




Chapter 14

The ‘Unholy Trinity Powers’ in the Malawi–Tanzania Border Dispute: The Shaping of Postcolonial Relations in Southern Africa

James Zotto 

*Department of History, College of Humanities,
University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania* 
zottojames@gmail.com

Introduction

After the independence of Malawi and Tanzania in the early 1960s, their relations soured, especially at the state level, following the countries' laying of claim to Lake Nyasa. Whereas Malawi claimed that its sovereign territory with Tanzania is on the shore of Lake Nyasa in Tanzania (I call it the Eastern shoreline), Tanzania tenaciously recognised a boundary in the middle of Lake Nyasa (I call it the Middle line). Thorny relations between Tanzania and Malawi are attributed to both colonial and postcolonial forces. The influence of the colonial powers on the Malawi–Tanzania border dispute is highlighted by inconsistencies contained in colonial cartography, contradictions in the application of the mandate system in Tanganyika, and the ambiguities in the interpretation of the Anglo–German Agreement of 1 July 1890, which established the boundary between Nyasaland and German East Africa.

At independence, hostile relations between Malawi and Tanzania greatly reflected the difficulties of the postcolonial states to reposition themselves in the new postcolonial border context. This was aggravated by the differing foreign policies, domestic tribulations, and contestations over the interpretation of the boundary within the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/



African Union (AU) border inheritance doctrine, as well as the environmental dynamic. This followed the suspension of some cabinet ministers in Malawi and the granting of asylum to the ministers by Tanzania and Zambia. The resultant tensions were compounded by the involvement of such ministers, who were labelled 'rebels' in the anti-Banda¹ movements in Tanzania and Zambia. While tensions were evident in the early decades after the attainment of independence, in later periods, especially when all Southern Africans became independent, relations were cordial and repositioned themselves in the new postcolonial context to collectively tackle their pressing socio-economic and political challenges.

The central thesis of the chapter is that the postcolonial border dispute between Malawi and Tanzania and the resultant relations within Southern Africa were largely swayed by the imperial agenda of the White regimes in Southern Africa, and the (re)integration agenda of the Southern African countries in the postcolonial dispensation. The chapter draws its sources from documentary evidence accessed from libraries at the University of Dar es Salaam and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), private libraries, the AU documentation centre, and oral interviews. The chapter concludes that international relations in modern Southern Africa have been dynamic, and that this dynamism must be understood historically by considering the nature of the relations contested and negotiated during the colonial period, the events that shaped the colonial period, and the postcolonial history of conflict and peace on the shared international frontier and beyond.

Relations between Malawi and Tanzania: Power Politics in Southern Africa, 1964-1975

The preceding section has established a political crisis within the President Banda administration. This crisis led to certain ministers fleeing their country to Tanzania, an act that did not amuse President Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Indeed, Lake Nyasa

1 Hastings Kamuzu Banda was the prime minister and later the first president of Malawi from 1964 to 1994.

was regarded as an infiltration route. The Banda administration saw it necessary to control the lake and hold accountable those considered rebels. In this situation, there is no doubt that the Banda administration accused the neighbouring states of part-plotting the subversion of his administration. Three of his cabinet ministers, namely OE Chirwa (minister for justice), WMK Chiume (foreign minister), and A Bwanausi (minister for development) were dismissed from the government. Three other cabinet ministers, K Chisiza, W Chokani, and HBM Chipembere, resigned in sympathy with their fellow cabinet members. This political crisis witnessed the detention of about 1 200 Malawians (Mayall 1970). In addition, four senior Malawi Congress Party (MCP) members were expelled. Also, President Banda deposed a senior chief at Nkhata Bay, an area bordering Tanzania. It was alleged that all the expelled party members were unpopular and aided Banda's opponents (The Standard 1965; The Sunday Post 1969).² Thus, any hint of succession from any member of the cabinet had led to their unceremonious dismissal from office. Indeed, this characterised the Banda government (Mackenzie 1986).

During this political crisis, Malawi suspected that its neighbours, especially Tanzania and Zambia, had plotted subversion by aiding rebels within the government. Banda's government believed this, partly because the expelled ministers and many other actors sought refuge in Tanzania and Zambia. While in these countries, the dismissed groups allegedly formed opposition movements, which were aimed at assassinating Banda and, ultimately, overthrowing his government. For instance, Dar es Salaam was regarded by the Banda administration as the host of anti-Banda activities. Hence, in 1965, while addressing a political rally at Nkhata Bay, close to Lake Nyasa in Malawi, President Banda claimed that the Malawian rebels were trained in Tanzania in four camps, one of which was allegedly situated in a place close to Dar es Salaam. According to him, the training was meant to overthrow his government.³

2 Several newspaper reports captured the dynamism of the internal conflict.

3 *The Standard*, "Banda Accuses Tanzania", 25 August 1965.

While in Tanzania, the anti-Banda politicians opposed President Banda's claims over some districts, which they considered as baseless. They thus called on their fellow Malawians living in Dar es Salaam to embark on a protest action to force President Banda out of office. Also, the anti-Banda politicians participated in the mass demonstrations organised in Tanzania, which were aimed at denouncing Banda's territorial claims and his support for the Southern African colonial regimes.⁴ This tendency virtually destroyed the relations between Malawi and Tanzania (Mayall 1970).

The Tanzanian government rejected the allegations of supporting the anti-Banda politicians but maintained that it could not deny them refuge.⁵ James Mayall associates the Malawi crisis and the involvement of Tanzania and Malawi in such politics with Malawi's foreign policy towards the White regimes in Southern Africa. Thus, foreign policy differences and domestic crises influenced the border dispute and resultant relations between Malawi and Tanzania, and between Tanzania and the White regimes in Southern Africa.

Likewise, the politics of nationalism divided Malawi and Tanzania, frontline states and the White regimes in Southern Africa. From the 1960s to the 1970s, Malawi and Tanzania differed in terms of their foreign policy towards the racist regimes in Southern Africa. The difference especially concerned the liberation of the former Southern African colonies, including Southern Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe) under Britain, Mozambique under Portugal, and South Africa under the Boers. Whereas Tanzania was among the frontline states in the liberation struggles in Africa in general and in Southern Africa in particular, Malawi had diplomatic relations with the same colonial regimes. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was the headquarters of the co-ordinating committee of the liberation movements. The Frontline States Group was formed in the 1970s because of the intensity of the Southern African liberation struggle, after consultations

4 Ngurumo, "Wamalawi Wamkana Dr. Banda", 20 September 1968; *Ibid*, "Mhaini Dr. Banda Alaaniwe", 29 September 1968.

5 *Sauti ya Mwafrika*, "Nyerere Akanusha Banda", 18 June 1965.

between Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

After the independence of Mozambique and due to the pending independence of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the liberation base was moved from Tanzania to Zambia. Tanzania became the centre for organising liberation movements because of its status as an independent country, and because political parties and liberation movements had been banned in east, central, and southern African states. Thus, many leaders gathered in Tanzania to organise the movements and others formed political parties while in Tanzania. For instance, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) was founded in Tanganyika in 1962 (Mpungwe 2016).

Since its inception in 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now transformed into the African Union (AU) aimed to decolonise Africa (Binaisa 1977). It therefore declared hostility with and dissociated itself from any country under colonialism or ruled by foreign powers, including the South African apartheid government, ruled by the 'Boers'. The OAU's position on Southern Africa had three dimensions, namely: giving material and financial support to the armed struggle, imposing economic sanctions on South Africa, and isolating South Africa politically and culturally (Preiss 1973:2; Igbal 1973:1951). The OAU was of the view that apartheid persisted because of the attitudes of certain states towards the government of South Africa and their continued relations with the Southern African White regimes.⁶ So, a country that related with the White regimes in Southern Africa was an enemy of the frontline states.

However, Malawi objected to it and acted in contravention of the OAU deliberations, in particular the frontline states. Malawi's rejection was because she had diplomatic relations with and benefited politically and economically from the 'Unholy Trinity', that is the White regimes in Southern Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Portuguese East Africa. The three regimes united to fight

6 OAU, Resolutions Adopted by the First Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Cairo, UAR, 17-21 July 1964". See Resolution. AHG/Res. 6(1).

the frontline states and aided any country that was against the frontline states. They did so because nationalism threatened their colonial hegemony in Southern Africa. Thus, they used Malawi as a base to 'punish' their enemies, including Tanzania and Zambia. Malawi's objection was attested by its leader, President Banda, at the Summit Conference in Cairo, where he said,

While I feel strongly against Imperialism and Colonialism in any form; while I am just as anxious as anyone in this conference to help our brothers and sisters still under colonial rule in neighbouring territories, Malawi's power, my own power, to help is limited and circumscribed by geographical position... I want to make it quite clear here at this conference that the geographical position of Malawi makes it impossible for me and my country to sever all ties, diplomatic economic and cultural, with a certain power [Portugal] now still controlling great portions of our continent. I cannot promise here that I and my country will be in a position to carry out to the letter any resolution which demands total severance of all relations, diplomatic, economic, and cultural, with that power.⁷

As intimated by President Banda's statement, Malawi's denial of support for the liberation struggle was a result of two things: economic imperatives and moral issues. Malawi was, and still is, a landlocked country; thus, the country sought access to the sea through South Africa and Portuguese East Africa. Additionally, it aimed to employ its citizens, many of whom had previously worked in South Africa's industry, commerce, and households. For these economic factors, the Malawian Ministry of Labour had called on able-bodied Malawians to contact their district labour officers for possible employment in South Africa. The ministry believed in South Africa's capacity to employ them due to its expansive labour opportunity.⁸ In respect of the moral issue, President Banda believed that violence demonstrated the inability

7 GL Binaisa, pp. 59 (copied in Proceedings of the Summit Conference of Independent African States, Vol. 1, sec. 2, Addis Ababa, May 1963, pp. 140-141).

8 *The Nationalist*, "Malawians for South Africa", 28 June 1969.

to effectively address the liberation struggle. Instead, he pursued a more nuanced approach, emphasising dialogue and engagement. Banda believed that, through contact with colonial powers, their perspectives on the colonisation of Black Africa could be altered.

Countless pieces of evidence indicate that Malawi's open intention to support the White regimes in Southern Africa was an attempt to build relations with them from 1964. In 1966, Malawi chose to remain in the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) as South African Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller addressed the assembly, while other African countries withdrew from the assembly. Malawi, too, objected to Afro-Asian attempts to wrest the Western part of Southern Africa from South Africa. In 1967, Malawian delegates visited South Africa and established diplomatic relations with the country.

Later, South African Prime Minister Vorster visited Malawi to strengthen the diplomatic relations. In 1971, President Banda visited South Africa and Mozambique, as the first African head of state to do so for diplomatic reasons. Malawi opened up its airport to the South African Air Force and admitted a military attaché from the country (Preiss 1973:4; Robinson 2009:4). In 1969, Malawi did not vote for the Lusaka Manifesto (the Fifth East and Central African Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia), which opposed the apartheid regime in South Africa. Also, President Banda did not attend the inter-African conferences, while his representatives who did so had no plenipotentiary powers.⁹

Similarly, Malawi did not attend the 1972 Rabat Summit, which called upon all independent African states bordering colonies to allow liberation movements to install military bases in their territories to help increase the number of liberation activities (Igbal 1973). While the Malawian government built relations with the Southern African White regimes, the frontline states did not engage in any diplomatic relations with the White regimes. They also mobilised other African countries to isolate the regime. For instance, African countries boycotted the 1975 Montreal Olympics. They adopted the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement, which sought to

9 Mfanyakazi, "Malawi Yampendelea Kaburu", 18 May 1968.

isolate apartheid South Africa from participating in sports across the world (Mpungwe 2016).

Banda's foreign policy towards the White regimes in Southern Africa was partly a result of his support of capitalism. On many occasions, he opposed Tanzanian Julius Nyerere's socialist and Zambian Kenneth Kaunda's humanist philosophies. For him, these two philosophies had been tried out elsewhere and had never worked. To him, socialism was an 'economic and political suicide'.¹⁰ Because he supported capitalism, his critics often called him a defender of imperialism and fascism.¹¹

The relations between Malawi and the 'Unholy Trinity' had very significant effects on the frontline states (Tanzania and Zambia) that were close or directly opposed to the White regimes in Southern Africa. For instance, South Africa developed hostile relations with Tanzania and Zambia, where the guerrillas who fought against South Africa were trained. However, South Africa feared communist penetration in Africa, especially following the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway by China (Preiss 1973). As a result, Malawi was not only isolated from the rest of Africa but also had sour relations with some neighbouring countries, especially Tanzania – relations that ultimately resulted in the border dispute between the two nation states.

The dispute over the Lake Nyasa frontier was provoked by the different policies endorsed by the two states (Mayall 1973). It is important to note here that the boundary was bitterly contested because Malawi and its allies wanted to control the activities of the freedom fighters and threaten Tanzania.

At this time, the relations between Tanzania and South Africa became very sour. For instance, in 1967, more than 40 Tanzanians were repatriated from South Africa and received by Minister for Home Affairs Oscar Kambona when they arrived

10 Often Banda said he was against socialism but pro capitalism. Countless pieces of evidence show this. See, for instance, *The Nationalist*, "I believe in Capitalism – Banda", 17 May 1968.

11 Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Banda was referred to by many African heads of state as a defender of imperialism because of his relations with the White South. See, for instance, *The Nationalist*, "Malawi Expels Tanzanians", 12 February 1969.

at the port in Dar es Salaam through a Kampala ship.¹² It is thus felt that Malawi and its allies were involved in the border dispute to control the liberation movements. In response, Tanzania initiated the dispute to stop Malawi and her allies from attacking the country, using the lake as a gateway in the fight against the colonialists. This indicates that the politics of both states, which led to the border dispute, were navigated within the foreign policy domain. This is because national leaders operate in the nexus of international and national politics. In doing so, they present their arguments within the context of domestic politics and remain concerned about international politics, how international affairs affect their supporters at home (Kim 2014).

As shown earlier, Malawi had diplomatic relations with the White Southern African regimes that threatened to destabilise Tanzania. Throughout this period, the border tensions were also stirred by Malawi's allies in the conflict. The allies were the governments of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the South African Boer regime, and the government of Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). These governments had diplomatic ties with Malawi.¹³ Tanzania regarded Malawi as an enemy that was used by the colonialists against the frontline states in the struggle to liberate Southern Africa. It was in that context that the relations of these neighbours deteriorated shortly after independence.

Government officials and ordinary people in Tanzania believed that the border dispute had nothing to do with the two countries, but the quest for hegemony in Southern Africa, where a majority of the countries were ruled by a government with an imperial agenda. There was compelling evidence of the involvement of the White regimes in this border dispute. For instance, the Lake Nyasa people in Tanzania used songs to express their views in times of peace and conflict. During the period of active border tensions which involved White actors, there was a popular song:

12 Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam, *Information General*, p. 9.

13 See Ngurumo, "Tanzania Itajibu Matendo, Siyo Majibu ya Banda-J. K. Nyerere", 14 September 1968; Mfanyakazi, "Banda na Vijibwa Vyake Hawawezi Kuchukua Tanzania. Kama Wanaume Wajaribu", 28 September 1968.

*Mnjangalia Banda wa ku-Malawi, adai ndema witu tenga, akotiki va Msumbiji na Makaburu va Kusini kutola ndema witu kwa makakala. Sinda sinda lelo kanandumbwe kandu kawoneka palochi, ku-Luhoho kandu kawoneka, ku-Mbaha kandu kawoneka, ku-Liwole kandu kawoneka.*¹⁴

The song loosely translates thus:

Watch Banda of Malawi, he has staked a claim to our country. He has sought the help of his Mozambican and South African Boer allies to snatch our country by force. Behold, behold, there is a thing seen in the waters, it is seen in Luhuhu, it is seen in Mbaha, it is also seen in Liuli.

The song was intended to call the government's attention to what they perceived as an imminent attack by certain Malawian warships and those of their allies. Through this song, a message was conveyed to the government to protect and support them. This song was metaphoric. It meant that a small country that had just gotten her independence threatened a neighbouring country through the deployment of marine vehicles in Lake Nyasa.

In another move, in September 1968, Banda extended his irredentist claims to Zambia. He repeatedly maintained that at least four districts in the Eastern Province of Zambia belonged to Malawi. In response, the President of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda, said in September 1968 that:

Let him go ahead and declare war on Zambia. Let him come. We are ready. Dr. Banda can bring in South African and Portuguese troops. But if they get in they won't get out. They will perish in Zambia. Banda is 'stooge and megaphone' [sic] of his master.¹⁵

14 Such songs and similar ones were widespread in Tanzania's Lake Nyasa region during this time of active border dispute.

15 There is a wide range of chronological events of rival and cordial relations between Malawi and Zambia. See *Sunday Nation*, "Zambia and Malawi: Healing the Breach", 20 September 1970.

The irredentist claims were recurrent and widespread throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Following such declarations of irredentism, two Zambian officials cancelled their official visit to Malawi.¹⁶ This indicates the knotty relations between the two countries.

The border issue continued to stir discontent among ordinary citizens, with voices of disagreement echoing from both Malawi and Tanzania. People in various regions of both countries engaged in heated verbal disputes over the matter. Verbal threats, mass demonstrations, and claims denouncing speeches characterised the socio-political environment of both countries.¹⁷ Regions such as Dar es Salaam, Moshi, Tanga, Mwanza, Arusha, Iringa, Mbeya, and Ruvuma in Tanzania participated actively in denouncing Malawi's claims. Most of the demonstrations were led by the Tanganyika National Union (TANU), which was the only political party in Tanzania at the time. Other demonstrations were organised by the sole trade union in Tanganyika, the National Union of Tanganyika Workers (NUTA), the Tanganyika Youth League (TYL), and the Union of Tanzania's Women, locally called *Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania* (UWT). The NUTA General Meeting of 20 September 1968 discussed the matter and agreed on measures to be taken, including an agreement to draft a very strong report to denounce Banda's claims. Second, they agreed that workers' demonstrations against Malawi's border claims be staged in the whole country, at NUTA's headquarters as well as in regional and district offices. In Dar es Salaam, more than 20 000 workers and farmers demonstrated on the main road against what they called President Banda's wrong territorial claims.¹⁸ The police, army, musical bands, and thousands of civilians participated in the demonstrations on 25 September 1968, which had earlier been declared a country-wide demonstration day.

The deterioration of the relations was aggravated by bitter verbal exchanges between Presidents Banda and Nyerere at the

16 Ngurumo, "Hakuna Urafiki na Malawi", 28 September 1968; *Sunday Nation*, "Smith Visits South Africa", 12 July 1970.

17 See Ngurumo, "Tanzania Itajibu Matendo – Siyo Majibu ya Banda", Saturday 14 September 1968.

18 *Mfanyakazi*, "Banda na Vijibwa Vyake Hawawezi Kuchukua Tanzania. Kama Wanaume Wajaribu-Simba wa Vita (Kawawa)", 28 September 1968.

time. The aggressive name-calling made it impossible for Blantyre and Dar es Salaam to normalise relations, as the presidents were at the centre of the dispute. In another important meeting held at Malangali village, Iringa, President Nyerere stressed that not an inch of the land belonged to Malawi. He also argued that giving the territory to Malawi meant giving it to the White settlers of South Africa.¹⁹

Che-Mponda (1972) argues that at the time of name-calling, there was a definite breakdown in direct communication between the two leaders. Name-calling did not merely mean the exchange of insults between the two leaders, but the heightening of bitter interpersonal political hatred between them. This ultimately deterred relations between them and consolidated the tensions. Ironically, journalists were the only carriers of information from one country to another. As intimated earlier, the OAU's major role at this time was to ensure that all colonies in Africa were liberated through the provision of moral, financial, military, and economic counsel and intervention. Indeed, the crisis in question had compounded the very role the OAU and frontline states bore at their disposal. It is in this context that the OAU, due to ideological and foreign policy differences among its member states towards the White South, created a division between those who supported liberation through violent means on the one hand, and those who opted for adaptation on the other hand. The two lines were hard to reconcile and tensions between them were the order of the day.

Between 1964 and 1975, newspapers reported pronouncements by statesmen that showed the hostility and anxiety of the two nations. Certainly, this period witnessed the division rather than the cohesion of relations between Malawi and Tanzania and also in the southern African region. Due to the hostility that manifested itself in verbal and military threats,

19 While countering Banda's territorial claims, often Tanzania alleged that Banda was used by the White South regime which allegedly controlled Malawi and used it to fight the anti-colonial movements. As a result, no territorial area could be given or negotiated at this time, as giving any piece of land to Malawi was regarded as giving it to the enemy – the colonialists. See, for instance, *The Nationalist*, "Not an Inch of Land for Banda – Nyerere", 9 October 1968.

it became clear that the Lake Nyasa area was not peaceful. Ultimately, this slowed down the already inadequate socio-political and economic developments in both countries (Msafiri 2011). In Tanzania, a lot of people fled the Lake Nyasa area to other parts of the country. The presence of many combatants with ammunition in the area terrified the local people. Meanwhile, important centres of commerce that had developed during the colonial period collapsed. Liuli, Mbamba Bay, Manda, and Mwaya, for example, collapsed, while Mbinga and Songea became famous trading centres because the border tensions did not affect them (Mihanjo 1999).

Because of the active border dispute, there were limited cross-border movements, and so human interactions were virtually impossible. This shows the link between border disputes and regional integration initiatives. Indeed, people-to-people interactions and demilitarisation of African societies are germane to the attainment of Agenda 2063. During the border dispute, the Malawian government recruited a youth paramilitary group called the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), and stationed it along the border, especially in the Karonga district in Malawi, which borders the Kyela district in Tanzania. The MYP was also referred to as Banda's private army because of their loyalty to him. Its primary function was to maintain Banda's grip on power (Mackenzie 1986). They guarded the border and harassed people, especially those from Tanzania, thereby aggravating the tension at the border and preventing interstate movement between Tanzania and Malawi.

The Tanzanian government also prepared itself by enlisting some youth and able-bodied adults and turning them into militias to defend the border areas. Also, the government built military preparedness in expectation of President Banda's army. This was made explicit when the second vice-president and the minister for defence, Rashid Mfaume Kawawa, delivered a speech to the National Service Army at Mgulani barracks, Dar es Salaam.²⁰ Similarly, the road infrastructure in the region was improved

20 See, for instance, *Ngurumo*, "Banda na Atie Mguu Tanzania-Kawawa", 26 September 1968; *Ibid*, "Santuri ya Wabeberu ni Dr. Banda", 12 October 1968.

and military trucks and combatants were supplied to the Lake Nyasa region. The government spent about 1.5 million pounds on infrastructural development, including road upgrades and improvement in the transport and communication networks in the border region. In another development, the government offered military and political education to the villagers living along the shores of the lake.

The two governments' actions presented above sparked some exchanges of fire. In Tanzania, military displays caused psychological disturbances and internal displacement of people to the mountainous areas, where they took refuge. In short, they caused general unrest among the communities in the border region. Also, people dug bunkers in which to hide. One event that illustrates the tensions was witnessed at Manda in 1968. There was a graduation ceremony at St Thomas Middle School, Manda. Suddenly a submarine ship emerged from the lake and bombarded the area, leading to the paralysis of the ceremony, making it a struggle for parents to rescue their children. This was a very shocking event.²¹

The people expressed their frustration, anxiety, resentment, and disillusionment at the border tensions. The local people perceived the conflicts stirred by the states' ambitions to safeguard and enlarge their territories as factors that disconnected them from their peaceful interactions with their kin across the border (the lake). These tensions, initiated by the states, seemed irrelevant to the local communities, who felt estranged from their long-standing harmonious relationships. The reaction of the local people was expressed through letters and songs by organised traditional bands. One such letter, written to the editor of *The Nationalist* newspaper reads:

You very well know that both our countries are in a delicate period, that of development. We are concentrating all our efforts to get our people better housing, better education, better hospital facilities, better and high standard of living.

21 There are widespread tales, stories, memories, and songs describing this event in the communities that surrounded the respective school and communities in Lake Nyasa, in Tanzania.

I doubt if you have accomplished all these in your country!
Now that you are bringing in the unthinkable: war. All that
we have achieved will be destroyed.²²

Evidence also shows that the people of Katumbasongwe, Kasumulu, and Ikolo in the Kyela district, who crossed the border on foot, could hardly attend social events such as funerals, marriages, and initiation ceremonies in their friends' and relatives' villages in Malawi, as they were afraid of being harassed and, perhaps, imprisoned by the paramilitary Young Pioneers. At this time, such soured relations were neither intervened by the OAU nor did any international organisation come into play for mediation. Relations were largely shaped by interstate imperatives. When some people met the paramilitary group while trying to cross the border, the latter asked, "*wachokela kuti?*" This means, "Where are you from?". If one said he or she came from the Tanzanian side of the border, the person would be severely punished or imprisoned.

Several road blockades were set up by the paramilitary group, which controlled and blocked the movement of people, especially the movement of those from Tanzania. The actions of the group indicate that cross-border relations during this time were influenced by an instituted instrument of force. Indeed, both countries had a role to play in heightening this dispute, especially when diplomacy did little to settle the dispute. While there were road blockades at many entry points of the border on the Malawian side, equally Tanzania built infrastructure to prepare itself should war break out. Yet, both countries engaged in the display of firearms and shootings, but such actions did not escalate to a full-blown war.

In grappling with security threats, the Tanzanian authorities prohibited their citizens from crossing the border. For instance, the Mbeya regional commissioner ordered the people living in the Lake Nyasa area not to cross the border into Malawi, and not to attack the Malawians who were crossing the border into Tanzania. He, therefore, called for the maintenance

22 *The Nationalist*, "Open Letter to Dr. Banda", 4 October 1968.

of harmonious relations with Malawians, including those visiting Tanzania to greet their relatives; however, they had an obligation to report to the authorities in the Kyela district those with bad intentions.²³ It is important to note that, while the relations at the state level had soured, people living at the borders continued to enjoy cordial relationships. This is a lesson to African political elites and regional actors. The state and its apparatus had deviated from its original purpose of aligning itself to the interest of its subjects.

The cross-border relations were worsened by Malawi's decision to stop the Ilala ship from providing transport services from Malawi to Tanzania (Mayall 1973). Similarly, the boats that used to transport people and goods across Lake Nyasa were withdrawn by the Malawian government. As the steamers were only allowed to go to Mbamba Bay, Mwaya, and Manda, human interactions across Lake Nyasa greatly deteriorated. This caused some hardship for the lake dwellers (Che-Mponda 1972). The boats that managed to enter Tanzania were confiscated, and so was the property found in them. Due to this situation, the people stopped passing through the middle of the lake. They instead went to Kyela, where they crossed the River Songwe on foot. However, even the Songwe route was insecure. The border was guarded by the violent paramilitary Malawi Young Pioneers. A camp for this paramilitary group was established at Kapolo in Malawi, thus making it possible to control the cross-border movements of people, as the camp faced Kyela district, which borders northern Malawi. Also, some members of the Youth League of Malawi (YLM) were deployed together with the paramilitary group. The two groups harassed the people who crossed the border.

Thus, despite Karonga and Kyela being close to each other, the people in the two areas were separated from each other not because of natural barriers but because of the border surveillance mounted by the Malawian state. The local people at the border, especially on the Tanzanian side, were not passive, but worked out ways of crossing the border. For instance, they concealed their identity. Consequently, they identified themselves as affiliated

23 Ngurumo, "Wasivuke Mpaka", 11 December 1968.

with specific chiefs or clans in Malawi. Therefore, when questioned about their identities and backgrounds, they would refer to the names of their relatives or friends residing on the opposite side of the border. They could act the way they did because they spoke the same language as their Malawian counterparts and because the paramilitary youth who controlled the border were not natives of the border community. Thus, they could not countercheck the correctness of the information they were given. While the mobility from Tanzania to Malawi was reduced in scale and intensity, evidence indicates that the movement of people from Malawi to Tanzania was significant during the border dispute. There is strong evidence suggesting that Tanzanians treated individuals arriving from Malawi with respect and hospitality by Tanzanians. Unlike in Malawi, Tanzania did not have paramilitary groups, ensuring a more peaceful environment for those from Malawi.

Migration from Tanzania to Malawi was affected by the Mozambican wars of liberation. Between 1964 and 1974, the history of Mozambique was characterised by, among other things, political unrest. Movement from Tanzania to Malawi via Mozambique stopped because the route was unsafe. This was problematic because, prior to the war, this route was the most convenient. However, the conflict between African liberation movements and the Portuguese colonial government in Mozambique made the route insecure. Due to this insecurity, a refugee camp was set up at Lundo village in Tanzania for Mozambican refugees (Mihanjo 1999). Therefore, the interaction between Tanzanians and Malawians through Mozambique diminished between 1964 and 1974 for three reasons. The first reason was the constant unrest in Mozambique caused by the armed struggle. Military attacks ultimately spread to Mozambique's Niassa district that borders Tanzania. Tanzanians were equally targeted by the colonial state in Mozambique because they supported FRELIMO. Second, Malawi had bad relations with the Mozambican liberation movement, FRELIMO, since the former supported Portuguese rule in Mozambique. Third, both Malawi and Mozambique were faced with internal security problems, and their dissidents were granted sanctuary in Tanzania (Henderson 1977).

Some conclusions can therefore be drawn regarding the relations at this moment. First, when the interaction between people from the two neighbouring states was influenced by a neighbouring state engaged in war, cross-border movements suffered. Evidence shows that the interaction between Tanzanians and Malawians through Mganda and Kihoda ended at this time because the route to Malawi through Mozambique and Malawi itself was insecure. Second, when the two neighbouring states faced a border crisis, their relations and the movement of people diminished. Thus, the cross-border relationships that flourished before the crises – such as trade, intermarriage, relatives' visitations, and collective tackling of calamities – significantly deteriorated at this time.

Malawi-Tanzania Relations during the Conflict: (Re)Integration of Southern African Countries, 1975-2010

In 1975, another phase of the Malawi-Tanzania border dispute began. This phase was characterised by a passive and dormant border dispute. During this phase, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and even Zambia were interested in normalising their political relations due to domestic and external pressures. There are certain reasons why this phase was characterised by the dormant border dispute. First, each government felt that it was internally preoccupied, especially with building economies that needed multilateral co-operation rather than conflicts with neighbouring countries. Second, any external conflict could hardly receive local support. Third, Malawi made a major foreign policy change at this time. Among other things, it sought to establish partnerships with its neighbours, including those who had been adversaries before. The fourth reason was Malawi's membership of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), of which Tanzania was also a member. In this regional block, the countries needed each other for vested economic reasons.

Furthermore, the fifth reason was the increased tensions within and outside Malawian polity. President Banda faced stiff

political competition at home, especially from politicians who sought to subvert him. His opponents were supported by South Africa, the US, and a Mozambican political party called *Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana* (RENAMO). All these, especially South Africa, threatened Malawi with a destabilisation campaign (Robinson 2009). So, from such increased tensions, Malawi turned to her former enemies as potential trade and political partners. This is evidenced by many conferences, which involved Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia, which were held between 1978 and 1979, and beyond.

The open border tensions between Tanzania and Malawi came to an end in 1975, leading to the normalisation of relations between the two states. This effectively diffused violence and threats. Also, the local people on each side of the border maintained harmonious relations between them. James Mayall asserts that some of the people of northern Malawi and southern Tanganyika (Tanzania), such as the Nyakyusa and Ngonde, were related (Mayall 1973). The normalisation of the relations manifested itself in, among other things, the resumption of the steamer services across the lake and official visits of senior government officials to each of the two states on matters relating to currency exchange and trade. Also, the paramilitary group that was stationed at the border region to block cross-border movements was withdrawn. Consequently, peace and stability returned to the border region and normal cross-border human interactions resumed.

Generally speaking, the official position is that cross-border relations are mutually beneficial to Malawi, Tanzania, and the entire Southern Africa. There is prosperity in trade, visitations by relatives on both sides, intermarriages, and exchange of official visits. There were other problems, such as smuggling and violation of immigration rules. However, these were tackled immediately as they happened and did not deter cross-border relations because most of the misconduct was founded on interpersonal issues.²⁴

24 Interview with government official, Nyasa District, 30 August 2022.

The restoration of peace and stability to the region accounted for the thriving of cross-border trade in domestic and other materials, such as cloth, soap, sugar, cooking oil, and cassava. People from one side of the lake established businesses on the other side of the border. For instance, a lot of people from the Tanzanian side of the border carried out business activities in Nkhata Bay and beyond. There was a market called Mataifa in Mzuzu, Malawi, which was mainly dominated by traders from Tanzania. Cross-border crossings were either by land via the official border at Kasumulu or porous borders such as Katumbasungwe in Kyela, or across the lake following the resumption of shipping services between Mbamba Bay and Nkhata Bay. Such Malawian ships as the Nkwazi and the Mtendele called at Mbamba Bay port once a week. Also, the Songea ship from Tanzania called at Nkhata Bay port once a week. This happened after the opening of the lake transport services between Tanzania and Malawi in 1996 to enhance the continuous operation of the ports at Mbamba Bay in Tanzania and Nkhata Bay in Malawi.²⁵

The establishment of the lake transport services at Mbamba Bay and Nkhata Bay increased the interaction between the Lake Nyasa communities in Malawi and Tanzania. Border passes, which were renewable, were issued to allow passengers to stay on either side of the border for seven days. Thus, a lot of people crossed Lake Nyasa to undertake trade and fishing, visit friends and relatives, and attend social events, such as funerals and marriages on either side of the border. However, others crossed the border illegally for similar purposes. This resulted in the smuggling of goods and other essentials from Malawi to Tanzania.

Studies indicate that most of the cross-border trade was done informally, and thus not recorded by government officials. This trade involved the traditional exchange of goods and services between the neighbouring communities on the two sides of the border, involving commodities intended for re-export and re-sale in distant, urban, and rural areas. Four categories of unrecorded goods were traded at the border: agricultural commodities,

25 Interview with port officer, 18 March 2022.

industrial goods, forest products, and water products (Ogutu & Echessah 1998:xii and Minde & Nakhumwa 1998).

While informal cross-border trade characterised the transactions between Malawi and Tanzania between 1975 and 2011, with a small contribution to the national economies, they largely grappled with seasonal food deficits among the bordering people in both countries. This resonates with other cross-border relations in Africa. For instance, despite its adverse impact on the economy, health sector, and environment, informal cross-border trade at Botswana's borders played a substantial role in involving individuals and families in trade. This engagement contributed to food security, employment, and income. Indeed, it alleviated poverty, complemented the formal commercial network, and created an opportunity for another market for domestic goods. Characteristically, the colonially imposed border across Africa did not deter the flow of goods and cross-border movement of people across border communities in Africa. As such, borders are not barriers to movement but are interstate pathways and conduits for intra-community relations. In this regard, boundaries in Africa are porous at the local level.

Due to the existence of harmony and peace in the border region, people from one side of the border could work on the other side. It is indicated that a lot of people from Malawi, especially from the Karonga and Rumpi districts, secured jobs in the Kyela district, Tanzania. Kyela attracts labour mobility because of its big border post as well as a commercially viable township at the border area. Some people from the Nyasa and Kyela districts also have been employed in kiosks, bars, and shops in Malawi.

Most of those who migrated from Tanzania worked in sectors that were owned by Tanzanians. Some Tanzanians have opened businesses in Karonga and Nkhata Bay, which are border regions. This was possible because people in border regions usually interact much with each other in business activities that contribute to the development of the township community. As such, those who had relatives on the other side of the border secured employment there and made others do likewise. After settling in their neighbours' land and mingling with the natives

for a long time, they established permanent settlements there. This caused immigration control problems, for most of the people at the border spoke the same language and had similar clan names.²⁶ Later, they visited their relatives back home during calamities or festivals and sent remittances to them, thereby building further ties between the cross-border people. So, during such calamities as hunger, drought, food shortages, and diseases, the people helped each other. For instance, during this study, the member of parliament for Ludewa constituency recollected the support his constituency received during a drought, including assistance in the form of firewood, food, and seeds from the lake villages in Malawi.

The residents in the border region engaged in cross-border interactions for medical purposes as well. Those living in adjacent areas had convenient access to medical facilities on both sides of the border. There is evidence supporting the fact that numerous dispensaries and medical stores situated on the Tanzanian side of the border served individuals from Malawi seeking immediate medical attention. In cases where specific medicines were either unavailable or expensive in Malawi, some Malawians would cross the border into Tanzania to obtain them. Additionally, when the dispensaries in Malawi offering necessary injections were situated far from their residences, individuals from Malawi would sometimes cross into Tanzania for these medical services. Conversely, residents from the Tanzanian side of the border also crossed into Malawi to receive medical treatment, often opting for public hospitals.

The hospital mentioned by most of the respondents was Apolo, located in the Karonga district. People from the Tanzanian side of the border, especially those from certain villages in the Kyela district, continued to seek medical services in Apolo Hospital because of free medical services in public hospitals in Malawi. Upon confirming their home villages, such as Katamba, Mwaituni, Mwambande, Mwasulama, Mwantende, and Kalongolela, they were provided with Malawi Health Passports (MHP) for easy facilitation of free medical services.

26 Interview with government official, 22 August 2022.

Sometimes, they used the passports of their friends and relatives who lived in Malawi. It was difficult for the hospital officers to verify their places of origin because the people from Tanzania spoke the same language as those of the villagers in Malawi, besides having identical clan names. It appears that, if a Tanzanian died in a hospital in Malawi and his identity showed that he or she came from a certain village in Malawi, the remains were transported to the respective village, and from that village, would be transported to the Tanzanian side of the border. This indicates the nature of the porosity of the border as well as strong social cohesion among the people in the bordering areas. This community cohesion and solidarity transcended the logic of an international frontier or modern-day border construction. While the heterogeneous nature of cities seems to reveal identity politics and hostility to migration in several African countries, the local population in villages and border towns have continued to live in harmony, rejecting xenophobia and anti-migration disposition.

However, one event threatened the harmonious relations between the border peoples in recent years. This had to do with the violence inflicted on some Tanzanian businessmen on the Malawian side of the border. The Tanzanians had opened small businesses in Malawi's Karonga district. However, between the 1990s and 2000s, the Malawian government forced the Tanzanians to close their businesses. There are two interpretations of this. First, the businessmen claimed that the order was issued because of jealousy from the local people, who thought that they were making lucrative profits from the shops. However, the jealousy argument has been refuted. Second, the superintendent of the immigration department in Kyela district maintained that the shops were shut because the owners did not have passports or permits to do business in the area, thereby evading taxes. These different views imply that there was articulation between the modern-day and official trade-related practices and the local or customary business practices. The local practices, which drive the economy of border towns, are usually in contravention of the state-established controls in the border region.

Although relations have subsequently normalised, they were not as great as they were during the pre-colonial and

British colonial periods. There were increased contacts between people from the Lake Nyasa area and those of the mountainous areas and the core urban areas. This happened because their contacts with the Malawians no longer yielded the expected results, especially trade-related ones. The transformation was influenced by the emergence of a novel connection between the lake's peripheries and the central regions, facilitated by enhanced road infrastructure.

In contrast, transportation services across the lake dramatically deteriorated. For instance, ships plied only the Mbamba Bay-Nkhata Bay route. Documentary evidence indicates that transportation services were irregular due to frequent vessel breakdowns and decreased water level in some of the ports. Furthermore, there were very few privately owned boats in the region; most of the boats belonged to the government of Malawi (Bootsma 2006). This suggests that, although a border was opened and human interactions were uninterrupted, opportunities were not, and still are not significantly directed towards economic progress at the local level. This calls for the intervention of RECs and regional actors to dialogue with state and non-state actors on both sides in the quest to overcome the challenges and enhance the economic activities in the border towns.

Conclusion

As systematically engaged in the chapter, the postcolonial states of Tanzania and Malawi exemplify how modern African states can alter the trajectory of international relations in times of conflict and peace. The first decade of independence witnessed division in international politics, the promotion of extreme nationalism, and co-operation among the states with similar ideological inclinations, which shaped cross-border relations. The agenda of imperial powers was to perpetuate colonial domination in areas still under their control. This agenda was achieved by making alliances with some newly independent African countries to sustain the hegemony of the imperial states.

On the contrary, frontline states intended to liberate the colonies – an agenda that met with strong opposition from

colonialists. Tanzania, being one of the spearheads of the liberation movements, met opposition from the colonialists. The White regimes in Southern Africa intended to use Malawi to countercheck Tanzania's move and that of the larger frontline states in Southern Africa. As such, the Lake Nyasa area became a zone of fierce contestation and the Lake Nyasa border region became a highly guarded frontier. This restricted the movement of people, as most of the relations that flourished during the pre-colonial and colonial times deteriorated during this period.

In the case of Tanzania and Malawi, lake transportation services ceased, and cross-border relations declined. Also, cultural visits, intermarriages, and trade relations experienced stagnation. In addition, after the two states became independent, co-operation in the education sector also ceased. However, after 1975, the two countries normalised their relations. This was because colonial territories, which used to divide them because of the penetration of the imperial agenda, attained independence. Thus, the key preoccupation of nation states at this time was to reposition themselves in the economic agenda of co-operations within the SADC framework. So, the demise of colonialism created a new wave of foreign policy within these countries, in which former foes became doves. As such, trade, transport services, and normal trans-lake visitations relating to marriages and ceremonies were restored.

Border disputes in Africa are still a practical reality that need politically and legally binding permanent solutions. African regional organisations, such as the African Union (AU), should intervene in border disputes to prevent degeneration into interstate wars. It is crystal clear that the colonialists who 'sliced' up the continent and those who divided the people into nation states due to power politics and struggles for independence have long gone, but their legacy remains. As noted in the preceding discussion, economic and political imperatives of integration brought together nations that were torn apart by the imperial agenda.

Countries in the Global South learned from past mistakes and used them as opportunities to forge strong solidarity in a path

of pursuing their common interests. Indeed, African countries should abide by the intervention of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) to fix all remaining troubling interstate borders on the continent. This should go hand in hand with clearly defining interterritorial treaties, putting in place boundary marks on the ground such as pillars and beacons to complete the process of demarcation, and reports of these schemes should be submitted to the AU for evidence and reference. Implementing these measures will mitigate the likelihood of future interstate border disputes, fostering unity and bolstering continental integration, particularly within the SADC zone, thereby promoting regional cohesion and co-operation.

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Chapter 14

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