



The church and state redefined in the 21st century: The relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in the democratization of Malawi

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Abstract

The study reflects on how the church and state could be redefined in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi. In the recent past, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and some socio-political analysts accused the Malawi Government of corruption, nepotism; rigging and stealing of elections, plunder of state resources known as “cash-gate” or maize gate by the ruling elite, theft of hospital drugs, closure of Colleges of the University of Malawi, failure to deliver other essential social services to the population leading to poverty and hopelessness. In retaliation, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) under President Professor Peter Mutharika, supported by a few religious leaders polemically demonized the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) challenging its constitutional and Scriptural mandate and declared it irrelevant in contemporary politics of Malawi. The aim of this study is to explore how the church and state could be redefined in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi, the socio-political factors for the formation of the Public Affairs Committee, relationship between Christian religion and state and lastly redefine an interdisciplinary political and public theology for the democratization of Malawi and elsewhere.

Keywords: Public Affairs Committee (PAC), state, democracy, government, reformed church perspective.

Introduction

The study will reflect on how the church and state could be redefined in the 21st century with special reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi. The method of approach for this study will be purely qualitative and descriptive in conceptual framework and review how some political and public theology terms are widely applied in the church and society in Malawi in reformed church perspective. The concepts of political and public theology are used in a variety of ways by exploring different aspects of church's or believer's relationship with politics in Malawi and elsewhere.

To assist in the study, the following questions are used: to what extent and how could the church and state be redefined in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi. How could the questions of constitutional, Scriptural mandate and relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) be resolved in Malawi? What are some of the political and public approaches for the Christian religion and state? How could a new political and public theology for the church and state be applied for the democratization of Malawi and elsewhere? Therefore, the study will analyse socio-political factors for the formation of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), constitutional mandate and relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi, the relationship between Christian religion and state and lastly redefine an interdisciplinary political and public theology for this conversation in the democratization of Malawi and elsewhere.



Definition of terms

In this study, the term “state” (Hornby & Turnbull, 2015:1477) means a country considered as an organized political community controlled by one government. The word “politics”(Hornby & Turnbull, 2015:1150) refers to activities involved in getting and using power in public life, being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society. The word “government”(Hornby & Turnbull, 2015:659) is the system of management used to rule, to preside over, oversee, lead, direct, command, to manage, and control an organization.

The system of government composes of a representation of the group of people who are responsible for controlling a state, nation or an organization. In Reformed tradition perspective, it is accepted that Scriptures are the Word of God and that Christ governs His church and state including the cosmos in extraordinary way. For Calvin, God governs both the church and the world. God also rules the world, but maintains a special relationship with the church which he has bought and recreated (Du Plooy, 1982:109f).

Socio-political factors for the formation of Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi

Malawi experienced some socio-political problems after she became independent from British Colonialism under Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda in 1964. Some of the socio-political factors for the formation of the Public Affairs in Malawi are as follows:

President Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in Malawi 1964-1994

Mvula (2020:168-178) argues that in the post-independence period, Malawi went through unprecedented governance problems epitomized by Dr Kamuzu Banda’s autocracy. He consolidated power and later declared Malawi a *de facto* one-party state under the Might Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in 1965. In 1970, a congress of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) declared Dr. Kamuzu Banda its Life President. In 1971, the legislature declared Dr. Banda Life President of the Republic of Malawi. Within Malawi, views on Dr. Banda ranged from cult-like devotion to fear. He portrayed himself as a caring headman to his people. Banda himself bluntly summed up his approach as ruling the country by saying: “Everything is my business. Everything....Anything I say is law...literally law” (Mvula, 2020:178).

However, during the time of Dr.. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1963-1994), the relationship between the church and state was characterised by mixed reactions: the Roman Catholic Church with suspicion, other churches such as Pentecostal denominations were coerced-aligned with the state (Mvula, 2020:168).

In 1993 the CCAP Blantyre Synod openly apologised to the membership and the nation for being aligned to Malawi Congress Party and Dr H. Kamuzu Banda’s government and some churches like the Jehovah’s Witnesses were opposed to the state. Mvula(2020:168-178) summarizes that the history of the Malawi Congress party (MCP) regime was marked by various atrocities such as brutality, repression, violation of human rights and other evils. All criticism was banned. All freedoms were not allowed Human rights were repressed. Parliament was used only to rubber stamp the wishes of the president. While the structure was that of separation status of the branches of the government, in practice, the Judiciary and Parliament were under the Executive. There was unlimited power, lack of separation of powers, abuse of human rights and a general lack of accountability. According to theoretical framework of constitutionalism, the practice of these principles constituted violations of constitutionalism during the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) regime. Democracy was defined and understood in ways that supported the policies of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda’s regime (Mvula, 2020:178f).



High political temperature in Malawi

High socio-political temperature and resistance from advocates of multi-party democracy were the major factors for the formation of the religious organization for dialogue and reconciliation in 1992. The people of Malawi tired of the 31 year single party autocratic rule of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) opted for the multi-party system of government in Malawi. Despite intense Malawi Government's intimidation, the people were determined to campaign for multi-party democracy. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) was formed after the Roman Catholic Church pastoral letter: "Living our faith", supported by the Chancellor College, University of Malawi students march entitled "We support our Bishops" on 15 March 1992 (Wikipedia, 2021:19).

The huge support came from the Southern Africa Trade Union Coordinating Council led by a fearless critic Chakufwa Chihana, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Blantyre Synod, other religious bodies and pressure groups such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), Malawi Democratic Party (MDP), Malawi Law Society and others. During its formation, it assumed various names such as: Ecumenical Committee, Extra-ordinary Committee, Malawi National Affairs Committee, and National Affairs Committee. Then became the Public Affairs Committee during the meeting held at Chilema Lay and Ecumenical Training Centre in Malosa, Zomba in August, 1992 (Wikipedia, 2021:19).

The purpose of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) was to offer a platform for serious dialogue for political transition to democratic change with the Life President Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party. On 19th October 1992, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and the Presidential Committee on Dialogue (PCD) met for the first time to discuss on the question of choosing the one-party or multi-party system of government in the history of Malawi (Gama, 2010:142-145).

In order to forestall the initiative the President Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda announced the government's intention to hold a National Referendum. Therefore, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) opened and maintained dialogue with the Government of the Republic of Malawi on fundamental rights of each and every Malawian individually and in association with others to participate in the political process of the country (Gama, 2010:142-145). The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) had a huge responsibility to ensure that the political ground was equally leveled during transition period which led the people of Malawi voting 63% in favor of the multi-party system of Government on 16th June 1993. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) was instrumental in vigor for civic education and translating a popular desire for political transformation and freedom into reality within the society of Malawi (Kanyongolo, 2007:23-24).

Constitutional reforms in Malawi 1964, 1993-1995

Mvula (2020:143) holds that there have been constitutional reforms in Malawi since 1964, but the major one was carried out in 1993-1995 to suit Malawi's democratic system of governance. Msosa (2003:164) defines "constitution" as a document having special legal sanctity which sets out the framework and principal functions of the organs of government. The constitution sets out the principles upon which it is founded and the principles guiding the various organs on how they should operate. Kanyongolo (2007:23-24) defines the term "constitution" as a body of supreme legal standards that seek to reflect the general vision of the people of a state. The constitution is a set of basic rules of a political or social organization that determines the power of key political institutions and often guarantees rights and liberties.

Therefore, in this study the term constitution can be used more broadly to include laws made by Parliament, legal principles laid down by courts, and practices that seek to entrench



fairness in the competition for political office. In addition to its formal and material meanings, the term constitution may also be used to refer to the actual behavior of the various actors in the political arena (Kanyongolo, 2007:23-24).

Dialogue and reconciliation forum 1992-1993

Dialogue and reconciliation were other motivating factors for the formation of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in 1992. The concept of public theology is the Christian engagement and dialogue within the church and especially with the larger society. It seeks the welfare of the state and a fair society for all by engaging issues of common interest to build the good. Therefore, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) committed itself to serious dialogue with the State government to achieve a common interest of multi-party democracy for a fair society in Malawi (Gama, 2010:142-144).

The political pressure groups felt dialogue and reconciliation in Malawi were necessary factors for entering into conversation with Dr Kamuzu Banda's Presidential Committee on Dialogue (PCD) in the transition period from the one-party to the multiparty system of government in Malawi (Gama, 2010:142-144). The religious community which took part in the dialogue were five mother bodies such as the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EACM), Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches (CHAPEL), Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM) and the Quadiriah Association of Malawi (Gama, 2010:142-144).

The dialogue lead to pressure groups such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), Malawi Democratic Party (MDP), Malawi for the Multiparty of Democracy (MMD) leave the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and formed major political parties to participate in 1993 National Referendum (Gama, 2010:143-145).

In the first Referendum which took place in May 1993, Malawi chose to move away from one party system of government to multi-party democracy. On 17th May 1994, Malawi held multi-party General Elections in which Dr Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Party (UDF) became the first democratically elected President in Malawi. On 21st May, 1994, Dr. Bakili Muluzi was sworn in as Malawi's second President (Gama, 2010:143-145).

President Dr. Bakili Muluzi and the United Democratic Front (UDF) 1994-2004

According to Kanyongolo (2007:23-24), some of the unconstitutional behaviours that the UDF Government committed include but not limited to the abolition of the constitutional office of the Secretary to the President and Cabinet, the un-procedural dismiss of an Inspector General of Police and a Director of Public Prosecutions. The implication of such non-compliance, tampering and violations of constitutionalism was that such practices served short term political advantage of particular political parties and politicians rather than long term national interests.

Mvula (2020: 187-188) summarizes the President Dr. Bakili Muluzi and the UDF regime's lack of accountability and transparency, corruption, and high-handed violent crimes characterized the regime especially during the last term of Muluzi's presidency. The excess power of the executive over the other two branches of legislature and judiciary making them suffer from extreme lack of resources and excessive workload. Some of President Muluzi's and the UDF undemocratic tendencies and things he wilfully accepted were bidding for unpopular third term and open term, unleashing terror to people who had dissenting political views and disappearance of opponents through the Young Democrats, and presiding over a regime synonymous with economic plunder and corruption (Mvula, 2020:187-188).



President Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika and the Democratic Progressive Party Regime 2004-2012

President Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika became the third democratically elected President in Malawi on 24th May, 2004. During his first term as President, Mutharika remained largely true to his democratic ideals and demonstrated a genuine concern for the people of Malawi (Mvula, 2020:187-188). He remained focused on development agenda, engaged in a well-publicized anti-graft campaign and instituted credible economic management policies that earned his praise from international development organizations, donors and partners as well as a cross section of Malawian population.

However, critical analysis of his second term Presidency from 2009 to 2012 reveals that one of the hot issues connected to his “not declaring assets,” Mutharika’s massive accumulation of wealth within a short period of 8 years of his presidency (Mvula, 2020:193-194). Mvula (2020:194-195) summarizes Mutharika’s bad governance policies almost plunged Malawi into terrible economic crisis. The Mutharika’s second administration (2009-2012) committed atrocities which included non-compliance instances with the constitution. Outright tempering the constitution, constitutional violations manifested in human rights abuses, disappearance of opponents among others and cases of governance flaws. He died in April 2012 a billionaire worthy over MK 62 billion (Mvula, 2020: 195-197).

President Madam Joyce Banda and the People’s Party (PP) 2012-2014

In summary, the President Joyce Banda and the People’s Party regime might go into the annals of Malawi as the shortest regime that ever governed Malawi in 2012 to 2014 (Mvula, 2020: 195-197).

The regime is known for revealing massive looting of government funds called “cash-gate” by top government officials and political elites as well as junior government officials from the time of President Bingu Wa Mutharika. No declaration of assets, financial mismanagement and violations of freedom of conscience and association were some of the constitutional violations during President Joyce Banda’s regime (Mvula, 2020: 195-197).

President Professor Peter Mutharika and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) 2014-2020

Mvula(2020: 198-203) holds that since coming to power, President Professor Peter Mutharika and the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) in May 2014, the government is treading the same path its predecessors have trodden. History is repeating itself in Malawi. Instead of leading the government and focusing on good governance, the DPP Government is enmeshed in 2019-2024 general elections among others. The Malawi Media was awash with stories of the DPP maladministration, Anti-Corruption Bureau and Police Officers are being intimidated and threatened by corrupt business men evading tax, money laundering by key financiers of the ruling DPP and “well-wishers” of President Peter Mutharika (Mvula, 2020:198-203). Unconstitutional behaviours being noticed by the DPP government among others, selling of the Malawi Savings Bank (MSB) despite Parliament’s opposition, big businesses evading tax hiding behind government officials, beat up opposition party leaders, bribery and corruption, seeking to shield or sheltering the offenders by anyone or whatever means which undermine the spirit of constitutionalism in Malawi (Mvula, 2020:198-203).

According to the Afrobarometer’s research findings and releases show how corruption intensified strongly during the DPP government. The findings indicate a growing state of high ranking corruption during the third year of the DPP regime of President Professor Peter Mutharika (Afrobarometer, 2017:5ff).



The constitutional mandate of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi

According to the Constitution of the Public Affairs Committee, the aims and objectives include:

Encourage religious bodies to fulfil their prophetic and religious roles, and respond to the socio- economic and political affairs of the Republic of Malawi. Enter into and maintain a dialogue with any person, political body or any other institution in the Republic of Malawi regarding any issues of concern to the nation. Promote peace and tranquillity in the Republic of Malawi. Promote respect for the rule of law and for human rights in the Republic of Malawi. Promote education in principles of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Encourage and support the creation of scholarships or bursaries or prizes to be awarded to deserving students of Malawi origin. Devote itself to the increase of the knowledge and understanding of Malawians on issues relating to the advancement of status of Malawians culturally, politically and economically. To develop relationships with religious, other institutions those share the aims and objectives of the Public Affairs (Constitution of the Public Affairs Committee 1993).

Ross(1996:5ff) holds that some functions of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) include work with international organisations, governments and institutions with an interest in the promotion and establishment of common standards of democratic governance and respect for the rule of law with the object of attaining and maintain the highest standards of excellence, accountability, transparency and participation in governance.

The relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi 1994-2022

Key Advocacy Civil Organization

Gama (2010:142-150) holds that after 1994 change, Malawi's political transition from one party to multiparty system of government, the position of the church on its involvement on social-political issues also changed from one model of church and state, to another. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) then strategized to remain a key religious civil society institution in the field of human rights, mediation, advocacy, HIV/AIDS, Gender based Violence, religious co-existence, electoral processes and peace and security (Ross, 1996). Most people argue that after 1994, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) went to sleep since some of the key founding persons accepted political appointments in the Foreign Ministry as High Commissioners, ambassadors, and in Government Para-state Companies as board members (Gama, 2010:142-150). Another political challenge was when President Dr Bakili Muluzi started to silence and side-line the Vice President Mr Justine Malewezi on issues surrounding Presidential succession; the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) did nothing to safeguard democratic principles. President Dr Bakili Muluzi and the United Democratic Front (UDF) started to campaign for the amendment of the constitution for a third term.

In 2003, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) suddenly realised that things were going wrong in government, so it started to spearhead a counter-campaign against open and third term constitutional amendment. The constitutional amendment contestation and third term bid campaign ended when the government side lost only by two votes in Parliament (Gama, 2010:142-150).

On the succession question, President Dr Bakili Muluzi and the United Democratic Front (UDF) opted to appoint an outsider Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika, leaving out the *madeya* (husks) as he used to in sinuously say. In 2007, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) maintained its task to dialogue with major political parties on priority between Section 565 Members of Parliament crossing the floor and 2007 Budget. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) managed to convince all political parties in Parliament to pass the budget successfully (Wikipedia, 2021:19).



During Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika's Presidency, the Public Affairs Committee(PAC) criticised his government and the Democratic Progressive Party on economic meltdown, nepotism, limiting human rights freedoms of association, speech, movement, and passing of "bad laws"⁴⁵. On Peace and Security Programme, the Public Affairs Committee was not only involved in the preparations of the 20th July demonstrations in which regrettably over 22 people were killed, but also got involved in the UN led Presidential Committee Dialogue Group negotiations following the July 2011 demonstrations that led to the handing of the 20 point petition to the leadership of the country.

The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) fiercely criticised President Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika for silencing and side-lining the Vice President Mrs Joyce Banda on all government programmes and for saying publicly that his brother Professor Peter Mutharika was well qualified and exposed internationally to succeed him.

Jere (2004:22f) holds that the major social, economic and political problems that have greatly affected the people of Malawi in this multiparty democracy are namely: regionalism, nepotism, poverty and corruption. This time, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) did not keep quiet, it fiercely criticised the government for passing "bad laws" and policies in Parliament as well as abuses and infractions.

International recognition of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC)

The International community has recognised the Public Affairs Committee for its prophetic role with regard to the relationship between church and state. Because of its extensive experience in the political processes, for example the organization has previously hosted COMESA on CSO initiatives, participates in COMESA observation missions, Africa-EU Joint Strategy for Development and AU- ECOSSOC initiatives at international level. Against this background, issues of good governance and peace building occupy the centre stage of the Public Affairs Committee's strategic direction, and any state's deviation from the expected democratic norms attracts its intervention through advocacy and constructive engagement (Gama, 2010:142-144)..

The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) is also the national chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP). The organisation's mission statement is to mobilise the general public through the religious community and other stakeholders in promoting democracy, development, peace and unity through civic education, mediation and advocacy (Gama, 2010:142-144). After existing for over a decade, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) worked with a large number of partners (both local and international) in pursuance of this mission, and has put into practice a wide variety of activities. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) is unique in many different ways. The organisation was formed as a result of a popular national outcry for socio-political transformation; it has structures that cover the whole country; was the first predominantly inter-faith organisation composed of Christians, Moslems and other religions and has a human resource for advocacy through use of its religious leaders (Gama, 2010:142-144).

Since its formation, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) has taken lead in national public advocacy and countrywide civic education programmes. It has over 3,500 volunteer at both regional and district level" (Wikipedia 2021:19). Though the civil society is being described as weak in Malawi, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) remains an exception in its role in the democratization process. At the moment the organisation has a national secretariat in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi.

The Drivers of Change and Development, (ODI Report, 2006) described the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) as an exception. It states that the exceptionality includes churches, faith based organisations and grassroots' membership. Currently, the United Nations Development



Program (UNDP, 2021:08) has described the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) as “the most important social institution with capacity to strengthen social cohesion”. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) is a platform for collective religious leadership of the country which meets, discusses and pronounces on important national socio-political and economic issues affecting Malawi. When the religious leaders speak and act in unison, they prove to be a powerful moral, spiritual and political voice that elected politicians could not disregard. Therefore, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) as one of the oldest religious institutions is a most relevant political power blocker and reformer in most sectors of life in Malawi.

However, due to different political situations at different times, the position of the church on its involvement in socio-political issues kept changing from one approach to another.

The political relationship between Christian religion and the state

Christian religion and the State in Europe

During the middle Ages, in Europe, the Christian religion determined the position of the state as well as the position of the church. Religion gave state authorities and state power its legitimacy, and the government was the protector of the Christian faith (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174). holds that during the middle Ages, in Europe, the Christian religion determined the position of the state as well as the position of the church. Religion gave state authorities and state power its legitimacy, and the government was the protector of the Christian faith. The relationship between state and religion differs from country to country (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174). Different approaches often appear in the constitutions. Legislation and case law elaborate the relationship between state and religion in the different countries (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174).

The Article 1 of the French Constitution determines the laic nature of the French state. The establishment clause in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States prohibits not only the existence of an established church but has a wider meaning, as well, as will appear later. Article 140 of the German Constitution refers to some provisions of the constitution of the Weimar Republic that, on the one hand, prohibit the existence of an established church but, on the other hand, lay down that religious denominations may be recognized by the state. In England, of course, the Anglican Church is the established church. In the Netherlands, the separation of church and state is assumed to be an unwritten principle of constitutional law, as the Basic Law keeps silent on this issue (Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

John Calvin (1536) in his book the Institutes of the Christian religion volume four in 1536 holds that:

He who knows to distinguish between the body and the soul, between the present feeling life and that which is future and eternal, will have no difficulty in understanding that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things completely distinct.

In Scotland, the state and church polity was adopted by a contingent of Scottish advisors and Parliamentarians who convened by the Act of the English Parliament “to give guidance to the church” in 1644CE (Hall & Hall, 1994). The General Assembly of the Scottish Church adopted the Directory of Church government for practical Presbyterian operation including recognition of four offices in the church: pastor in mutual parity with the teacher (doctor), ruling elders, and deacons, all dully called by the church; the ascending church courts, provincial, national and ecumenical, the issues of discipline and censure were all later approved by an Act of Parliament in 1647 CE (Hall & Hall, 1994).



In the church and state political partnership arrangement, pastors and full-time staff members of the church are treated as employees of the civil government; their salaries are paid, subsidized or paid a grant by the civil government. Other churches which nurture church and state connected relations are the Church in Holland, and the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, the Lutheran Church in some parts of Germany, the Russian Orthodox and many more. However, the Presbyterian Church in America did not adhere to sections of the Westminster form of government which deals with the church-state relations as early as 1721 CE, when it denied “the right of the civil government to intrude into church affairs” (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174).

Different models for the church and state

This study holds that there are different models for the church and state. However, a well accomplished scholar by the name of Brugger in Nieuwenhuis (2012:153-174) mentions six different models as follows:

State opposed to church.

The first model advocates for the state to completely oppose religion for example in Communist countries: Peoples Republic of China, Russia, and many countries in the Eastern Europe, Albania, where in the 1970s and 1980s religion was officially banned. In other Socialist Countries, there is limited toleration to religion (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174).

Separation model.

The second model is characterized by a “wall of separation” taken seriously not only in theory but in practice as well. In their own domain, the political community and the church are independent from one another and autonomous, but they should develop a mutual cooperation in favour of the welfare of all human beings (Doe, 2013:345-346). Barring all religious signs from public education belongs here. The separation model discourages Christians from participating in socio-political issues for fear contamination because the world is full of evil. State and church still have different aims, however; respectively, the citizen’s welfare and his salvation. In the Scriptures, there are a number of texts where God separated his people from the wicked community (Doe, 2013:345-346).

Separation and partly allowing model.

The third model is less drastic: “separation” and “allowing for” are linked. Government may neither advance nor obstruct religion. In separation view of church and state, the church is not regulated under the civil law (Doe, 2013:346). In other extreme right church government systems, they allege that since the state authority is so corrupt, the church should have as little to do with it, although they should be good citizens as long as their convictions are not compromised. They could not work for the government, vote or serve in the military. Some churches in this extreme category are the Anabaptists, the Baptist Churches, Christian Brethren, Jehovah’s Witnesses and many charismatic churches (Doe, 2013:346-347).

Transformational model

The transformational model presents a view of how to live under the two rules: church and state simultaneously in a way that differs significantly from both the separational and identificational models (Gama, 2010:54). The transformational model believes that the structures of life can be modified and changed. The transformational model advocates an optimistic position towards culture as central to the Christian conviction about history and life. For example in Germany, the government takes care of the ‘church tax’ collection for



recognized religious denominations. This model, therefore believes in taking the middle position that God has given the state authority in certain areas and the church authority in others (Gama, 2010:54). Still others believe that Christians have a responsibility to make the state better. They can do this politically, by electing Christian or other high – principled leaders. They can also do this morally, by serving as an influence for good in society.

In this view, church and state ideally work together for the good of all. The Scriptural basis for transformational model could be from doctrines of creation, redemption and eschatology (Milne, 1983). The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements lay one-sided emphasis on the spiritual reality; they are largely neutral towards civil government and sometimes even hostile towards natural life and civil government (Du Plooy, 1982:109).

Identification model.

The identification model seeks to address the big challenge for the church to demarcate the line between the two rules (kingdoms) of the church and state. While the prophetic model recommends that the church speaks on any situation that oppresses the people by confronting the state on issues of social justice, other scholars formulated an identification model as the right approach with regard to relationship between the church and state (Gama, 2010:72).

This model seeks to resolve the conflict of church and state by this paradoxical approach by affirming that both sides are correct. Instead of using confrontational approach of prophecy to the state on social justice matters, the identification model recommends the participation of the church with the state on social justice. Therefore, Christians as citizens ought to live in both the Kingdom of God and in the world. The churches which nurture this view are the Church Scotland and the Church of England or Anglican World Communion, the Lutheran Church in some parts of Germany, the Russian Orthodox and many more. The Episcopalian and the Erastian system leave all the ruling power in the church and the world in the hands of the government (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174, Du Plooy, 1982:109).

The two kingdom view holds that the church carries both swords, namely the ecclesiastical as well as the secular sword (Du Plooy, 1982:109). Every human community needs authority to endure and develop by the ecclesiastical authority and public political authority which are based on human nature. However, God established diversity of political regimes as legitimate. Political authority must be exercised within the limits of moral order for it is the role of the state to defend and promote the common good of civil society (Doe, 2013:346).

Theocratic model.

In the last model, the state and church actually converge under the rule of God in a theocracy. This is called a theocratic model of church government. The churches which nurture this view of established State Church are the Roman Catholic Church in Rome and the Church of England (Nieuwenhuis, 2012:153-174). One could also include the Orthodox Church in this aspect (Nicolaidis, 2010)

However, Gama (2010:52-91) in his book *The role of the church in politics in Malawi*, insists and skilfully summarises that there are four models for the relationship between the church and state in the history of the church over the centuries, namely: Separational, prophetic, identificational and transformational models with analysed merits and demerits (Gama, 2010:52-91).

Subsequently, the modern trend is to the understanding that the state should be completely neutral towards the church. In other words, the church and the state government are completely separate (Du Plooy, 1982:109ff). The church governs with mandate from God



through Scriptures and should therefore exercise no authority over the state nor does the state over the church. They should not confuse the two. In this view, the church and state are two totally different spheres – the spiritual and the physical- and thus complement each other but do not work together (Du Plooy, 1982:109ff). Therefore, in the Reformed tradition perspective, there must be a distinction between the church and the state.

However, none of the above views advocate rebellion against or refusing to obey the government's laws or regulations unless they clearly require you to violate the moral standards revealed by God in His Word (Doe, 2013:354f, Du Plooy, 1982:109ff). Whenever, the church finds itself in that position, it must be the discretion of the responsible citizen to act accordingly. The responsible Christians must know that he will give an account of whatever happens in life to Christ, the King of the Kingdom of God and Head of the Church.

Evaluation and analysis of the relationship between the church and state

In light of the discussion above, the study established that in the post-independence period, Malawi went through unprecedented governance problems epitomized by Dr Kamuzu Banda's autocracy. The study discovered that there have been constitutional reforms in Malawi since 1964 and the major one was carried out in 1993-1995 to suit Malawi's democratic system of governance. The study held that there are varied concepts, theories and frameworks in the understanding of the church and state in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi. The study further established that there are varied doctrines, ideologies and political persuasions to Christian religion and state in Malawi, Europe and elsewhere. The doctrine of political theology deals with the relationship of theology and politics for instance in Southern Africa arising from the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and nationalist campaigns of the mid to late 20th century elsewhere.

This study will now evaluate, redefine and apply an interdisciplinary political and public theology for this conversation of church and state in the democratization of Malawi and elsewhere in reformed church perspective as follows:

The Scriptural mandate for the church and state

In reformed church perspective, the Scriptures hold that the civil government is appointed by God and the church is called to live at peace with the state (Milne, 1983:56). Both the church and the state are servants of God and, each in its own way serves the kingdom of God (Isaiah 9:6-7, Romans 13:1-2, Hebrews 13:7). The apostle Peter in 1 chapter 2:17 argues that it is by divine wisdom that "kings reign," and gives special command to the church "to honour the king." Thus the church has to obey the government, pray for it and, where appropriate, bear testimony towards it. The government, on the other hand, has to create room for the church to fulfil its calling in the world, it should protect the church and assist it in serving the kingdom of God. However, each governs its own territory and neither may dominate the other (Du Plooy, 1982:109ff).

God governs structures of church and state through Headship Christ

In Reformed tradition perspective, Christ is the Head and Ruler of the kingdom of God, the church and the state. His Sovereign authority encompasses gift of office, *charisma* as *diakonia* service, the church and the state. Everything belongs to God. God governs in Christ over the entire cosmos (Calvin cited in Smit, 2014:181-196).

The Kingdom of God includes all forms of authority and governance; the differences in the government of different institutions are all under the authority of Christ given to him in heaven and on earth. The reign of God is about the domain of Christ in the heart of people groups of all nations (Calvin cited in Smit, 2014:181-196). He governs everything in the church and in the world in an extraordinary way through the Word and Spirit according to Scripture. This is



how God governs structures of church and state through Headship Christ in the Reformed church perspective.

God governs the church and state in love and compassion

In reformed church perspective, humility and servant-political principles were characteristics entrenched in the Kingdom. Political power and authoritarianism characterized the kingdoms of the earth. Humility and servant-hood characterized the Kingdom of Heaven. Paul radically subverted the political social order of slavery by exhorting slaves and masters to fellowship as brothers in Christ in one congregation (Figart, 1973:102). Faith in Christ obliterates political social status as a boundary to fellowship. However, cutting across the various functions of the church was the responsibility to perform acts of Christian love and compassion. It is very clear from the Scriptures that Christ cared about the problems of the needy with love and compassion (Figart, 1973:102). He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and raised the dead on many occasions. Social concern includes condemning evil, corruption and all unrighteousness as well. John the Baptist likewise condemned the sin of Herod, the ruler of his day, even though it cost his liberty and eventually even his life (Figart, 1973:102). In James 2:1-9, faith in Christ obliterates political, social and religious status as a boundary to fellowship.

The prophetic role of the church in society

In reformed church perspective, the prophetic role of the church and state could be related to the offices of Christ. Christ is the priest, prophet and king. Christ polemically made efforts to overcome racial bigotry of His day. It must be a concern for the church to make an effort of positive contribution of forgiveness, dialogue and reconciliation toward erasing political barriers for the good of society (Matthew 6:14, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20). If Christ thought, it important enough to supersede an errant of political tradition with gracious gestures; then we must take heed that we are not be imbibed in the river of bad socio-political and economic governance today.

It must also be remembered that the Samaritan woman had accepted Christ as Messiah, along with others in the city. Jesus rejected the whole Samaritan inimical political system (John 4:1-30, Luke 19:1-10ff). He agreed that politically racial bigotry was wrong. Jesus did on occasion take the Samaritan route, a trunk road from north to south following the Samaritan watershed. He advocated the need for human sympathy to men of all races, but He rebuked any attempt to solve politically ethnic problems by the expedient of militancy (Matthew 12:26-32, Luke 4:18-30). The contemporary church must radically engage in the communities to give encouragement, hope, prayers and solutions to struggles of all sectors of life.

However, Hall and Hall, (1994:17) hold that one consistent system of government that fits with the underlying theology of the Reformed view must be a government that:

Honours God's Word as the revealed law and mind of our God the Creator, accounts for the depravity in our nature and action, seeks to reinforce by checks and balances the limitation of such depravity, benefits the church as a corporate whole and the members thereof for sustained ministry and finally seeks to give glory and honour to Christ, the Head and King of the Church, and not the human agents.

The contemporary church must take a queue the ministry of Christ. The ministry of Christ was public or people centred. Christ had a transformational and servant leadership agenda. His activities involved in getting and using power in public life was able to influence decisions that affected a country or a society. Therefore, the church must be the priest, prophet and king in matters of social concern namely: checks and balances on abuses of judiciary-justice, legislation-review of laws and execution of political administration of the church and society (Hall & Hall, 1994:17). This how the contemporary church could play its prophetic role of the church and society.



Constitutional obligation

The study holds that the constitution of the Republic of Malawi is the supreme rule as far as governance is concerned in Malawi according to the 1994 Constitution of Malawi: Chapter 3: Section 12: Fundamental Principles:

All legal and political authority of the State derives from the people of Malawi and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution solely to serve and protect their interests. All persons responsible for the exercise of powers of State do so, on trust and shall only exercise such power to the extent of their lawful authority and in accordance with their responsibilities to the people of Malawi. The authority to exercise power of State is conditional upon the sustained trust of the people of Malawi and that trust can only be maintained through open, accountable and transparent Government and informed democratic choice (Government of Malawi (GOM): 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi: 23/06 /2021).

However, the state machinery governs on trust from the people of Malawi and ought to respect the rights of all people which include Chapter 4: Bill of rights, protection of human rights and freedoms:

The human rights and freedoms enshrined in this Chapter shall be respected and upheld by the executive, legislature and judiciary and all organs of the Government and its agencies and, where applicable to them, by all natural and legal persons in Malawi and shall be enforceable in the manner prescribed in this Chapter. Any person or group of persons with sufficient interest in the protection and enforcement of rights under this Chapter shall be entitled to the assistance of the courts, the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission and other organs of Government to ensure the promotion, protection and redress of grievance in respect of those rights.

Every person has the right to life and no person shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her life: Provided that the execution of the death sentence imposed by a competent court on a person in respect of a criminal offence under the laws of Malawi of which he or she has been convicted shall not be regarded as arbitrary deprivation of his or her right to life. Acts of genocide are prohibited and shall be prevented and punished. Every person has the right to personal liberty. The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable. In any judicial proceedings or in any other proceedings before any organ of the State, and during the enforcement of a penalty, respect for human dignity shall be guaranteed. No person shall be subject to torture of any kind or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No person shall be subject to corporal punishment in connexion with any judicial proceedings or in any other proceedings before any organ of the State (Government of Malawi (GOM): 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi: 23/06 /2021).

In obedience to the Scriptural, prophetic and constitutional mandate, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) must be committed to this God ordained obligation to continuously reform democratic principles to meet the serious needs of the people of Malawi. The underlying theory of the reformation in the 16th century therefore was *semper reformanda*, always reforming, and a continuous process of transformation according to the needs of the people and time (Van der Walt, 1984). At the centre of this interdisciplinary political and public conversation must be transformation of heart, mind-set, attitude, and approach on how to theologically engage recurrent challenges within the church and state in Malawi and elsewhere.



Conclusion

In summary, this study reflected on how the church and state politics could be redefined in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi. The study further explored the socio-historical factors for the formation of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi. The study established that the aim of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) was to advocate for dialogue and reconciliation, end socio-political ills in the Malawi Government system from 1964 to 1994. Some of the socio-political ills are corruption, nepotism; rigging and stealing of elections, plunder of state resources, theft of hospital drugs and failure to deliver essential social services to the population leading to poverty and hopelessness. The study established that the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) also aims at civic educating the population of Malawi. The study established that there are constitutional and Scriptural mandates for the varied understanding of doctrines, ideologies and political approaches to Christian religion and state in Malawi, Europe and elsewhere. This study established that God instituted and ordained the state government to administer justice, prevent corruption and to protect the poor in society from being exploited by the rich and thus promote the general welfare among all people. God also tasks the government to restrain evil. Subsequently, by grace God gave the church, *ekklesia*, the assembly to aid or check on the state government in its service to humanity. The church must be a prophet of God in society in the 21st century and beyond.

Therefore, for the well-being of church and society, the Lord God puts together organized forms or institutions for settling controversies in the world. Consequently, by grace God gave the church, *ekklesia*, the assembly to aid or check on the state government in its service to humanity. Any formerly distinct groups need to coexist in harmony in the *ekklesia* as they form the body of Christ. (Nicolaidis, 2010). The church, *ekklesia* has a double divine calling: compassionate and solidarity- standing by in any form or siding with the suffering, the needy and courageously prophesying – witnessing against the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek to fulfil their own interests thereby controlling and harming others (Doe, 2013:354f). The religious organizations including the church in Malawi govern with prophetic authority from God through Scriptures and should therefore exercise no authority over the state nor does the state over the church (Isaiah 9:6-7, Titus 3:1). They should not confuse the two. In this view, the church and state are two totally different spheres – the spiritual and the physical, the church functions pneumatically by the power of God, the state politically, by the trust and power of the people and thus complements each other, but do not work closely together (Milne, 1982:56).

In Reformed view, Christ is the Sovereign Ruler and Head of both the church and state. He has appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate, and that civil authorities being always subject to the rule of God across boundaries. This concurs with most Christian beliefs not least the Orthodox Church where the 'Body of Christ' is always subject to God's precepts (Nicolaidis, 2021). Consequently, the religious organizations including the church in Malawi govern with mandate from God through Scriptures and should therefore exercise no authority over the state nor does the state over the church. They should not confuse the two. In this view, the church and state are two totally different spheres – the spiritual and the physical- and thus complement each other but do not work together (Du Plooy, 1982:109ff). Consequently, the relationship between the church and state in matters of socio-political, economic and peace-building efforts must be cordial in the 21st century.

The church and state must both must take on seriously the fight against socio-political ills of society such as corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, tribalism, neo-racism and many more pertinent issues with utmost love and compassion. The church and state must both be concerned with delivery of social services to the population, more especially to the vulnerable and the poor in society. However, in the Reformed church government the relationship between the church



and state must clearly be distinguished respectively. The government, authority, task, and territory of the church and the state differs respectively. The contemporary church must be guided by the Scriptural authority while the state guided by constitutional secular authority. The church must be pneumatically empowered while the state politically empowered in all sectors of life.

In conclusion, in Reformed tradition perspective, on one hand, there are no constitutional and Scriptural justifications for maliciously suspecting evil or demonizing the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization in Malawi. On the other hand, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), must not play double-stands in discharging its noble duties. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi must be committed to the interdisciplinary moral, political and public theology obligations from the constitution and Scriptures to radically engage socio-political, cultural and economic challenges in the democratization of Malawi. This is therefore, an approach on how the church and state could be redefined in the 21st century with reference to the relevance of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in democratization of Malawi and elsewhere.

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