education and health. This same spirit of rebellion was evident in the fight for independence, which was granted in 1964, and for democratic rule, which was achieved in 1994 (see Chapter 5). These rebellions have mostly been against social

Injustices such as poverty and inequality (*The African Executive*, 2005). However, these rebellions are considered inconsequential, as this respondent notes:

Yes we have social unrest; but not the kind that can change things. We express our anger in terms of demonstrations and smashing windows here and there. But it never lasts” (PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08).

Some respondents (PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08; Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/08; Academic, 08/04/08; and MP, 6/05/08) pointed to the rise in food prices that had not provoked any response from the poor. Another respondent pointed to the ten years of the United Democratic Front Government (1993-2004), which he considered the most difficult years for the poor, compared to the time of Kamuzu Banda's one-party system. Yet Malawians remained peaceful (General Manager, Media, 15/05/08).

This respondent noted that:

We have had attempts (at rebellions) before by the Consumer Association of Malawi when bread or transport costs have gone up. They have called on people to boycott bread and public transport; but nothing really happens. Malawians do not like to question authority (Director, Media, 16/4/08).

The basis for respondents' lack of fear of insurrections by the poor is their belief that the poor are fairly peaceful. As this respondent suggested:

Open rebellions in Malawi are not possible. Under normal circumstances in a village setup that would be rare and strange, because the system in the village is more equal. But the poor who live among us (urban areas) are able to see the inequality, and the differences are too big. A family of four in the urban areas might have four cars, enough food for three nutritious meals and equate that with the maid who cleans your house on a daily basis, but this poor woman lives in these dirty slums. The guard who looks after your life in the night gets peanuts at the end of the month; the difference is very big, and we are sitting on a time bomb. It is just the cool nature of most Malawians that we do not see a lot of violence and most of them do not want to be involved in violence (MP, Parliament, 6/05/08).

Thus some respondents considered the poor as having accepted their fate. As this prominent minister indicated:

I get worried because poverty has become acceptable; people believe it is normal to be poor; they are resigned to the way life is. Although I am not afraid of the poor revolting against the system, I am worried about this acceptance of poverty (Minister, Civil Service, 6/6/08).

Related to this is the view that the poor cannot really rebel because poverty has been an integral part of Malawian society. Thus a rebellion would only occur if there was a period of improvement in poor people's lives or things drastically deteriorated.

Poverty would not result in social unrest, because it is characteristic of Malawi to be poor, we have always had poverty. We've always had hunger, we have always had some areas supported by development and others not supported. It is normal to have poverty and to be poor (Project Leader, Donor, 5/6/08).

Most academic literature on politics and political development supports respondents' views on the passive nature of the Malawian poor. For instance, Jones and Manda (2006) talk of an absence of voice and a culture of fear and silence; Ott et al. (2003) of an unquestioning loyalty and a culture of silence; Bwalya et al. (2004) of undue respect for authority and submissiveness; and Booth et al. (2006) of a dependence culture which means that in Malawi inequality is desired and anticipated. Generally, 'In the minds of the ordinary people, the government is conceptualised and understood as a powerful and feared institution that operates at the top and the people do not see themselves as part of the governance process, (Meinhardt and Patel, 2003:51; see also Chapter 7).

Others see religion as having contributed to the poor's moral restraint and submissiveness.

Consequently,

There is still this religious impact on the poor such that a rebellion would be wrong, therefore rebellions would not be possible (MP, 6/05/08).

In a society like ours, full of preachers and churches, they pacify the communities. A country like Malawi is less likely to experience a rebellion because if you are poor, your entry into heaven is that much easier (PS, Civil Society, 28/04/08).

Another respondent likened religion to the role that shock absorbers play in a car, seeing it as beneficial in ensuring harmony amongst different groups in society and also making hard work the only acceptable route out of poverty:

Churches are entrenched in Malawi. Therefore the thinking of Malawi as a God fearing nation has a negative effect in Malawi. That is why political extremities in terms of corruption and utterances by politicians are able to be consumed by Malawians without any real reaction. Malawians have shock absorbers because we are mindful of being a God-fearing nation. This is important for Malawi, we should not lose it. Riches are always a result of hard work and one has to be a hard worker to be rich (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/6/08).

Another reason given for lack of fear of social insurrection was that respondents believed the poor were illiterate and therefore had no understanding of their rights. As these respondents argued:

You have to remember that if people rise up against something it is an indication of a certain level of literacy, and they are able to understand their power and can use it to their advantage. I am more afraid of the rise in petty crime and the rise in corruption than I am in an uprising (Managing Director, CSO, 6/05/08).

Malawians cannot rebel because we are not knowledgeable about striking as a form of reacting to situations that arise. We are not aware of our rights and how to protect our rights (Minister, Civil Service, 21/04/08).

Generally, respondents believed that the poor ‘do not like to rock the boat’ (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08), were obedient, did not question authority or voice any concern over poverty, and were docile (Executive Director, CSO, 11/06/08). Respondents argued that by nature Malawians were humble, which enabled the elite ‘to throw them about like a football’ (PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08). Their sense of insulation was exacerbated by their belief that the violence that accompanied rebellions and other threats such as health and crime, affected other poor people, rather than the elite. As this respondent stated:

Violence would actually revolve around the poor themselves rather than towards elites. With high fences the elite are insulated from poverty and in their ability to seek medical attention abroad as well as education they are highly insulated. As I said, crime, violence and disease revolve around the poor themselves, but it does spill over to the elite now and again (PS, 11/04/08).

However, the high fences show that elites are in fact affected by rebellions, because crime could be seen as a form of rebellion:

If you want to know that elites are scared just look at the high walls they have and the security guards they employ. They pretend that they do not care about rebellions but they are unconsciously insecure (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/5/08).

However, crime was not considered a serious form of rebellion, and definitely not one that would impact on their welfare in the short term: 'I do not see Malawians rising up, maybe in the next 50 years' (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/5/08). Therefore, there were some respondents who acknowledged that insurrection was possible but was unlikely to occur in the short-term:

I have not tried to advance this theory of whether the growth of poverty can result in a rebellion or uprising by the poor. But for sure I get concerned and worried when I see the people at 4pm or 5pm almost stampeding from their work places, walking long distances because they cannot afford a bus fare. I get worried. If you saw me in 1993 it was as if my fear came true. We used to see the labour force stampeding like that, and I always said this was a problem (MP, Parliament, 8/4/08).

It is a misconception to think that the poor would never rise up. Slowly people are beginning to react and starting to demand for the provision of goods and services (PS, Civil Service, 23/4/08).

In Malawi it takes time to rise up, and the social movements are not yet confident enough to rebel against social injustices. But we cannot say that it will never happen A time will come when people will say enough is enough (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/5/08).

Although rebellions cannot occur because of our culture of submissiveness, we need to keep in mind that habits change over time. Malawians have not always been quiet, and poor people will not be quiet forever. The poor have the capacity to rise up one day, and someone can organise them in future. In a democracy rebellions are even more possible (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/5/08).

If poverty levels rose then there would be a chance of rebellion, because people want to see that their leaders are doing something and changing their lives. If the leaders do not meet expectations then there will be a rebellion with people wanting to change government" (MP, 30/4/08).

Examples were given by the above respondents of rebellions that had occurred, such as those by poor Malawians against their Asian employers over poor working conditions. Another was the protests from

tobacco farmers over poor prices in 2008. The most serious was in 2007, when many Malawians rose up against foreign traders and vandalised their places of trade as Malawians complained that these groups were taking their markets and hence their livelihood. Most recently, on 20 July, 2011, Malawians demonstrated against poor political and economic governance that had worsened life for many of them. However, there appeared to be a belief amongst the respondents that these types of rebellions were instigated by other elites. For example, following the 20 July demonstrations, President Mutharika said: 'People who wear slippers do not strike. It is these political and civil society leaders who want to topple my administration' (Mawawa, 2011).

Therefore, there is a sense of security from the threat of insurrection, which is driven by elites' belief that social uprisings are only possible if the elites instigate them. As indicated by this respondent:

A rebellion in Malawi is not possible without the hand of the elite. For the poor to organise a mass movement it requires funds and a certain level of economic muscle. This rebellion would require use of communication aides for advocacy and the poor would not have access to these. Even during the recent mass action against opposition MPs for refusing to pass the budget, you could see banners, type written letters and so on which the poor cannot afford. You could see that some elites had a hand in it because the poor cannot write a petition (National Secretary, CSO, 7/5/08).

Other respondents were uncomfortable with the ease with which the poor could be manipulated to form a rebellion: 'The poor can be manipulated on the promises of simple things that they dream of such as nice shoes, food, clothes' (Minister, Civil Service, 6/6/08). There was social awareness amongst respondents of the inequality in society and fear that those elites who rebelled could easily find a following amongst the poor:

The facts on the ground show that the distribution of resources is unequal unless government programmes start to distribute resources equally or give resources to the poor through social protection. The budgeting system is such that the elites get a big share although the elite are in the minority. Even the tax system taxes those earning less and these are the people that have a lot of people to look after (MP, Parliament, 6/05/08).

It is plausible to conclude that the fear voiced by respondents of rebellion from other elites drives most

of the political bargaining in parliament, appeasement through employment, and the general distribution of resources amongst the three regions. This would then affect pro-poor policies, as they would not be responding to the real needs of the poor¹⁰⁴. Moreover, Malawian citizens have not developed the attitudes and personal characteristics that would enable them to take an active role, accept the privileges and bear the responsibility of the democratic and development process in their society (Packenham, 1964). As Toye (2007) suggests, to reduce poverty the poor have to be able to organise and challenge the system. This was the hope of one respondent:

I am looking forward to the time that the poor will rebel and claim what is due to them. If only the poor had power then we would listen to them, because they are now able to bargain. If the 70 % of the poor people rose up, then the 30 percent would listen. The time that I hear the poor have risen up, that is the day I will know that poverty has a chance of being reduced. Culture and the traditions of Malawi do influence the extent to which the poor can rebel, but this brings us back to the fact of power. The fact is that Malawians became unquestioning obedient beings because of the power Kamuzu exercised over them. People were disempowered and excluded from decision-making, such that decisions were made for people that were under threat. It might be difficult for people to rise up, but life is changing and people are exposed to technology and a time will come when the poor will say enough is enough and rebel. One day this will happen in Malawi, and it might not be our generation but maybe the future generation will rebel (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/4/08)

In Chapter 2 we saw how social and political threats to elite welfare were partly responsible for the implementation of welfare states in Europe. Although some welfare responses were at times repressive rather than ameliorative, threats were partly responsible for ensuring that elites paid attention to poverty and the poor, in their midst (Toye, 1999; de Swaan, 2005). The data from Malawi shows that similar responses to poverty and the poor are lacking. Malawian respondents seem content with the way things are and secure in the knowledge that poverty has not reached a sufficiently worrying level to warrant an insurrection. Thus, the threat of insurrection is not a means of keeping poverty high on the agenda of elites in Malawi. The next section discusses the potential threat that respondents saw crime as posing.

¹⁰⁴ As Cammack (2004) argues, Malawian elites are unresponsive to the needs of the population and form coalitions on issues that have no impact on the welfare of the people; whereas the poor are tied to big men by patronage ties along regional, ethnic and religious lines.

8.3.3 Elites on the Potential Threat from Crime

Unlike health and insurrection, crime was a significant cause of concern among Malawian respondents: when asked to choose the worst consequence of poverty, 85% of the respondents mentioned crime. This shows that the respondents placed emphasis on individual negative consequences (i.e. crime) rather than collective negative consequences (i.e. health hazards and insurrection) (Reis, 2005). The reasons for this became clearer during the analysis of the qualitative data.

Crime is considered to have increased with the transition to democracy in 1994, and there was no shortage of crime stories in the news following the transition. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey of 2007, Malawi has relatively high rates of crime and at least 48.5% of the respondents to the survey indicated they had experienced crime (Pelser et al, 2007). In the face-to-face interviews, some respondents (Governance Specialist, Donor, 16/06/08; PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; MP, 28/03/08) noted that security companies and the use of electric fences seemed to have grown proportionate to a perceived increase in crime. Thus respondents' feeling of insecurity in the face of crime was evidenced by the fact that most elites were spending more on paying private security companies, constructing high fences and electric fences, and putting up burglar bars. However, very few respondents perceived crime to be clearly linked to poverty. This is because respondents considered crime to be perpetrated by the non-poor, and destitution was not considered a cause of crime.

Thus, respondents made a distinction between crimes of need and economic crimes. Crimes of need occurred where poor people lacked the means to cope, especially when facing food security issues, so that they resort to crime for subsistence. Economic crimes occurred because people who had less were living in close proximity to those that had more (and things that were worth stealing) (Kelly, 2000; Pelser

et al., 2007). Consequently, the setup in Malawi, where at the periphery of each suburb there is a slum, is seen to present an opportunity for crime:

The poor in urban areas live among the rich: they know what they eat, what they own and the lifestyle they lead. They know they have televisions, DVD players, and human nature has it that either they want similar things or get it to sell in order to have money; therefore the poor start to steal. These people have nothing else to do, therefore can do anything to survive (MP, 6/5/08)

Therefore, owning property was a security risk for the respondents:

I live in area 49. I am considered well to do because of my house and the fact that I have a job. I cannot show that I have money because most people around me are poor. For example, I was thinking of buying a generator for my house but when I look around my neighbourhood some people do not even have electricity, therefore my house would be the only house with electricity. Some of these developments are a hazard to your health because they attract criminals. Even if I wanted to buy a better car I cannot because it would attract unnecessary attention and people begging for alms. You cannot live comfortably when you are surrounded by poverty (Director, Media, 16/4/08).

I live in area 47, next to the slum Ntandire where most of the thieves come from to steal in our areas. Due to the social gap which is there, they come to steal from us because of poverty. Every time there is political unrest in Malawi, all the shops are smashed because they see the goods daily, but they are unable to access them. When they get a chance they take what they can (PS, Civil Service, 23/04/08).

I live in Lumbadzi amongst the poor and I own a house that is better than my neighbours', that makes me insecure. I am afraid of crime because people believe I am better off (Regional Manager, Media, 9/05/08)

Despite the recognition that inequality led to crime, most respondents' discussions dwelt on other motivations for criminal activities, such as unemployment. As this respondent argues:

High unemployment rates, lack of advice for poor people, lack of motivation – these are factors that increase crime. The breakdown of the social security system itself contributes to crime. Poverty itself is not a big contributor to crime and the poor are hardly involved in crime (Director, CSO, 7/04/08).

However, some respondents considered crime a complex issue, one that related to human nature and the criminal mind, mainly of the non-poor. One respondent asked:

The elites you talk about, if they steal, are they stealing because they are poor? No, it is because of their criminal mind and because it is in them just to grab all the time. Definitely, poverty does not explain crime (MP, 8/04/08).

Another respondent noted that:

Some elites are involved in crime, but it's not easy for them to get caught, and some gangs are sponsored by elites. Although the crime that is most pronounced is the one done by poor people (Executive Director, CSO, 12/05/08).

Consequently, the crimes (corruption) of the non-poor were considered to be more significant than the crimes (stealing food) of the poor. This view may be well-founded, as public sector corruption is increasing and citizens have to pay bribes to access services, and large sums of money are stolen through government contracts and outright thievery (Malawi Government, 2006; Anders, 2002).

It seems that most respondents failed to acknowledge a link between poverty and crime because they wanted to appear sympathetic towards the poor. The poor are seen to have dignity such that, 'Despite being poor they will not be involved in crime' (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/05/08), whilst another respondent observed that the poor 'are so preoccupied with survival that they spend more time looking for food because that is what is important, not crime' (Director, CSO, 7/04/08). If the poor's crime could be termed as such, it was because they were 'vulnerable' (Country Director, INGO, 24/04/08; Regional Manager, Media, 9/04/08) and 'desperate' (MP, Parliament 28/03/08; Managing Director, CSO, 6/05/08). Generally, the poor were considered peaceful and 'innocent with no other choice' (National Secretary, CSO, 7/05/08). As these respondents argued:

The poor are in a situation where they have to find money on a daily basis to buy water and at the same time they have no food or cannot afford three meals a day. They are strained and resort to crime (National Coordinator, CSO, 6/5/08).

When the poor break into your house, they steal bags of maize or your goat. They will not take anything else, and you know that people are starving because they have nothing to rely on, to survive on, and the only way of getting something is to steal (General Manager, Media, 15/05/08).

Crime was therefore seen by some respondents as a form of natural justice meted out by the poor which ensured distribution of resources (Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08). As these respondents noted:

There is a strong link between poverty and crime. This is their way of being heard because they are frustrated and you have a lot of theft and vandalism. Some vandalise because they want to sell but others do it because they say 'we should be equal'. For instance they would vandalise an electricity poll so that there is no electricity, or destroy a bridge so that vehicles are unable to pass because they are walking (PS, Civil Service, 23/4/08).

Poor people think that everyone who is well-to-do is the cause of their poverty, therefore would want to steal from this person (National Director, Media, 16/04/08).

Crime is a result of the inequality that exists in Malawi. The poor want to have what the rich have (PS, 28/04/08).

It became clear that the urban poor, who were considered by the respondents to have the resources within their means to reduce their poverty, were seen to be involved in economic crimes.

I do not agree that people become criminals because of poverty. I do not expect a villager to come and rob my house. I have never seen that. But criminals are those in urban areas, that have tasted the good life, and they are not motivated by poverty but want to live a life they have not worked hard to get. People become criminals because someone has what they do not have (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08).

In the rural areas there is no correlation between poverty and crime or diseases. The poor in the rural areas are not prone to crime, but the urban poor are prone to crime. If they don't have any economic activity many of the men resort to crime to do with theft or stealing. I haven't seen poverty bring out in the rural areas the vices of crime (PS, Civil Service, 6/6/08).

Some poor people, especially in urban areas, are to blame because they are not entrepreneurial, therefore they fail to uplift themselves out of poverty (PS, Civil Service, 28/04/08).

However, most respondents acknowledged that the poor in urban areas faced untold hardships (see also Chapter 6). According to this respondent:

If you go to that slum in Blantyre called Mbayani, it is steaming with children without clothes, suffering from malnutrition. There are no adequate services even though it is within city boundaries. There are no clinics there. This is bleeding disease and crime. The petty theft occurring, the thieves come from there because they have nothing else to do and they need to survive. Crime is a form of rebellion, because if these people were provided with something they will choose not to steal. If you meet people that are caught stealing, they have no shoes and they are wearing tattered clothes (PS, Civil Service, 24/4/08).

Although crime was clearly a concern for the respondents, some respondents pointed out that Malawi's crime was not as bad as in some other countries. As this respondent argued, "*there is a connection between crime and poverty but not as bad as other countries. The crime rate is there but it's not as bad*" (MP, Parliament, 28/3/08). He went on to argue that respondents were somehow immune from the effects of crime, noting that:

Even though the effects of crime are there, they will only trickle down to the elites in the longer term. Eventually it could. We are in a very fortunate position because we have not reached that part yet. Even though the elites keep themselves in high fences to protect themselves from crime, in terms of crime do not compare us with South Africa (MP, 28/3/08).

It was a common view amongst respondents that the impact of crime on their welfare was minimal as they could insulate themselves by employing private security firms or build houses with high or electric fences (Executive Director, CSO, 15/04/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 6/05/08; Executive Director, Civil Service, 5/05/08; PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08; PS, Civil Service, 17/04/08; and MP, 28/03/08; Programme Manager, Donor, 6/06/08).

The ability to make themselves secure led most respondents to believe that crime affected other poor people from whom it was easier to steal than from elites. As this respondent states: 'Crime actually revolves around the poor themselves rather than towards elites, but the elites are affected' (PS, Civil Service, 11/4/08). This is also explicit in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (2002) which states that, 'For the ultra-poor, the only means of survival may be stealing food or assets from other poor people (p. xiv).

The point is that respondents did not seem to unanimously agree that the poor were prone to crime. Rather, they agreed that some poor people committed crime. These were considered crimes of need (e.g. stealing food), and respondents believed these to be inconsequential in comparison to economic crimes (armed robberies and corruption), committed by the non-poor. But most respondents felt

insulated from crime because (a) they believed in the innocence, dignity and generally good moral character of the poor; (b) they did not believe poverty or inequality necessarily caused crime; and (c) they could afford security. As Kelly (2000) argues, when crime is seen in economic terms, then the best solution has been the deterrent effect of the criminal justice system rather than a direct response to poverty. In my analysis of parliamentary proceedings, I found that MPs showed concern at growing crime in Malawi, but that their solution was to tighten the judicial procedures for dealing with criminals:

We are saying no to armed robbers in this house. I want those who perpetrate those crimes to get it from here that their time is over. This bill is intended to tighten the noose. We are saying no to burglars (National Assembly debates, 34th session, 27th June, 2000).

Then again it can be argued that strengthening the judicial system is an indication by the elite that living in high fenced houses does not render them immune to crime. As one respondent indicated:

In Malawi 50% of the elite know that if poverty is not reduced then they will be affected at one time or another. That is why they are trying to introduce social protection policies that will mitigate the situation (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08).

This respondent continued to argue that the social protection policy was one way of reducing crime in Malawi, and noted that South Africa was an example of how social protection policy had reduced crime:

South Africa has introduced social protection policies, which have helped a lot in reducing crime. Without this policy, the crime in RSA would have been higher. The poor are struggling to eat, definitely. They will be violent in a society like Malawi, where we do not take the poor on board in development planning. Definitely we are heading for disaster. You know social protection has been argued as one of the most important interventions for averting instability (PS, Civil Service, 11/04/08).

Another respondent believed that increasing poverty would lead to an increase in social problems, and thus to elite action:

Elites do care about the poor but they become more caring when poverty starts to impact on their welfare through crime and social instability (National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08).

However, the current lack of fear of health, insurrection and crime was worrying: 'This lack of fear of crime amongst the elites affects the way elites support policies. For instance, the shooting down of bills in parliament would not happen if elites knew that the poor would react' (Bureau Chief, Media, 16/05/08). In nineteenth century Europe, the fear of crime induced elites to act to mitigate the impact poverty had on their own welfare, through coordinated public action. However, Malawian respondents, although aware and concerned about crime, believed its impact could be mitigated individually through private security and fortifying their houses. In addition, the crimes of the non-poor were felt to be more threatening than the crimes of the poor, and from respondents' views, the poor were restrained in their response to deprivation.

8.3.4 The Potential Threat from Social Networks

In many African societies extended families have been a safety net, with the well-off assuming responsibility for the social or economic needs of their poor relations. In some cases in Malawi, and indeed in much of Africa, families have pulled resources together to educate one person to become the breadwinner for the extended family. Therefore in Malawi to be poor or *umphawi* implies the lack of kin or friends:

There are no poor and rich; the rich have helped those who are in want. No man starves because he has no food; no child cries for milk because its parents do not have milk cows; no orphan or old person starves because there is nobody to look after them. No, these things are unknown in Bantu society (Iliffe, 1987:3).

This argument is consistent with a study carried out by Chilowa et al. (2000) that identified assistance from relatives as the poor's major coping strategy (see Appendix 8). According to the respondents interviewed, the extended family had the greatest negative impact on their own welfare in comparison

with crime, disease and social insurrection. The extended family was considered an encumbrance to the respondents, who were impaired in their professional or political activities¹⁰⁵:

Because I am doing well, have a job and earn a steady income, I have become a target of relatives and other poor people who come and beg from me. My ambitions are detracted because of the poverty in my family and home village. The little resources I have pay school fees for my families' children. The impact that poverty has on the elites prevents them from progressing or become richer (Head of Policy, INGO, 24/04/08).

If it wasn't for poverty, I should have been one of the millionaires in Malawi. But if my brothers or sisters have children and they cannot afford to send these children to school, it becomes my responsibility to educate them. If I do not send these children to school then I do not wish my children well, because all these children will camp at their house if I died (Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08).

If you drive a car and have a nice house to live in, you cannot refuse people money. They do not believe when you say that you do not have money. One relative told me to my face when I told him I do not have money that he felt I was lying. The understanding of the poor is that if you live in area 47 then you are rich and should provide assistance (Executive Director, CSO, 15/4/08).

The extended family was considered a drain on respondents' resources as it encompassed both their own kin in their home village and their partner's family. As this respondent explained:

The extended family system in Malawi starts from my family, which is myself, my husband and our children, then his brothers and sisters. As well as my brothers and sisters, their children, both sets of parents, their brothers and sisters, and the extension goes on (PS, Civil Service, 2/5/08).

This affects not only the respondents' resources but also their mental health. As this respondent noted:

This strains even my conscience because the demands are too many that you cannot afford to meet them all. But the expectation out there is that I should be able to provide for everything for the mere fact that I am working. They think I get a lot of money. If you tell them you do not have money they think you are mean and this can be psychologically stressful. Sometimes one has to go to the extent of getting into debt to assist people. Otherwise had it been the money was for me, my wife and children, I would have been happy because the money is enough for me and my wife. But when you bring in the demands from kin it becomes problematic (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/5/08).

¹⁰⁵ For an account of extended families and their role in African life see also Chabal, 2009.

When I asked the respondents what these demands entailed, most mentioned basic necessities such as food, money for school or hospital fees, funerals, weddings, purchasing agricultural inputs and, in most instances, to provide a safety net in times of food crisis that lead to hunger.

People come to you that some relation is dead and they do not have a coffin, food for people to eat during the funeral ceremony and transport to the graveyard. You provide for these. Then someone else might come and say someone is sick and there is no transport to take them to the hospital. Poverty also impacts me professionally because if you lose a relation, you have to leave everything to attend the funeral, and our funerals last two to three days before burial, and people do not understand that you need to go back to work. Another thing is that as a breadwinner you are expected to mobilise everything and pay for school fees for relatives' children. Sometimes people just show up at your house and tell you that they discussed in the village for you to look after a relative's child, and they bring that child without consultation (PS, Civil Society, 17/4/08).

Political respondents pointed out that apart from extended family, they had to cater for the needs of their constituents, including both individual and community needs. This included supporting development projects, for instance the building of school blocks or bridges and support for income-generating activities, from their personal resources. The respondents were weary of the demands pressed on them. As a result, political elites had called on civil society to educate Malawians on the role of a member of parliament.

What MPs are doing through charitable acts is a temporary measure. There must be a deliberate programme by civil society to civic educate the poor, because it is not a job of an MP to buy coffins. We hope a time will come where people will understand our role and theirs (MP, Parliament, 16/04/08).

A similar call was made by women MPs to the Catholic Centre for Justice and Peace (CCJP)¹⁰⁶, who argued that Malawians did not understand the role of women leaders:

They expect everything from us and they just want to receive. If I bring development, for instance to drill a borehole to provide water, they expect me to transport the brick and sand with my own resources. If you do not assist in this way then you will lose your seat in parliament (MP, Parliament, 22/05/08).

¹⁰⁶ CCJP is a civil society organisation that was established in 1992 to contribute to the common effort of the Episcopal Conference and the whole Catholic Church in Malawi, in the creation of a just and peaceful Malawian society that promotes integral development and lasting peace (<http://www.ccjp-lilongwe.org>).

It was normal to find constituents at the offices of several ministers I was interviewing asking for school fees, transport to return to the constituency, employment and so on. Respondents noted that since government began providing ambulances in rural areas, calls to pick up sick people to transport them to the hospital, or even the dead to the mortuary, had reduced. However, according to the elite this reliance of the poor on elite resources could and did lead to corruption.

For a person like a politician, you are always pressed for resources, and you are always trying to find ways of acquiring more resources to meet demands and expectations. It's constant pressure, and what every politician is thinking is that they need money in order to be re-elected. This can lead to corruption, because you need resources to get into power and resources to maintain power, and these resources are not finite. You need to find a way of generating this income (MP, 28/3/08).

Other respondents ridiculed the idea that elites benefited from the poor, arguing that this was not true in Malawi. As this respondent noted:

There is no joy in being the only person who has a vehicle in the village, because every time there is a problem they come to your house to ask for transport to hospital and the like. If you have a grocery shop in a rural setting where people do not have money, then you cannot make any profit. There is too much money coming from the elites to the poor and elites do not benefit from the poor (PS, Civil Service, 6/6/08).

Despite these perceived negative impacts of social networks on elite welfare, respondents pointed out that no one in Malawi could escape contact with the poor, and the extended family actually represented a strong link between the poor and the elite. They saw the legitimacy that they had amongst their kin, a legitimacy that protected them from violence or social uprisings by the poor, as predicated on their ability to provide social and economic support for the poor. Kinship in Africa translates into structures of reciprocity that govern interpersonal and intra-communal relations. There is a system of exchange that, though unequal, provides a win-win situation for both the elite and the poor (Chabal, 2009). Therefore, this link provided social protection for the poor but also security for the respondents by ensuring social harmony between the rich and the poor and averting future burdens. For instance, help in paying for the education of the children of poor relations would ensure that they became more productive and entrepreneurial in reducing their own poverty.

I have so many people that am looking after today and my house is one of the largest homes in area 47, even though I only have five children. Four of my children are abroad studying, so I should only be having one child in the home. But I have twelve children. If you don't assist these children to go to school, they will always be a burden on you and your children. It is a vicious circle and to break it you send them to school. If you send a relative's child to school and she leaves school without completing, they cannot come to you for any other assistance because you have done your bit (Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08).

The impact of poverty in Malawi is felt through the extended family because if you do not do something to help your extended family then you bear all the costs that come along the way. That is why we are forced to send our cousins, nieces and nephews to school, so that they become independent and no longer need your help (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/05/08).

Similarly, support towards extended family and kin is seen to avert social tensions in Malawi that might lead to social uprisings and violence from the poor. As this respondent stated:

It becomes very dangerous as a family for you to build a big mansion, well roofed and ventilated, and to do nothing for your family members. It threatens your own well being, such that in my personal life before I could build a house for myself I had to build one for my mother, brothers and only after that could I start thinking of building a house for myself. This ensures that there is no tension between me and my kin. These charitable activities are a moral obligation for elites because it develops communication between elites and the poor. If you show that you care, then the poor will approach you and they start to feel empowered. Otherwise the relationship between elites and the poor can become hostile (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08).

This may suggest that support towards the extended family protects elites from some of the negative impacts of poverty and may begin to explain respondents' lack of fear from social uprisings. Alternatively, extended family relations may lead to collective responses to poverty reduction:

These charitable activities are a burden for us elites and this will put pressure on elites to do something for the poor so that the burden becomes less (MP, Parliament, 6/05/08).

As elites we need to move beyond providing these charitable gifts and provide a conducive environment for the poor to escape the poverty trap. We need to introduce credit facilities with minimal interest, provide farm inputs that they need, and as elites we should plough back into the communities from which we have moved. It is our duty to provide for the poor and the poor have the right to benefit from what we have amassed (Country Director, INGO, 24/04/08).

Extended family relations cut across stratification or hierarchy and thus link rich with poor, powerful with powerless and urban with rural. As Chabal (2009) argues, notwithstanding the negative burdens or positive opportunities that extended family relations imply, these relations contribute to a sense of

socially meaningful belonging (Chabal, 2009:47). This sense of belonging introduces a set of obligations and defines how individuals relate to one another as human beings. There is a collective virtue and a notion of public good implied in extended family relationships. This can be related to the political system as, 'People begin to vote for politicians along district or kinship lines, so that they have their own in power that can then support them financially' (Academic, University of Malawi, 08/05/08). Therefore, despite the unequal, exploitative relationship between respondents and the poor, their relationship is mutually beneficial, such that the poor are not likely to rebel against the elites as they need them for their social and economic needs.

Another respondent noted that these social relations were beneficial for development in Malawi, arguing that, 'The fact that elites are attached to the village through extended family is good for Africa. For instance, the success that Japan had was based on culture and community spirit' (Resident Representative, Donor, 25/5/08). Consequently, despite the negative impact on elite resources of extended family demands, respondents overwhelmingly supported continued support towards the poor. When I asked respondents whether these charitable deeds were their responsibility, the majority agreed, with only two respondents disagreeing. These two members of parliament argued that support towards the poor was the role of government, noting that their taxes should go towards support for social services. This suggests that although they might rely on patronage for legitimacy and a sense of belonging, they did not like the demands it placed on them.

However, charity was considered by the majority of the respondents as a moral and a cultural obligation of the elite:

Sometimes, when you stay in town for too long without visiting the rural area, you start to think that things are okay. But if you take time to walk around in the rural areas you start to realise that there are despicable levels of poverty that exists in Malawi. It is disheartening and you will feel a sense of hopelessness, as a country whether we will ever rise from this poverty trap.

Charitable activities are a moral obligation on the part of the elite, and it is embedded in our cultural orientation. You would not want to see your mother starving when you have a little something that you can share (Academic, University of Malawi, 08/05/08).

This kind of support towards the poor is a moral obligation; it is a responsibility from which the elites cannot 'switch off' unless they turn a blind eye to the problem in their own backyard. As things stand there is no way to escape it because the African heritage in us still continues, and we are rural in our minds even when we stay in town (MP, Parliament, 6/05/08).

This assistance towards extended family should be a moral obligation if we want to change the society because if my sister's children are educated, then their children will also go to school and we are cleaning society in the process (Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08).

For some, moral duty is derived from a religious belief that God expects the non-poor to be stewards and assist the poor:

Even though extended family commitments impact negatively on my resources, this support teaches me and enhances my concern for the poor. I am able to support my family but what about those people that do not have families, who do they turn to? This becomes the responsibility of the elites because the Bible teaches us that we need to show concern for the poor (Director, CSO, 12/05/08).

I believe in sharing the little God has given me (National Coordinator, CSO, 17/06/08).

Support towards extended family is a cultural and moral duty because God expects us to be stewards (Chief Executive, Private Sector, 13/05/08).

For others, support was more than a moral obligation: it was a matter of life or death:

It has come to a situation where if elites do not do anything, then someone will die. Therefore we are helping people to survive. A moral obligation would be to help someone from one point to another not to live from day to day (Governance Specialist, Donor, 6/06/08).

Therefore more involvement in charitable organisations was considered an essential form of social responsibility and reinvesting in the community. However, there was recognition that charitable acts towards kin were not sufficient to deal with poverty. Thus, respondents believed that support to kin should go towards productive activities, such as agricultural inputs, entrepreneurial activities and education. This was consistent with the elites' view of the importance of poverty alleviation through the development of human resources.

Morally or practically, if you are well off you cannot ignore your needy relatives, but on the other hand, these same handouts increase dependency. Support towards relatives does not give them the drive to do better and reduces productivity in their lives (Leader, Donor, 5/06/08).

Moral obligation perpetuates poverty and encourages more relatives to come and beg. Sometimes we are doing more harm and we should be helping the poor to help themselves, for instance instead of giving maize, we need to provide fertiliser, because the poor also have to work (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/05/08).

Thus kinship ties generate bonds between elites and the poor and imply a “social consciousness” and a degree of social engagement on the part of the elite, including a belief in the interdependent fates of rich and poor’ (Clarke and Sison, 2005:75). But can the elites’ feelings of moral obligation and personalised commitment towards relatives and kin be generalised and converted into a civic notion of responsibility (Reis, 2010:15)? The next section discusses which key actors or institutions respondents considered suitable for implementing pro-poor policy in Malawi.

8.4 Elites’ Faith in the State

Table 8.5 shows that when respondents were asked who should be responsible for taking action against poverty, 91% of them assigned responsibility to the state/government¹⁰⁷. One reason for this overwhelming support for state responsibility may be because of Malawi’s three-decade-long experience of a centralised state and the pivotal role of the state in the economy under Kamuzu Banda (1964 – 1994).

¹⁰⁷ Government and state was used interchangeably during interviews.

Table 8.5: Institutions Responsible for Poverty Reduction

| Category | Government | civil society | Other |
|----------------|------------|---------------|----------|
| | % | % | % |
| Academic | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| CSO | 94 | 6 | 0 |
| Donor | 80 | 3 | 0 |
| Government | 95 | 0 | 5 |
| Media | 87 | 13 | 0 |
| INGO | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Parliament | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Private Sector | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Missing value | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 91 | 7 | 2 |

*Data derived from questionnaires. Total respondents = 86.

Similar support for the state as provider emerged during face-to-face interviews, as indicated below:

Government is the institution that has a major role to play in reducing poverty. The citizens look up to the government for assistance, and it should be government that drives the policies from formation to implementation. The government should put things in place so that when donors, INGOs and civil society come in to assist they are clear in which areas government needs support (Regional Manager, Media, 16/05/08).

Government is mandated through our taxes to implement policies and reduce poverty. Therefore, government is ultimately responsible for poverty reduction, because it can lay claim to a large share of national resources and international funds (Advocacy Manager, INGO, 27/5/08).

Government is better coordinated than the private sector. The issue here is about the provision or delivery of services and government is central to that (MP, 28/03/08).

Government has social responsibility over the people and it is obligated to support its people. Donors or civil society have not been elected, therefore not mandated or obligated to implement pro-poor policies. The government's responsibility towards the poor is constitutionally guaranteed. The people entrust the government with the power to reduce poverty and inequality (Member, Parliamentary Committee, 31/03/08).

Some of those interviewed believed that the private sector was an essential partner in reducing poverty, especially in the provision of employment for the poor (Principal Secretary, Civil Service, 28/04/08; National Coordinator, CSO, 21/05/08; Academic, 08/05/08; Programme Director, CSO, 13/05/08; Acting Executive Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08; Deputy Director, Private Sector, 12/05/08) and

complementing government initiatives in the provision of goods and service (Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08; National Director, Media, 16/04/08; Regional Manager, Media, 9/05/08; Executive Director, CSO, 12/05/08; Country Director, INGO, 27/05/08; Operations Manager, Donor, 16/06/08). The private sector was also considered to have an equal stake in ensuring a healthy nation and economy for their businesses to thrive (Director of Programmes, CSO, 7/04/08). However, there was reluctance to involve civil society organisations in implementing social policies, perhaps because respondents (including those from civil society) were sceptical about their legitimacy and competence, or feared that CSOs would take over the state's responsibilities:

I find it wrong when CSOs lead and government follows. It is not natural (Minister, Civil Service, 7/05/08).

Sometimes CSOs compete with government (National Coordinator, CSO, 13/05/08).

The issue of lack of productivity has been worsened by CSOs and made poor people dependent on handouts. CSOs are always busy looking for donations to donate to the rural poor, and what do they donate, a bag of flour, they are not helping Malawi (Regional Manager, Media, 9/04/08).

People think CSOs are doing a lot of work. This is not true because they spend 48 percent of their money on themselves as overheads, to pay for cars and houses (PS, Civil Service, 28/04/08).

CSOs are cashing in on hunger, HIV/Aids and other problems affecting the poor (PS, Civil Service, 5/05/08).

Malawi does not really have a civil society. The one that is there aims to alleviate its own poverty. Their interests are donor-driven because they are donor-funded. They are not transparent, and they have weak accountability systems (MP, 28/03/08).

Most CSOs aim to earn a livelihood and not to help the poor, and they move from one meeting to another to get a sitting allowance (Academic, University of Malawi, 8/05/08).

Although some respondents saw a significant role for CSOs, others considered them as opportunistic and accountable to the donors who funded their activities rather than to Malawians. Then again, most respondents identified shortcomings with the state, noting that it had failed to provide a conducive environment for other sectors to support its initiatives and provide the institutions or structures required

to implement social policies. Despite this view, respondents believed that the state had moral responsibility and was officially mandated to act on behalf of the poor.

Therefore, respondents argued that the state should provide better and more efficient support, especially towards educational services and agrarian reforms. Respondents' willingness to pass on the responsibility for poverty reduction to the state was contrary to their view on tax, as they were not willing to support the state through an increase in taxes (see Table 8.2, p226). Although some respondents understood that poverty reduction would benefit from taxes, they argued that through support towards the extended family, they were already doing enough. As this respondent noted: 'At the moment I am supporting the poor twice, through taxes and through personal assistance (Minister, Civil Service, 21/04/08). Basically, respondents' belief in economic growth (see Table 8.1, p225) suggested considerable confidence that economic growth would generate the necessary revenues that could go towards poverty reduction, rather than increasing taxes, a sacrifice, respondents were unwilling to make.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter first discussed respondents' views on anti-poverty strategies and their policy preferences. Respondents' perceptions demonstrated that they generally preferred policies that would have wider benefits to society. Thus there was more support for economic growth as a means of reducing poverty, and for policies that would minimize direct distribution (Reis, 2005). Respondents favoured policies that would improve the human resource component necessary for economic growth, such as education or health, and also those policies that would reduce the scope for the poor to become dependent, such as agricultural subsidies and micro finance. Therefore, there was very little support for policies such as cash transfers or old age pensions that respondents believed would lead to laziness or dependency.

Further analysis of respondents' policy choices reveals a connection between these views and their views of the causes of poverty (see Chapter 6). Elite perceptions of the causes of poverty point to poverty as a problem of insufficient growth. Inevitably, 'Solutions are medium-to-long-term with no real expectation of immediate impacts on the well-being of the poor, and are focused on fostering self-reliance at some future unspecified time rather than on guaranteeing minimum levels of well-being in the present' (Hossain, 2003: 76). Thus poverty is not a matter of urgency or priority, and might be eclipsed as a problem by the need for national development. However, we may conclude that Malawian elites believe that efficacious and feasible means exist to reduce poverty. There is a widely shared belief in education and economic growth as the best means of reducing poverty.

The second section of this chapter discussed the extent to which respondents feared the negative externalities of poverty, such as crime, insurrection and health threats. 'The rise of welfare policies in Western Europe can be interpreted as the combined result of decisions made by rationally oriented elites to protect themselves against public evils, plus the active engagement of morally committed ideologues' (Reis, 1999:135). Therefore, social policy was prioritised and effectively implemented following a combination of ideological and pragmatic concerns (Reis, 2005). Respondents' perceptions indicate some concern for individual negative consequences of poverty, such as crime and costs associated with the extended family, but no real concern for collective negative consequences of poverty, such as insurrection or health threats. Respondents were aware that there was a correlation between poverty and disease, but felt insulated because they believed that something was being done; that when there was an outbreak of disease, it affected the poor and not them; and that they could easily access private health care or go abroad for treatment.

In relation to crime, respondents did not feel that the more serious crime was linked to poverty, and where crime did threaten their private property and personal security, individualised responses such as private security were utilised to reduce this threat. The possibility of insurrection as a response to poverty solicited no fear amongst the respondents, as they argued that the personal characteristics of the poor made this impossible. Respondents were more worried about other elites using the poor for their own ends.

Support for kin or the extended family seemed to represent a threat to elite welfare, but at the same time gave them a sense of security. Even though this threat was not similar to those threats that moved elites to action in developed countries, this view suggested an awareness of the negative externalities of poverty and a sense of social interdependence between respondents and the poor. Respondents' sense of responsibility towards the poor was met through support towards kin rather than through redistributive policies led by the state, supported with state taxes. Thus respondents lacked a sense of co-responsibility for action as they placed the responsibility for public action on the state whilst seeking private means for mitigating the negative consequences of poverty and the poor on their welfare (Reis, 2005; Clarke and Sison, 2005). The respondents appeared to have some belief in the principle of social citizenship as the best corrective measure to poverty (see Reis, 2005) and appeared not to support a universal right of citizens to an extensive set of state guaranteed social and economic provisions.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.0 Introduction

This thesis employed De Swaan's theory of 'social consciousness' to examine elite attitudes towards poverty and the poor in Malawi, in order to understand how these might influence elite's attitudes towards pro-poor policy. This final chapter discusses the wider implications of the analysis of these attitudes on understanding the politics of poverty in Malawi. The main argument is that the political processes of patronage have underpinned the institutional arrangements within which pro-poor policies have been implemented and shaped the nature of state-society relations in Malawi.

The Chapter proceeds as follows. Section 9.1 reflects on some methodological issues that underpinned this study. Responding to the study's research questions, section 9.2 states the findings of this study. Section 9.3, which is divided into two sections, discusses the broader implications of the study. Section 9.4 critiques the study's framework in relation to similar studies carried out in other contexts. Section 9.5 concludes the Chapter and discusses issues for further research.

9.1 Malawian Elites: Poverty and Politics

This thesis has taken into account two major challenges in the way in which elites are conceptualised within the literature on Malawi. First, is a methodological problem pertaining to how we study and discuss elites, and their role in the politics of pro-poor policy. In Malawi, theories of elite influence are inspired by a public choice analysis of politics that views political action as driven by the rational pursuit of self-interest (Moore, 1999:37). Consequently, the dominant conceptualization of elites in Malawi is one that emphasises their pursuit of particularistic and personal interests over the national interest (Cammack, 2011). Hence, the development community treats Malawian elites as a force to be co-opted or circumvented in the implementation of policy (Dicaprio, 2011; Moore, 1999).

The implication is that a development paradigm, in the development community, has emerged that sees pro-poor policies as likely to result in conflict and generate opposition from elites, who are likely to wish to redirect policies towards patronage or clientelistic interests. Consequently, policymakers and aid donors in Malawi have initiated pro-poor policies through consultations with, and mobilisation of, the poor; and the pattern of programme aid or budget support has incorporated conditionalities in order to reduce resource redirection by elites (Moore, 1999). However, labelling of Malawian elites, by the development community, as simply self-interested leads to a failure to understand the social incentives and behavioural characteristics that lead them to implement policies in a manner that addresses, or fails to address, the needs of the poor (Dicaprio, 2011).

The second problem that underpins this research relates to the points made above. Despite agreement amongst development practitioners that Malawian elites are self-interested, there is no attempt to understand how these interests can be aligned with national objectives in a way that makes national policies effective and sustainable. As Moore (1999) argues, there is scope for elites to gain, or believe they gain, from implementing policies that reduce poverty. Moore provides an interpretation of self-interest that goes beyond the narrow economic understanding, arguing that elites may feel morally obligated to reduce poverty, but in doing so, may themselves positively benefit (1999).

Conversely, in seeking to understand the role of elites in reducing poverty there is a lack of agreement in the literature on who constitutes members of the elites. Because of the centralisation of power and the constriction of political space under the one-party state, the literature on elites in Malawi has referred to an inner circle of ruling elites, such as the executive, parliamentarians and bureaucrats, thereby excluding elites from within civil society organisations, donor organisations, the media, the private sector, academics, and INGOs. However, in contemporary, liberalised Malawi, the members of the inner circle of the ruling elite are no longer the sole actors with responsibility for poverty reduction. Thus one contribution this study makes is to a widening perception of who exactly is part of the elite.

The two problems highlighted above were addressed in the process of collecting and analyzing data. De Swaan's (1988; 2005) theory of 'social consciousness', was used to analyse the ways in which poverty affects elites and interpret their efforts to control it. This type of analysis helped me to go beyond the dominant view of elites as materially self-interested individuals to a notion of interest that encompassed both material and moral motivations.

The aim was not to determine whether elite perceptions were wrong or right, in line with the dominant thinking in the international community, but rather to determine whether these existing perceptions helped to make visible the broader processes at work in efforts to reduce poverty in Malawi (Hossain, 1999). To understand elite attitudes towards poverty in Malawi, interviews, documentary analysis, observations and questionnaires were used. As acknowledged in Chapter 4, establishing a representative sample of elites is difficult, making generalisation difficult. Nevertheless, the findings of this study broaden our understanding of the politics of pro-poor policy in Malawi.

9.2 Malawian Elites and Poverty Reduction

9.2.1 Main Findings: Causes of Poverty and Policy Choices

The first major research question looked at respondents' explanations of the causes of poverty and their policy preferences for poverty reduction. To answer this question, respondents' attitudes were put into two groups: first, those that created a factual assessment of the society in which they live; and second, those that identified a causal chain linking their (in)action to the living conditions of the poor and provided moral evaluations of what ought to be done about the poor's living conditions.

In this thesis I have argued that Malawian elites' lack of urgency towards poverty reduction cannot be explained by ignorance of poverty or indifference to the poor. Malawian elites are neither isolated from the poor nor ignorant of the extent and nature of poverty; nor do they believe that the poor are entirely to

blame for the presence of poverty in Malawi. Rather, the respondents to the survey demonstrated strong personal ties with the poor, which was not surprising given that Malawi is still a traditional society where kinship and patronage ties are an important part of social life. Despite this poverty was not considered to be a problem requiring immediate action using all available initiatives. Instead, there was a preference for policies such as education, subsidies, and growth policies that would address processes of national development and enable the poor to help themselves. There was minimal support for policies aimed at direct redistribution, such as taxation of the wealthy or cash transfers. In effect, the respondents supported pro-poor policies directed at the active rather than the inactive poor believing that the poor had developed attitudes that left them unable to take advantage of economic opportunities. Thus, the poor had become resigned to poverty and dependent on handouts from kinship and patronage networks. Even though respondents acknowledged that structural impediments existed and economic opportunities were few, they argued that the poor's attitude was negative, compared to the non-poor, keeping them – and the country – trapped in poverty.

These findings substantiate the argument that perceptions influence policy preferences. Respondents' theories regarding the poor's behaviour are dominant in explaining policy choices. The theory that the poor easily become dependent and lazy was the main explanation for the lack of support for cash transfers, whereas support for education resulted from the view that it would change the consciousness of poor people who were seen to lack an innovative spirit and have a fatalistic attitude (Reis and Moore, 2005). However, the respondents seemed to contradict themselves in that when discussing poverty generally, they are reluctant to overtly blame the poor for their condition, arguing that the poor they know personally, through kinship and patronage networks, were hardworking individuals who deserved assistance. This is not surprising as the respondents are themselves conversant with a largely donor-driven discourse on poverty that shuns explanations of poverty that primarily blame the poor. But it is clear that respondents' ideas about the character of the poor in terms of dependency, laziness and fatalistic attitudes, help to explain their lack of support for cash transfers, even

if the interview data and observations shows that they seem to feel the need to apologize for these views.

9.2.2 Main Findings: Elements of 'Social Consciousness' amongst Malawian Elites

The second major research question sought to examine whether elements of 'social consciousness' were present amongst the survey respondents and how these influenced action or inaction in relation to poverty reduction. In order to address this question, a set of perceptions was assessed: belief in social interdependence; a sense of responsibility; and that feasible means of reducing poverty existed.

The study found that Malawian elites in the study did not seem to feel threatened by the social ills that the presence of poverty presents, such as crime, disease and social insurrection – ills that led to decisive public action among nineteenth century European elites. The respondents believed that they could defend themselves individually from the impact of social ills, by hiring private security if threatened by crime, or using private health care if threatened by disease. The character of the poor, and their own ties with the poor, led respondents to believe that social insurrection was not likely to occur in Malawi, at least, not in the short-term. Thus, applying De Swaan's framework to this data leads us to conclude that Malawian elites may not feel a similar sense of interdependence with the poor, judging by their lack of fear of crime, disease and rebellion. However, the evidence shows that the negative externalities of poverty in Malawi are felt directly through kinship and patronage networks. Although the reasons for interdependence are different in the Malawian context, interdependence is still there as an important factor, but perhaps much more individualised than in nineteenth century Europe. Nevertheless, these views reflect the Malawian respondents' propensity to have more fear of social ills that have personal negative consequences (e.g. through extended family) rather than those that have collective consequences (e.g. health threats and social uprisings) a result of the fairly recent fragmentation of Malawian society along kinship lines (Reis, 2005). This means that even though respondents argued that extended family obligations posed a threat, they also

seemed to suggest that these obligations provided them with security from the challenges posed by the poor collectively.

Second, I argue that the idea of a fragmented social identity has negative consequences for pro-poor policies in Malawi as elite's sense of responsibility are limited to individualised responses to the poor. This is significantly different from nineteenth century European philanthropic tradition of charity donations that helped the poor uplift themselves out of poverty. Responses to poverty being promoted by respondents were often structured along patronage lines, such that individuals are first responsible to those closest to them. The use of a 'culture of poverty' perspective to explain the poor's responsibility for their own poverty further undermined respondents sense of responsibility towards changing the structures that perpetuate poverty in Malawi.

Third, the study found that Malawian elites do believe that effective means to reduce poverty exist. There was considerable agreement in education as the best means of reducing poverty in Malawi. In addition to education, other initiatives such as agricultural subsidies, micro-finance, health and public works were preferred over cash transfers, old-age pensions and food distribution. Therefore, one component of De Swaan's framework was partially found: a belief that feasible and effective means exist to reduce poverty. However, in comparison to nineteenth century Europe, this could be said to be a partially developed and fragmented 'social consciousness' as the respondents' concern for the poor is localized to their immediate social networks and extended family. It thus fails to conform to the universalistic quality of De Swaan's framework. The development of a 'social consciousness' in Europe was a long process accompanied by many social, economic and political changes that allowed the movement from charity to welfare programmes; however, Malawi is being asked by donors to adopt a version of the welfare state, with cash transfers in particular, but without the sorts of social, economic and political changes that brought about social consciousness in Europe. Therefore, De Swaan's framework is less useful in parts (see section 9.4) but useful in

flagging up donor assumptions about the course of development in developing countries.

9.3 Broader Implications

This section outlines some implications of the argument presented in this thesis for understanding Malawian politics and policy, and theory of policy-making.

9.3.1 Implications for Understanding Malawian Politics and Policy

The literature on politics and policy in Malawi, in particular pro-poor policy, is silent on how elite attitudes towards poverty and the poor can explain the variance between stated pro-poor objectives and pro-poor outcomes. Most pro-poor interventions in Malawi have been based on a belief that once elites are aware of poverty statistics then policies will be geared towards reducing the numbers of those in poverty; and that interventions that have worked elsewhere can be implemented in the context of Malawi. As argued in section 9.2 the respondents' knowledge of the facts of poverty did not necessarily translate into support for pro-poor policies.

In Malawi, the political processes of patronage which have been prevalent since independence in 1964 and have provided the environment in which the rules of the game have emerged and poverty reduction initiatives undertaken. Politics have been personalistic, based on money, centred on a big man and mainly about negotiating development for localized constituencies (Englund, 2002). From 1964, Kamuzu Banda practiced a restricted form of patronage, thus the rules regarding how resources were distributed towards patronage networks, discouraged a free-for-all patronage where corruption and theft of public resources were common. Rather, Banda allocated power and wealth to his loyal supporters by directing rents towards productive sectors and into the hands of those who would use them most productively (Kelsall et al, 2010; Meinhardt and Patel, 2003).

The political processes that underpinned and accompanied democratization in 1994, were much more driven by competing patronage networks as Banda's centralized system broke down, and the institutional arrangements that emerged, especially in relation to competitive elections, produced uncertainty amongst the ruling elite. In order to gain political support, the elite had to negotiate with the wider array of interests in society through the disbursement of rents. Under the Muluzi-led government, there was widespread corruption, rent-seeking and rent-generating activities. Thus, rents were directed at unproductive sectors and populist policies such as promises of free food, seeds, fertilizer, shoes, houses, bicycles, and credit with serious implications for achieving stated objectives of poverty reduction (Fozzard and Simwaka, 2002; Cammack, 2004; DFID, 2004).

The findings of this study contributes to the literature that questions the idea that democratization changes and shapes the logic of patronage, reducing rent-seeking and rent-generating behavior (see Kelsall, 2008; Kelsall et al. 2011; Erdmann, 2006; Van de Walle, 2007), and demonstrates that patronage may be intensified by multiparty elections, especially in political contexts where institutions are unstable, the rules of the game are unclear and not universally agreed, and political parties become personal fiefdoms. Malawian respondents' ideas about moral responsibility towards the poor and support towards kin, is a contemporary version of patronage, where multiparty elections allow access to resources, but one needs to vote for a person who is their kin. What thus exists in Malawi is a quasi-democracy infused with the logic of patronage.

The persistent political processes of patronage have interacted with different forms of the state and ruling elites, which has led to varied socio-economic outcomes. For instance, between 1964 and 1979, Banda's patronage resulted in unprecedented levels of development, improvements in infrastructure, fixed capital formation and worker productivity. Between 1980 and 1993, as Banda grew old and lost control of the patronage system, patronage became directed at short-term policy issues and this trend continued into 1994-2003, such that policy was entirely driven by patronage. Needless to say, the impact on socio-

economic conditions was negative as growth faltered and poverty grew. Between 2004 and 2009, Mutharika reigned in the excesses of the patronage system and reoriented the system towards long-term policy, which resulted in food security and positive economic growth (Cammack, 2007; Booth et al, 2006). This trend was reversed between 2010 to April, 2012, and patronage was directed at short-term needs, in particular patronage was directed at securing the president's brother's presidential candidacy in 2014. This suggests that in cases where strong patronage exists public policies are weak and can reinforce socio-economic and political inequalities, but where political processes of patronage are effectively managed and respond to long-term policy vision, patronage may be more responsive to citizen concerns and deliver services.

The finding that respondents feel compelled to support their kin and patronage networks, financially or otherwise, contributes to an understanding of the legitimacy elites need to acquire within the moral order (Hossain, 1999). Malawian respondents emphasised the importance of taking their responsibilities towards kinship or patronage ties as a matter of morality but also 'life and death' for the poor. However, the ability of elites to take responsibility for their clients, by taking sick people to the hospital, providing food, transport at funerals, purchasing of coffins, financial support at weddings, and the provision of school fees (see Chapter Seven), is also seen as a measure of leadership quality.

Conversely, the way patronage politics structure the rules of the game can be an obstacle to poverty reduction and horizontal class alignment (Hyden, 2007). I argue, however, that accepting uncritically that patronage politics is an obstacle to horizontal class alignment is problematic considering the argument in the literature on Malawi that these ties are disappearing due to commercialization, reflecting a shift from a 'moral' to a 'market' economy (Devereux, 1999). Despite these assertions the study has found that patron-client relations are still appear to be the basis on which state-society relations are based.

The research uncovered a belief in the idea of social harmony with the poor, who are linked to elites through vertical ties and believed to be passive, dependent and ignorant, making the possibility of social uprisings impossible. The idea that these ties smooth social relationships is a romanticized version of patron-client relations and may also explain why poverty has not been considered a matter requiring urgent action (Hossain, 1999). Elite attitudes provide useful insight into the political processes of patronage; although this moral economy of affection may eventually fade, it remains important in the absence of state provision of public goods (Hyden, 2007).

I therefore argue that in implementing pro-poor policy we need to identify elite motivations and interests, and appeal to these because developmental outcomes will not necessitate a huge break from the political processes of patronage, which are deeply entrenched and embedded and provide the essential operating codes for politics in Malawi (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Chinsinga, 2007). A majority of the Malawian poor are not captured by formal political processes and instead solve their problems through informal political processes that rely on patronage and clientelism (Hyden, 2007). In the absence of state support, patron-client ties offer the poor the chance of survival and the transitory poor a means of avoiding destitution (Hickey and Bracking, 2005). As the findings show, although the ties between elites and the poor are that of master and servant, they are not always experienced as exploitative; rather they are reciprocal forms of exchange that go beyond goods and services to personal favors and obligations (Platteau, 1995). Thus, kinship and patron-client ties remain the primary locus of political obligation and moral imperative but are also a basis of elite power. Within these rules of the game, elites feel obligated to provide financially for their kin even if they find this personally challenging (see Chapter Seven and Eight; Kelsall, 2008; Law, 2010).

The lack of fear from collective consequences of poverty (see section 9.2) reflects in some ways the poor's minimum expectation – food security- on which legitimacy in Malawian politics rests (Cammack, 2006;

Sahley, 2006; Harrigan, 2003; Khaila et al, 1999). Therefore, the persistence of poverty or inequality is seen as an unlikely cause for social uprisings among the poor. It is not a coincidence that Banda emphasized agriculture and crop inspection tours to ensure food security; Muluzi introduced the seed and fertilizer inputs programme; and Bingu went against donor prescription and introduced the inputs subsidy programme. This study contributes to the body of knowledge that pays closer attention to how the underlying processes of patronage and the consequent legitimacy it provides, play out in the planning and implementation of pro-poor policies.

The analysis of elite attitudes indicates that patronage has structured institutions in a way that results in personalised patron-clientelistic responses to the poor, rather than redistributive action by the state financed by higher taxes. Therefore, support towards the poor fails to conform to the universalistic quality that public policies require. Even if poverty reduction is the stated long term policy objective, as many of the respondents indicate, and policies are formulated to this end, implementation is determined by the opportunity to support kinship and patronage ties (Cromwell and Chintedza, 2005).

The idea that state-society relations in Malawi are 'harmonious' provides a fresh perspective on the politics of poverty. Under Kamuzu Banda, repression served to enforce compliance with the president's objectives. Therefore, any attempt to understand the contemporary politics of poverty in Malawi has to explain the peculiar pattern of submissiveness to authority in the face of inequality, deep poverty, exploitation of the poor and a society with little evidence of real propensity towards rebellion. The failure of the poor to provide a check on elites is based on a large power distance between elites and the poor and relations that are based on patronage (Booth et al, 2006). This illuminates the concept of *ubunthu* (I am because we are): in Malawian society belonging to a network is important, with both the well-off and the poor included in these networks. The study found that these networks could be an important opportunity for influencing elites to become more pro-poor as a locus of social

engagement between the elite and the poor.

Therefore, the problem “lies in the logic of a situation in which the socio-economic structure is as much a constraint on political practice as political practice is on socio-economic structures” (Booth and Therkildsen, 2012: 10). As a result elite’s decisions respond to incentives that change slowly and do not benefit the poor in the short term. Awareness of these incentives is important and this may mean targeting areas of mutual interests among the elite. For instance, Malawian respondents have mutual interest on policies that contribute directly to economic growth, including education and agriculture subsidies, but not cash or food transfers.

9.3.2 Implications for Policy-Making Theory

This section discusses key implications of elite attitudes towards poverty and the poor on policy-making theory.

There are many theories of policy-making, including rational, incremental, political systems, pluralist, elite and group theory which, as Chapter 2 indicated, are divided between linear and interactive models of policy-making. The linear model assumes that policy-making follows specific stages, involving a set of policy demands that are then processed by the political system into laws, programmes and public goods. The interactive model sees the policy-making process as complex and dynamic, involving negotiating, bargaining and compromise between different interests. This makes policy-making an essentially political process, with different actors, who bring to the process different ideas and interests. Because the policy-making process has to accommodate competing demands, it is seen as subject to inherent tensions. Thus policy is seen as limited to providing minimum social and economic functions and maintaining the life of the elites (Grindle, 1999; Hill, 1993; Easton, 1957; Lasswell, 1951).

These approaches to policy-making are premised on stable institutions and agreement on the rules of the game. By contrast, Malawi has an unstable socio-political environment and a lack of agreement on the rules of the game such that informal politics of patronage and clientelism determine political influence and resource allocation over formal institutions. As a result, the policy-making process in Malawi possesses a distinctiveness of its own, making these approaches irrelevant for a comprehensive understanding of policy-making.

The assessment of elite attitudes shows that policy-making in Malawi does not follow a logical path. Even when an issue gets on the agenda, it does not necessarily lead to the formation of appropriate policies. For instance, although Malawian elites have deep knowledge of the scale and severity of poverty, identifying both structural and behavioural causes of poverty, their policy response is not to use all available means to reduce poverty. Rather they opt for policies that address issues of underdevelopment generally, which would address poverty in the long-term but do little in the short-term. In addition, respondents' ideas about the character (lazy, dependant, passive) of the poor seems to lead them to resist policies that target the poor specifically, with short-term targeted inputs, as some poor people are seen as undeserving of attention or resources (Bird, 2008).

I therefore argue that the influence of policy inputs (demands) is not significant, where policies are rarely a response to the demands arising out of the environment (political, socio-economic and physical) (Jenkins, 1993). Malawi's political processes of patronage have structured policy-making in such a way that it responds to particularistic needs. Therefore, the scope for people to make demands or support the policy process under these existing rules and practices are minimal. The poor are to be unable to organize horizontally, preferring to maintain vertical ties that guarantee access to the necessities of life. Put simply, they are seen as not 'biting the hand that feeds them'.

The study also suggests that policy-making should aim to understand why political processes of patronage lead to personalised commitment towards pro-poor policy rather than civic notions of responsibility. Understanding this is crucial to understanding why attempts to rationalise policy, especially agriculture sector policies, have failed. For instance, attempts to rationalise the Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) have failed to garner support for changing broader institutional and industry-protecting policies (Cammack, 2004). Elite attitudes analysed in this study suggest that obligations towards patronage and kinship networks in terms of food, which also serves to legitimise elite status and influence, result in lack of support for rationalising ADMARC, even if this has potentially wider implications for the nation as a whole

Conversely, although the policy-making process generally contains different policy actors who affect various stages of the process, Malawi's financial position has produced a significant policy actor – donors. This means that Malawian policy-makers respond to donor influence in terms of policy priority, and the allocation of resources. Donors are believed to have structured the policy-making process in such a way that they have become part of the technocracy that manages the processes necessary for the implementation of various policies in Malawi (Sahley et al, 2005; Rubin, 2008) and that policies are made in order to respond to donor dictates. Thus, the distinctiveness of Malawi's policy-making process stems from both the impact of patronage and donor influence. This means that interactive and linear approaches only provide broad outlines for understanding the policy-making process but not a comprehensive analysis of the policy context.

The analysis has therefore generated new insights for policy-making theory in relation to poor, aid dependent developing countries like Malawi. Dominant policy-making theories, like those based on the linear model, fail to take into account the broader political processes that structure state-society relations but also constrain or shape the actions of policy actors. In addition intimate knowledge of a particular

country context is useful for explaining policy design and outcomes, areas that linear models of policy-making fail to capture. Therefore, in analyzing obstacles to development, policy-making theories must identify the political processes that serve elite interests at the expense of the majority.

9.4 The Utility of the Framework of 'Social Consciousness'

Two points make the application of De Swaan's framework of 'social consciousness' to Malawi problematic. First, there are many pro-poor initiatives in Malawi but these do not amount to a welfare state in the sense of nineteenth century welfare systems in Europe. Second, unlike Malawi, the history of welfare states in nineteenth century Europe was connected to the emergence of the nation-state. Therefore, a criticism of using De Swaan's framework to interpret present day political processes of development, is that the theory of 'social consciousness' loses its analytical power beyond the historical events of nineteenth century Europe. However, De Swaan (2005:188) argues that applying this theory to non-western countries does not imply that they follow the same path as western countries. Therefore, it would be a great loss for social science if the ideas, questions and philosophies assembled about Europe were not brought to bear upon the study of non-western societies, as a true test of any theory is its applicability outside its original context.

This framework has been usefully employed to study elite perceptions of poverty and inequality in countries with varying historical and social contexts, such as Brazil, Phillipines, Haiti, Bangladesh and South Africa (Reis and Moore, 2005). These studies found that: first, elites agree that education is the best means for reducing poverty. Support for education is either for instrumental reasons, for instance 'it can raise or change the consciousness of people still hampered by traditional ways of thinking; promote entrepreneurship; or provide specific vocational and technical skills' (Reis and Moore, 2005: 20); or as an empowering mechanism in which the poor realise their power potential, and organize to

demand their rights and participate in development (Hossain and Moore, 2002). Second, with the exception of Bangladesh, elites agree that the state should be primarily responsible for reducing poverty as it has the moral responsibility. In contrast, Bangladeshi elites believe that civil society organisations are better actors in poverty reduction than the state. These preferences can be explained by the degree of institutionalization of the state. Brazil, and South Africa have a history of a centralised state, with a central role in development, whereas in Bangladesh CSOs employ more people than the state (Reis, 2010).

Third, across the different countries, except Brazil, helping the poor is part of a patronage tradition that is strongly institutionalized and is accepted as part of one's social and political obligations, often rewarded with social prestige. For Brazilian elites, personal patronage is less visible and less attached to prestige for the patron (Clarke and Marites, 2000; Reis, 2005). Lastly, despite awareness among elites of poverty and moral responsibility towards the poor, there is no real inclination towards support on a universal basis. The elites of these countries seem content to wait for the long-term 'trickle down' from growth in the national economy to the poor (Reis and Moore, 2005). This perspective does not commit to any kind of welfare measure; on the contrary, it relieves elites of any obligation towards the poor' (De Swaan, 2005: 192).

Although the thesis uncovers the limitations of De Swaan's framework, it also uncovers its ongoing usefulness. De Swaan's framework provided a means for posing the right questions, a way for examining elite motivations and debates around poverty in their historical context so as to understand why provisions to the poor are made, the priority elites attach to poverty reduction and identifying policy areas where elite interests coincide (see Hossain, 1999; Deacon 1997).

The findings of this study fail to demonstrate that the negative drivers (crime, disease and social uprising) that pushed elites to implement many public health and sanitation reforms in nineteenth century Europe,

have the same effect in Malawi (Hossain and Moore, 2005: 202). Rather, the political processes of patronage shape the pattern of interdependence between elites and the poor, such that policies are directed at particular territorial units with whom elites have ties. This makes it unlikely that public policies similar to those European elites initiated in response to poverty will emerge, because the kinship model effectively buys off the poor.

According to the findings of this study, De Swaan's (1988), theory of 'social consciousness' needs to be adjusted in order to account for historical and socio-cultural factors in Malawi, in particular the political processes of patronage that structure state-society relations and institutional arrangements that either reduce poverty or not.

9.5 Issues for Further Research and Conclusion

In considering the implications of the research results, the limitations of the study have been kept in mind. It is notable that studies of elites are often based on small samples, due to the very definition of an elite group and a limited response rate. This sample is not representative of the general population, with the result that the external validity of the findings and the possibility of generalising from them are limited to similar elite populations in different settings. However, the study is a starting point for understanding ways of fostering elite commitment and collective action towards poverty reduction. The study has unearthed some interesting trends: first is the significance of elite attitudes towards poverty and their implication for pro-poor policy; second is the lack of urgency elites feel about poverty reduction, which is reflected in their lack of fear of social ills that may emanate from poverty and the poor; and finally, the importance of kinship and patronage ties. Therefore, further research would further pull-out specific collective action problems at the national, sectoral and local levels as well as research into the role of elites in initiating collective action in order to effectively address these problems.

The study also suggests that, although the literature portrays personalized relationships in African society as detrimental to development, these relationships can become instrumental in contributing to progressive outcomes. Further study could contribute to these findings, most notably examining the differences between elite perceptions of poverty and those of the poor (such as those carried out under the 'Voices of the Poor' studies); between elected representatives and high-level bureaucrats; between local and national elites; and between elite perceptions and the perceptions of Malawians in general. These would enable further analysis of ways to foster commitment to poverty reduction and to building institutions that could ensure the poor's participation in development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Observation Check List

This checklist has been designed to observe elite behaviours linked to poverty reduction and the poor. The observations served as a check against participants subjecting reporting on what they believe and do, as well as gaining an understanding of how elites discuss issues of poverty and the poor amongst themselves. The observation checklist was based on the face-to-face interview questions

| Criteria | Comments |
|---|----------|
| Identification Elite perceptions of the poor (their nature, numbers and locations); How different from themselves do elites consider the poor to be? In which areas do the elites identify with the poor? | |
| Interdependence The impact of poverty on elite welfare; How threatening or how promising in respect to their own position do elites consider the poor to be? | |
| Generalized responsibility The priority given to poverty reduction; Do elites believe something should be done to improve the position of the poor? | |
| Policy action Which policies do elites believe can improve the lives of the poor and reduce poverty? | |

Appendix 2: Interview Invitation Sample Letter



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

International Development Department
School of Public Policy, Edgbaston, B15 2TT United Kingdom

28 March, 2008

Dear Participant,

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED FOR RESEARCH

My name is Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo, a PhD Candidate at the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. My research seeks to examine *the role of Elites in the politics of pro-poor policy in Malawi*. As part of my research I am required to gather primary data in support of my thesis. You have been selected to participate in this study. Your contribution is vital for the successful completion of my degree and I therefore count on your assistance.

Sir/Madam, I would like to further emphasize the importance of this research in understanding elite-level politics and policy-level discussions about how best to support public policies that help the poor in Malawi. The study is also significant to not only public policy and implementation but importantly to the Malawian nation struggling to engender new political and economic values amongst its leaders, especially their commitment and political will to push forward Malawi's developmental agenda. Therefore the study will serve as a theoretical and empirical framework for understanding and developing pro-poor policies that are sensitive to the political dimensions of poverty and how best pro-poor alliances can be created amongst the elites in Malawi.

This study is an academic exercise; your responses will be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Attached is an introductory letter from my University and a time schedule from which you can choose or suggest a date and time that suit you.

Thanking you in anticipation of your favourable cooperation. I can be contacted on [REDACTED] or email address: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,
Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo

Appendix 3: Sample Time Schedules for Interviews

INTERVIEWS ON THE ROLE OF ELITES IN THE POLITICS OF PRO-POOR POLICY

SCHEDULE

| May/JUNE (Date) | AM | AM | PM | Alternative Date/ time |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------|
| 26 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 27 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 28 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 29 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 30 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 2 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 3 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 4 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 5 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |
| 6 | 08.00am | 10.00am | 02.00pm | |

PLEASE PICK OR SUGGEST AN APPROPRIATE TIME/DATE THAT IS SUITABLE FOR YOU. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SUGGEST ALTERNATIVE TIMES OR DATES WITHIN THE MONTH OF MAY. I CAN BE CONTACTED ON [REDACTED].

THANK YOU

Appendix 4: Research Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Elite perceptions of poverty and poor people in Malawi

This questionnaire is designed to gather information as to the values, beliefs and ideas that shape perception on social problems in society particularly the issue of poverty and poor people. Please tick as appropriate.

SECTION A

1. Sex: Male [] Female []

2. Age on last birthday

3. Which organization/institution do you work for?.....

4. Marital Status
 - a) Single []
 - b) Married []
 - c) Cohabiting []
 - d) Divorced []
 - e) Separated []
 - f) Widowed []

5. Current Position held.....

6. What is your highest level of education attained?
 - a) Secondary and lower []
 - b) Bachelors degree []
 - c) Higher National Diploma []
 - d) Masters degree []
 - e) Doctoral degree and Higher []
 - f) Other

7. How long have you worked for this organization?.....

SECTION B

8. What are the main obstacles to democracy in Malawi? Circle yes or no.
- a) Low educational levels of the population [yes][no]
 - b) High levels of poverty [yes][no]
 - c) Lack of party political tradition/ideology [yes][no]
 - d) Incompetence of those in power [yes][no]
 - e) Selfishness of the elites [yes][no]
 - f) Political Clientelism [yes][no]
 - g) Too much power in the hands of the executive [yes][no]
 - h) High inflation rate [yes][no]
9. In your view, what are the most important problems facing the country today? Circle yes or no.
- a) Inflation [yes][no]
 - b) Education and Health [yes][no]
 - c) Poverty [yes][no]
 - d) Governability [yes][no]
 - e) Income distribution [yes][no]
 - f) Political patronage/ clientelism [yes][no]
 - g) Corruption [yes][no]
 - h) Behaviour of the elites [yes][no]
 - i) Moral crisis [yes][no]
 - j) Unemployment [yes][no]
 - k) Foreign dependency [yes][no]
 - l) Other social issues [yes][no]
 - m) Other Political issues [yes][no]
 - n) Other economic issues [yes][no]
10. Please indicate in your own view, what should be the nation's policy objectives in the medium term.
- a) Increase educational levels [yes][no]
 - b) Reduce the size of the state [yes][no]
 - c) Eliminate poverty and reduce inequality [yes][no]
 - d) Increase popular participation in political decisions [yes][no]
 - e) Preserve democracy [yes][no]

- f) Guarantee economic growth [yes][no]
- g) Integrate the economy into the international market [yes][no]
- h) Protect the environment [yes][no]
- i) Implement a social protection policy [yes][no]
- j) Keep order [yes][no]

11. What do you consider to be the cause of poverty?

- a) The government does not fulfill its social function [yes][no]
- b) Lack of political will to fight poverty [yes][no]
- c) Elites lack social sensitivity [yes][no]
- d) Insufficient economic development [yes][no]
- e) Monopolization of opportunities [yes][no]
- f) Corruption/patronage/clientelism [yes][no]
- g) Lack of effort on the part of the poor [yes][no]
- h) Other.....

12. Please indicate what you consider to be the main means of reducing poverty?

- a) Promote agrarian reform [yes][no]
- b) Increased spending on education and educational reforms [yes][no]
- c) Increase the efficiency of public social services [yes][no]
- d) Control population growth [yes][no]
- e) Deregulate the economy [yes][no]
- f) Increase social expenditure [yes][no]
- g) Introduce social protection for the poor [yes][no]
- h) Increase income tax [yes][no]

13. Which of the following social policies do you consider desirable and viable? Please indicate in the table below.

| POLICY | Viable & desirable | Desirable but not viable | Viable but not desirable | Neither Viable nor desirable |
|---|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Free and Universal Education | | | | |
| Fertiliser Subsidies | | | | |
| Cash transfers/ direct welfare transfers | | | | |
| Popular Housing Programmes | | | | |
| Public Works Programme | | | | |
| Old Age Pensions regardless of previous contributions | | | | |
| Child Benefits | | | | |
| Food Distributions Programmes | | | | |
| Unemployment Insurance | | | | |
| Free and Universal Access to Health services | | | | |
| Free University education | | | | |
| National safety Nets Programme | | | | |
| Micro finance | | | | |
| Minimum income for different age groups/ sectors | | | | |

14. Why do social policies fail to meet their objectives? Please list top five answers in order of priority.

- a) Bad planning/implementation [yes][no]
- b) Lack of political will or low priority [yes][no]
- c) Political &/or personal use of these policies [yes][no]
- d) Corruption [yes][no]
- e) Characteristics of the elite (selfishness, short-sightedness, authoritarian etc) [yes][no]

- f) Paternalistic &/or palliative nature of policies [yes][no]
- g) State concentrates on other activities(i.e. the state is too big and also too active in direct economic activities, thereby diverting human and capital resources from social areas) [yes][no]
- h) Lack of resource to implement social policies [yes][no]
- i) Lack of participation by civil society [yes][no]
- j) Structural economic problems [yes][no]
- k) Lack of private sector participation in implementation [yes][no]

15. What are the worst consequences of poverty in urban areas?

- a) Violence, crime and insecurity [yes][no]
- b) Dehumanization [yes][no]
- c) Risk of social conflict or social chaos [yes][no]
- d) Declining quality of life [yes][no]
- e) Unemployment [yes][no]
- f) Social misery [yes][no]
- g) Vicious circle of poverty [yes][no]
- h) Obstacles to development [yes][no]
- i) Housing problems (slums) [yes][no]
- j) Threat to democratic stability [yes][no]
- k) Encourages political opportunism [yes][no]

16. Which institution is ultimately responsible for anti-poverty action?

- a) Government [yes][no]
- b) Private sector [yes][no]
- c) Civil Society Organizations [yes][no]
- d) Donors [yes][no]
- e) Other.....

THANK YOU

Appendix 5: List of Interviewees

| Name of Respondent | Organisation | Date of Interview |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Member of Parliament | Malawi Parliament | 28/03/08 |
| 2. Member of Parliament | Malawi Parliament | 08/04/08 |
| 3. Member of Parliament | Malawi Parliament | 17/04/08 |
| 4. Minister | Public Sector | 07/05/08 |
| 5. Minister | Public Sector | 21/04/08 |
| 6. Minister | Public Sector | 15/04/08 |
| 7. Member of Parliament | Malawi Parliament | 16/04/08 |
| 8. Member of Parliament | Malawi Parliament | 06/05/08 |
| 9. Minister | Malawi Parliament | 30/04/08 |
| 10. Parliamentary Committee Member | Malawi Parliament | 31/03/08 |
| 11. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 17/04/08 |
| 12. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 02/05/08 |
| 13. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 17/04/08 |
| 14. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 05/05/08 |
| 15. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 05/05/08 |
| 16. Head of Section | Public Sector | 28/04/08 |
| 17. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 11/04/08 |
| 18. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 23/04/08 |
| 19. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 23/04/08 |
| 20. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 28/04/08 |
| 21. Principal Secretary | Public Sector | 02/05/08 |
| 22. Executive Director | Public Sector | 05/05/08 |
| 23. Chief Executive Officer | Private Sector | 13/05/08 |
| 24. Acting Executive Director | Private Sector | 12/05/08 |
| 25. Deputy Director | Private Sector | 12/05/08 |
| 26. Executive Director | Civil Society Organisation | 11/06/08 |
| 27. Managing Director | Civil Society Organisation | 06/05/08 |
| 28. National Coordinator | Civil Society Organisation | 06/05/08 |

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------|
| 29. Executive Director | Civil Society Organisation | 12/05/08 |
| 30. National Coordinator | Civil Society Organisation | 21/05/08 |
| 31. National Secretary | Civil Society Organisation | 07/05/08 |
| 32. Executive Director | Civil Society Organisation | 15/04/08 |
| 33. National Coordinator | Civil Society Organisation | 17/06/08 |
| 34. National Coordinator | Civil Society Organisation | 13/05/08 |
| 35. Director of Programmes | Civil Society Organisation | 07/04/08 |
| 36. Programme Director | Civil Society Organisation | 13/05/08 |
| 37. Bureau Chief | Media - Newspaper | 16/05/08 |
| 38. Regional Manager | Media - Newspaper | 09/04/08 |
| 39. Regional Manager | Media Institute | 16/04/08 |
| 40. Regional Manager | Media Agency - Newspaper | 09/05/08 |
| 41. Senior Reporter, Regional Controller | Media Agency - Radio | 19/05/08 |
| 42. General Manager | Media Agency - Radio | 15/05/08 |
| 43. Regional Manager | Media Agency - TV | 16/05/08 |
| 44. Resident Representative | Donor Agency | 25/05/08 |
| 45. Head of Policy | INGO | 24/04/08 |
| 46. Leader | Donor Agency | 05/06/08 |
| 47. Country Director | INGO | 27/05/08 |
| 48. Country Director | INGO | 24/04/08 |
| 49. Advocacy Manager | INGO | 27/05/08 |
| 50. Program Management Governance Specialist | Donor Agency | 06/06/08 |
| 51. Operations Manager | Donor Agency | 16/06/08 |
| 52. Lecturer | University of Malawi | 08/05/08 |

Appendix 6: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE: GENERAL ISSUES

1. Identification
 - Elite perceptions of the poor (their nature, numbers and locations)
 - How different from themselves do elites consider the poor to be? and
 - In which areas do the elites identify with the poor?
2. Interdependence
 - The impact of poverty on the elite
 - How threatening or how promising in respect to their own position do elites consider the poor to be?
3. Generalized responsibility
 - The priority given to poverty
 - Do elites believe something should be done to improve the position of the poor
4. Feasibility
 - Do elites consider that the conditions of poor people can be improved?
5. Policy action
 - Which policies do elites believe can improve the lives of the poor and reduce poverty?
6. Collective action
 - How do elites see effective coordination with their peers can be ensured?
 - How can non-collaboration by some peers be prevented?

INTERVIEW GUIDE SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

1. Elite perceptions of poverty and the poor – their nature, numbers and locations
 - What are your views on poverty in Malawi?
 - If you were to identify a person as being poor, what attributes would assist you in arriving at this conclusion?
 - Between the rural and urban areas of Malawi, where would you say the poor are located, especially in terms of visibility?
 - What percentage of Malawians do you consider to be poor?
 - Within this percentage of poor people, what categories can you identify in terms of severity of poverty?
 - In terms of inequality, how would you describe Malawi?
 - Which social groups are at risk of poverty in Malawi?
2. What do you consider to be the root causes of poverty in Malawi?
 - Why do you think poverty has persisted in Malawi?

- Do you think the behavior and attitudes of the poor people themselves contributes to the level of poverty in Malawi?
3. Impact of poverty on the elite
 - Do elites have contact with the poor? If so what type of contact exists?
 - How does poverty impact you personally and professionally? Do you consider direct assistance- for instance towards relatives or the poor in general - as a moral obligation for elites)
 - Do you think elites benefit from the persistence of poverty?
 - Is there a link between poverty and other social ills such as crime/disease/epidemics?
 - Do you believe that the behaviour of poor people has a bearing on elite welfare through crime, disease or the threat of social unrest?
 - Are you ever afraid that if the levels of poverty became unbearable poor people might rebel or carry out an uprising or cause political instability?
 4. Priority given to poverty
 - Do you think poverty or the plight of poor people is a concern for elites?
 - If elites are not concerned, is it because they have the resources to seek private education and medical assistance even the ability to travel abroad for treatment or education and other social needs?
 - Is or should the reduction of poverty be an operational priority?
 - Is poverty reduction a more urgent issue than other national problems of society particularly economic growth?
 5. Kinds of antipoverty action favoured
 - Do you feel that solutions exist to deal with poverty?
 - What solutions can you offer that would reduce poverty?
 - What is your opinion of social protection policies – cash transfers, subsidies and public works programmes?
 6. Collective action
 - Which institution in society is responsible for changing the plight of the poor?
 - Which other institutions can make the greatest contribution to poverty reduction efforts?
 - How can effective coordination amongst various actors in Malawi be ensured?
 7. Leadership
 - How important is leadership in ensuring that poverty reduction efforts are effectively implemented and bear the desired fruits?
 - How can Malawi foster a sense of nationalism, patriotism and unity particularly on reducing poverty despite the prevailing differences?

Appendix 7: Key Macroeconomic Indicators 1986 – 1992

| | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| % Growth Rate of Real GDP | 1.06 | 0.46 | 3.29 | 4.06 | 4.77 | 7.80 | -4.00 |
| Small Scale Agriculture | 1.03 | -0.86 | 0.50 | 0.16 | -3.44 | 15.79 | -25.33 |
| Estate Agriculture | -0.91 | 7.19 | 7.13 | 9.84 | 9.20 | 10.98 | 8.99 |
| Manufacturing | 2.22 | 0.94 | 3.27 | 8.50 | 11.25 | 3.00 | 2.69 |
| Investment % of GDP | 12.3 | 15.4 | 18.7 | 20.2 | 19.1 | 20.2 | 19.8 |
| Inflation Price Index | 14.8 | 26.8 | 31.4 | 15.7 | 11.5 | 11.9 | 22.7 |

Source: Harrigan (2001) 'From Dictatorship to Democracy: Economic Policy in Malawi, 1964 – 2000', p249

Appendix 8: Coping strategies of the vulnerable segments of society

| Strategy | Rural | Urban | National |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| Begging | 4.8 | 1.6 | 3.2 |
| Assistance from relatives | 67.6 | 45.3 | 56.5 |
| Assistance from friends | 40.7 | 50.9 | 45.8 |
| Charitable organisations | 1.4 | 3.0 | 2.2 |
| Street vending | 5.1 | 8.2 | 6.6 |
| Past savings | 13.2 | 28.6 | 20.8 |
| Working for food | 17.3 | 2.0 | 9.7 |
| Prostitution | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Selling used clothes | 1.2 | 4.5 | 2.8 |
| Buying second hand clothes | 13.9 | 17.5 | 15.7 |
| Sending kids to relatives | 3.9 | 1.8 | 2.8 |
| Other | 57.6 | 2.7 | 40.4 |

Source: Chilowa et al, 2000 'Social Policy in the Context of Economic Reforms: A Benchmark Survey Report', p61.

Appendix 9: Donor support to the budget

| Fiscal year | 2000/01 | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| % of total expenditure | 37.1 | 24.7 | 20.6 | 36.7 | 37.7 | 51.1 | 56.8 | 53.7 |
| As % of GDP | 9.2 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 12.2 | 12.4 | 18.1 | 19.0 | 17.4 |

Source: DFID, Is Malawi's fiscal crisis over? A Donor Perspective, paper presented at ECAMA Public Talk, 5th October 2007, Lilongwe

Appendix 10: Safety-net Conceptual Framework

| Poverty Status | Target Group | Intervention | Outcome |
|---|--|---|---------------------|
| Chronically (core) poor No capacity to generate income | - Chronically ill - Elderly - Disabled | Welfare transfers (food and assets) | Poverty Alleviation |
| | - Malnourished under 5s - Vulnerable Pregnant and lactating mothers | Targeted nutrition | |
| | - Rural poor with labour - Urban poor | Public works (asset and food) | |
| Transient (marginal) poor: ability of move out of poverty | Rural poor with land | Targetted inputs for productivity enhancement | Poverty reduction |

Source: Government of Malawi, 2002:65

Appendix 11: Needs and Social Protection Initiatives

| Poverty Group | Key Characteristics | Major Needs | Initiative |
|---------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Ultra Poor | Destitute or near destitute; very small asset base; small landholdings; per capita; single livelihood activity | Consumption | Cash transfers |
| | | | Food transfers |
| | | Education | Cash transfers |
| | | | Bursaries |
| | | | School feeding |
| | | Asset building | - |
| Micro credit | | | |
| Poor | Limited asset base | Consumption boost | Food for work |
| | | | Cash for work |
| | Single activity | Production boost | Inputs transfer |
| | | | Input subsidies |
| | Vulnerable to shocks | Asset building | Cash for work |
| | | | Micro-credit |
| | | Risk management | Social insurance |
| | | | Grain options |
| Transient | Vulnerable to shocks | Risk management | Social insurance |
| | | | Grain options |
| | Weak asset base | Asset building | Micro-credit |
| | | | Consumption boost |
| | | Production boost | Food for work |
| | Cash for work | | |
| | | Inputs transfers | |
| | Input subsidies | | |

Source: World Bank (2007) 'Malawi Social Protection Status Report'

Appendix 12: Timeline of National Poverty Policies in Malawi

| YEAR | POLICIES |
|------|--|
| 1971 | Statement of Development Policy 1 whose objectives were attaining an 8 per cent growth in the GDP, to be attained by increased public expenditure in agriculture and supporting sectors; raise the living standard of the rural population; and achieve a balanced development of the three regions of the country. |
| 1981 | Structural Adjustment Policies emphasising marketization, price controls and removal of farmer subsidies |
| 1987 | Statement of Development 2 was supported by Policy Framework Papers, national programme of action for survival, and protection and development of children. Reinstatement of the subsidy programme following food shortages |
| 1994 | Poverty Alleviation Policy which saw the introduction of the free primary education, Malawi Social Action Funds, EU Macro project, the Bakili Muluzi Initiative etc |
| 1998 | Vision 2020 is Malawi's long term development strategy whose aim was to ensure that by 2020 Malawi is secure, democratically mature, environmentally sustainable, self- reliant with equal opportunities for and active participation by all, having social services, vibrant cultural and religious values and a technologically driven middle- income economy. The PRSP and MEGS were derived from this strategy |
| 2000 | Malawi signs up to the Millennium Development Goals which has specific time targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, child mortality, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. |
| 2002 | The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy aim was to ensure sustainable poverty reduction through empowerment of the poor. It was built around four pillars: sustainable pro-poor growth; human capital development; improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable; and governance. |
| 2004 | The Malawi Economic Growth Strategy (MEGS) was a realisation that growth is essential for sustained poverty reduction initiatives. Key initiatives were in tobacco, tea, sugar, tourism, mining, manufacturing with particular emphasis to agro-processing, cotton, textiles and garments. |
| 2005 | Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) entitled from growth to prosperity is a five year plan to reduce poverty through sustained economic growth and infrastructure development. The MGDS has aligned its priorities along the MDGs which it considers important for improving the wealth and welfare of people in Malawi. |

Appendix 13: Results of the June 1999 parliamentary elections (number and percentage of seats by regions)

| Region | UDF | MCP | AFORD | INDEPENDENT |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| North | 1 (3%) | 4 (12%) | 28 (85%) | 0 |
| Centre | 16 (22%) | 54 (75%) | 1 | 1 |
| South | 76 (87%) | 8 (9%) | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 93 (48%) | 66 (34%) | 29 (15%) | 4 (2%) |

Source: Brown S, (2000) 'Malawi: The trouble with democracy', Southern Africa Report Archive, Vol 15, No.4

Appendix 14: Crossing the floor and Section 65

Since the transition to democracy in 1994, defections are not an uncommon occurrence in Malawi. Consequently, Section 65 of the 1995 constitution authorised the Speaker of Parliament to declare vacant a seat of any member of parliament who leaves the party on whose ticket he was elected and joins another party in the National Assembly. In 2001, the section was amended to include parties not represented in parliament to include associations whose objectives or activities are political in nature although this was successfully appealed. Between 1994 and 2005, section 65 was not invoked despite AFORD members of parliament being appointed to the UDF government's cabinet. However, the section was not applied to them because they did not formerly resign from their party (Cammack, 2007). However, the UDF applied section 65 to its members and AFORD members that broke away from UDF following disagreements over a bill to lengthen Muluzi's tenure to three five year terms. In its original intent, section 65 was meant to enforce accountability of MPs to their parties and constituents by barring them from crossing the floor without seeking a fresh electoral mandate. In practice, the section has not stopped MPs from changing party alliances nor made them accountable to their constituents (Cammack, 2007). The absence of the recall provision in the constitution has enabled MPs to change political parties with little consultation with their constituents and the section has been applied selectively.

Following the 2004 election, the subsequent breakaway of Bingu Wa Mutharika from the UDF and the formation of his own Democratic Progressive Party resurrected the issue of section 65. The failure to change the constitution to allow Bakili Muluzi a third term in office forced him to pick a successor for the 2004 elections. He opted to pick an outsider from the party, Dr Bingu Wa Mutharika whom in 1999 had had a failed attempt at the Presidency under the United Party. Although Mutharika was sold to Malawians as the solution to the economic crisis Malawi was facing, many believed that Muluzi was attempting to rule behind the scenes following his third-term bid failure. In early 2005 following his successful election as President, Mutharika quit the UDF, taking with him almost half of the UDF members, formed the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) within parliament and continued as head of state. MPs from UDF, MCP, Aford and independents joined the DPP but failed to give the party a working majority in parliament. The UDF, which had been pushed into opposition worked together with other opposition parties to impeach the president and failing to do so, asked the Speaker of parliament to declare vacant the seats of the DPP MPs basing their argument on section 65.

The issue of section 65 becomes magnified during the budget sessions of parliament. Since 2004 government has been in a standoff with the opposition who have refused to pass the budget unless certain seats in parliament are declared vacant. Government has had to use civil society organisations, traditional chiefs and the society at large to put pressure on opposition to pass the budget. This has at times worked as the budget has been seen as the main tool for the delivery of pro-poor policies. The DPP has therefore campaigned for the passing of the budget by arguing that the opposition is denying the citizens of Malawi development.

Section 65 serves political party interests rather than those of the citizens and the debate around it clearly illustrates the logic of neopatrimonial politics which enables disputes over the formal rules of the game. During its rule, the UDF government removed the only tool that really gave constituents power to remove MPs who were not working in their interests, which is the recall provision. Instead they left section 65 which was disregarded in the party's quest to boost its position in parliament. From 1994 until 2004, UDF took the position that regardless of section 65 it can appoint MPs from opposition into cabinet without consulting their party members. When UDF lost power to Mutharika, it was argued that any opposition member appointed into cabinet should lose their seats in accordance with section 65 (Cammack, 2007). On the other hand, despite Malawi's constitution clearly stating the rules under which a seat can be declared vacant and the court's ruling that Section 65 is valid, the speaker has failed to act on petitions to declare these seats vacant. The speaker in 2008 informed parliament that he was unable to rule on Section 65 stating 'my hands are tied' (Jamali, 2008).

Appendix 15: Inflation

| Year | Inflation, average consumer prices |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1980 | 19.19 |
| 1981 | 12 |
| 1982 | 9.524 |
| 1983 | 13.768 |
| 1984 | 19.745 |
| 1985 | 10.638 |
| 1986 | 14.183 |
| 1987 | 25.053 |
| 1988 | 33.838 |
| 1989 | 12.453 |
| 1990 | 11.857 |
| 1991 | 8.227 |
| 1992 | 23.236 |
| 1993 | 22.775 |
| 1994 | 34.659 |
| 1995 | 83.148 |
| 1996 | 37.733 |
| 1997 | 9.137 |
| 1998 | 29.779 |
| 1999 | 44.759 |
| 2000 | 29.597 |
| 2001 | 27.247 |
| 2002 | 17.43 |
| 2003 | 9.586 |
| 2004 | 11.424 |
| 2005 | 15.464 |
| 2006 | 13.904 |
| 2007 | 7.961 |
| 2008 | 8.71 |
| 2009 | 8.427 |
| 2010 | 7.41 |

Source: IMF (2011) 'World Economic Outlook'

Appendix 16: Case Summaries - Questionnaire

| Case Summaries | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | Sex of respondent | Age of respondent | Marital status | Employed by which organisation | Position | Highest level of education attained |
| 1 | | Male | 44 | married | Donor | Manager | Masters Degree |
| 2 | | Male | 47 | married | Academic | Researcher | Masters Degree |
| 3 | | Female | 34 | married | Donor | Programme Manager | Bachelors Degree |
| 4 | | Male | 50 | married | Donor | Programme Manager | Masters Degree |
| 5 | | Male | 55 | married | Donor | Manager | Masters Degree |
| 6 | | Male | 45 | married | Media | Manager | Higher National Diploma |
| 7 | | Male | 61 | married | Government | University Principal | Secondary or lower |
| 8 | | Male | 30 | married | CSO | Director | Bachelors Degree |
| 9 | | Male | 39 | married | CSO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 10 | | Male | 5 ¹⁰⁹ | married | Parliament | Member of parliament | Doctoral Degree and Higher |
| 11 | | Male | 51 | married | Government | Principal Secretary | Masters Degree |
| 12 | | Female | 62 | married | Parliament | Member of parliament | Higher National Diploma |
| 13 | | Male | 48 | married | CSO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 14 | | Female | 33 | married | CSO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 15 | | Male | 40 | married | Media | Director | Higher National Diploma |
| 16 | | Male | 43 | married | INGO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 17 | | Male | 30 | married | Donor | Manager | Doctoral Degree and Higher |
| 18 | | Male | 46 | married | INGO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 19 | | Male | 58 | married | Donor | Deputy Representative | Masters Degree |
| 20 | | Male | 44 | married | Parliament | MP | Masters Degree |
| 21 | | Male | 42 | married | Donor | Manager | Masters Degree |
| 22 | | Female | 44 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Secondary or lower |

¹⁰⁹ '5' denotes a missing value

| | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|-----------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 23 | Female | 47 | married | Donor | Manager | Masters Degree |
| 24 | Male | 33 | married | Donor | Manager | Bachelors Degree |
| 25 | Male | 56 | married | Donor | Resident Representative | Masters Degree |
| 26 | Male | 38 | married | Donor | Project Coordinator | Masters Degree |
| 27 | Male | 33 | married | Donor | Manager | Masters Degree |
| 28 | Male | 62 | separated | Donor | Deputy Head | Doctoral Degree and Higher |
| 29 | Male | 49 | married | CSO | Coordinator | Higher National Diploma |
| 30 | Male | 47 | married | Donor | Agric Specialist | Masters Degree |
| 31 | Male | 39 | married | Government | Principal Secretary | Masters Degree |
| 32 | Male | 35 | married | INGO | Financial Coordinator | Masters Degree |
| 33 | Male | 45 | married | Government | Chief Economist | Masters Degree |
| 34 | Male | 30 | married | Parliament | Committee Member | Bachelors Degree |
| 35 | Female | 49 | married | Government | Principal Secretary | Doctoral Degree and Higher |
| 36 | Male | 54 | widowed | Government | Principal Secretary | Masters Degree |
| 37 | Male | 56 | married | Government | Minister | Other |
| 38 | Male | 64 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Other |
| 39 | Male | 38 | married | Media | Manager | Bachelors Degree |
| 40 | Male | 49 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Secondary or lower |
| 41 | Male | 68 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Bachelors Degree |
| 42 | Male | 45 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Masters Degree |
| 43 | Male | 61 | married | Media | General Manager | Other |
| 44 | Male | 57 | married | Private Sector | General Manager | Higher National Diploma |
| 45 | Male | 5 | married | CSO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 46 | Female | 30 | single | Media | Regional Manager | Higher National Diploma |
| 47 | Male | 43 | married | Government | Advisor to President | Doctoral Degree and Higher |
| 48 | Male | 64 | married | Government | Advisor to President | Masters Degree |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 49 | Male | 64 | married | Parliament | Speaker | Masters Degree |
| 50 | Male | 31 | married | CSO | Director | Masters Degree |
| 51 | Male | 53 | married | Media | Regional Manager | Bachelors Degree |
| 52 | Male | 34 | married | Media | Bureau Chief | Other |
| 53 | Female | 46 | married | Parliament | Member of parliament | Bachelors Degree |
| 54 | Male | 49 | married | Parliament | Member of parliament | Masters Degree |
| 55 | Male | 38 | single | CSO | Executive Director | Masters Degree |
| 56 | Male | 53 | married | Government | Executive Director | Masters Degree |
| 57 | Female | 48 | married | Government | National Coordinator | Masters Degree |
| 58 | Female | 47 | married | Parliament | Member of parliament | Secondary or lower |
| 59 | Male | 49 | married | Government | Principal Secretary | Masters Degree |
| 60 | Male | 46 | married | NGO | Country Director | Masters Degree |
| 61 | Male | 38 | married | Government | Economist | Masters Degree |
| 62 | Male | 32 | single | CSO | National Coordinator | Masters Degree |
| 63 | Female | 5 | married | Government | Minister | Higher National Diploma |
| 64 | Male | 43 | married | Government | Director | Masters Degree |
| 65 | Male | 50 | married | Government | Director | Masters Degree |
| 66 | Male | 44 | married | Government | Director | Masters Degree |
| 67 | Male | 71 | married | Government | Advisor | Higher National Diploma |
| 68 | Male | 41 | separated | Government | Deputy Director | Masters Degree |
| 69 | Male | 31 | cohabiting | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Masters Degree |
| 70 | Male | 43 | married | CSO | Programme Manager | Masters Degree |
| 71 | Male | 29 | married | CSO | Executive Director | Higher National Diploma |
| 72 | Female | 41 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Higher National Diploma |
| 73 | Male | 34 | married | CSO | Executive Secretary | Masters Degree |
| 74 | Male | 68 | married | Government | National Coordinator | Bachelors Degree |
| 75 | Male | 5 | married | NGO | Director | Masters Degree |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--------|-----|------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 76 | Female | 58 | married | Government | Minister | Bachelors Degree |
| 77 | Male | 29 | single | CSO | National Coordinator | Bachelors Degree |
| 78 | Male | 42 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Bachelors Degree |
| 79 | Male | 39 | married | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Higher National Diploma |
| 80 | Female | 44 | single | Parliament | Member of Parliament | Secondary or lower |
| 81 | Male | 59 | married | Government | Director | Masters Degree |
| 82 | Male | 48 | married | CSO | Treasurer | Secondary or lower |
| 83 | Male | 32 | married | CSO | Coordinator | Masters Degree |
| 84 | Male | 50 | married | Media | Editor | Bachelors Degree |
| 85 | Male | 53 | cohabiting | CSO | Executive Director | Higher National Diploma |
| 86 | Male | 35 | single | DONOR | Political Advisor | Masters Degree |
| Total | N | 100 | 95 | 100 | 100 | 100 |