

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE MALAWI 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

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Malawi went to the polls on 19 May 2009 and it were successful and peaceful elections with a surprising landslide victory for the incumbent President Mutharika. Before the election day, there were however serious concerns that these hotly contested elections could disintegrate into chaos and pose another example of a failed electoral process in Africa. The African Union Commission had decided that after failed elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe they should pay more attention to elections as potential sources of conflict. Therefore an African Union delegation, led by John Kufuor and Joachim Chissano, the former presidents of Ghana and Mozambique respectively, paid a visit to the country in February to broker an agreement between the three main contestants for the Presidency.

In this article we want to analyse the role that the African Union played in the Malawi 2009 general elections and what that means for the potential of the AU as a democracy broker. The African Union Charter on Democracy has been commented upon to be vague, incomplete and ineffective. According to us, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We want to reflect on the role that the AU as regional organisation has played in a potentially volatile situation of the Malawian general elections in 2009. We will assess the impact that the interventions of the African Union made on the electoral process, and most importantly on the behaviour of political parties and its leaders. We will specifically focus on the interaction of the AU with political parties, and how the African Union interventions interacted with local dynamics that aimed to mitigate tensions in the electoral process. We aim to draw lessons on the value of the AU for fostering democracy and free and fair elections on the African continent.