

# HISTORY AS A DETERMINANT OF MALAWI-MOZAMBIQUE RELATIONS: THE CASE OF THE NSANJE INTERNATIONAL INLAND PORT

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## ABSTRACT

*Using the Nsanje international inland port saga as a case study, this paper employs the realism theory to examine the historically difficult relationship between Malawi and Mozambique. Based on data gathered from interviews and previously published studies, the study's final conclusion is that Malawi's bilateral relations with Mozambique are the product and continue to be shaped by history. Because the relationship between the two states is historically based on the provision of services especially port facilities, the Nsanje inland port is at loggerheads with Mozambique's national economic interests as it seeks to put an end to the historically rooted modus operandi of the relationship. The study recommends mandatory feasibility studies before starting projects, placing the port project on hold, continuing with the current foreign policy which to a great extent appeases Mozambique and finding some use for the port structures which currently constitute a white elephant.*

## KEYWORDS

*History, national interest, Nsanje inland port, Malawi-Mozambique relations, river navigation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Malawi is a landlocked country in Southern Africa bordered by Mozambique to the east, south and west, Tanzania to the north and east and Zambia to the west. Due to its landlocked status, the economy of Malawi depends heavily on neighbouring countries, especially Tanzania and Mozambique, for maritime transport. A 2020 study found that transportation costs for Malawi are one of the highest in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, a phenomenon that renders Malawi's low-value bulky commodity exports, including tobacco, uncompetitive and imports, like much needed fertilisers, more expensive [1].

To reduce transportation costs, Malawi has long desired an alternative route to the Indian Ocean through Mozambique, accessible by sailing from the town of Nsanje in the southern tip of Malawi, down the Shire River into Mozambique then into the Zambezi River and down to the mouth of the Zambezi at Chinde. In the 1850s, British explorer and missionary, David Livingstone, used this waterway which is often referred to as the Shire-Zambezi waterway, on his explorations of the region and he called it "God's Highway into Africa" [2]. The waterway was also being used in the early 20th century to transport molasses from a government-owned sugar estate in southern Malawi and small vessels were privately operated from Malawi to the port of Chinde in Mozambique. However, all this was stopped due to the 1977 to 1992 civil war in Mozambique [3]. Recent research on the waterway has shown that its successful reopening would reduce the distance to the Indian Ocean from 2855 kilometres to only 380 kilometres [4]. This would help Malawi reduce the annual import bill by an estimated USD175 million [5].

A pre-feasibility study conducted in 2006 on the waterway indicated that the rivers are navigable, but recommended more research to ascertain the technical, economic, social and environmental viability as well as the sustainability of the development and operation of the waterway [4]. Around 2009, Malawi's then president, Bingu wa Mutharika, perhaps relying on agreements like the cooperation framework for implementing the Shire-Zambezi waterways development project provided by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2007 among the Governments of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, and hoping to 'force' Mozambique to give in for the benefit of good neighbourly relations, proceeded with the construction of the Nsanje inland port without waiting for the further studies recommended by the study done in 2006 [6]. However, things did not go according to plan. On October 23, 2010, during the supposed opening of the port, President Bingu wa Mutharika had to tell the crowd that was gathered to celebrate the scheduled arrival of the first barge carrying 60 tonnes of imported fertiliser that Mozambican authorities had seized the barge and arrested the four Malawians on board for sailing in Mozambican waters without authorisation. President Mugabe of Zimbabwe and President Rupiah Banda of Zambia were among the notable figures in the crowd. Bingu added that before permitting any barges to traverse the stretch that passes through its territory, the Mozambican government had demanded environmental and feasibility assessments [7].

Years down the line, despite Malawi trying to improve relations and an environmental and feasibility study being conducted on the navigability of the waterway by a German consulting firm, Hydroplan, in 2015 with findings showing that the waterway is navigable for 4.2 months of the year without dredging the rivers and that the whole project has a very low environmental cost, Mozambique vehemently insists that the issue of the Nsanje inland port is a "closed affair" [5]. Mozambique further claims that the difficulties surrounding the inland port are not of Mozambique's making, but are inherent in the Malawian project which was neither viable nor sustainable in the short, medium and long term as the Shire-Zambezi waterway is not commercially navigable thereby defeating the general objective of the proposed project which is the reduction of transport costs in terms of time and money [7].

A number of authors have undertaken the task of explaining why the Shire-Zambezi waterway project failed [8]; [9]. While acknowledging that the two countries' history of relations has not always been pleasant, these studies have almost always placed a huge portion of the blame on the late President Bingu wa Mutharika for pursuing the project without Mozambique's express consent. This paper contends that while Bingu may have made mistakes in his foreign policy choices, he was also up against a huge tide of history that not only made the Mozambican leadership hostile to the project but also brought the two states' national interests at loggerheads. Hence, what Bingu did was largely a trigger and what followed were only symptoms of issues deeply rooted in history.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In a highly interdependent and fast globalising world, it is unrealistic to believe that African countries can prosper in isolation. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that there are calls for regional integration, cooperation and partnerships from organisations like the African Union with the aim of fostering peace and development on the continent. However, Africa's integration efforts are often influenced both directly and indirectly by interstate relations as differences among member-states of regional and continental organisations go against the mainstream discourse of integration and cooperation. The issue of the port in Nsanje seems to have been an issue that required the spirit of integration and partnership. However, the countries involved did not agree and were ready to escalate the situation further. In the context of the aforementioned dynamics, it becomes imperative to ask why was the project such a failure despite the huge amounts of money spent on the project, a few countries involved and the involvement of

international organisations? What powerful forces can force countries to overlook integration and partnership? This paper, therefore, endeavours to conduct a critical analysis of the relations between Malawi and Mozambique which have a greater impact on integration, economics and even peace in the region.

### **3. OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER**

This study's primary goal is to analyse the historical context that shaped Mozambique's reaction to the proposed Nsanje inland port. In order to achieve this, the paper examines political, economic and historical aspects of the bilateral ties between the two states with the aim of ascertaining the degree to which Mozambique's position with respect to the inland port is shaped by history. It must be noted, however, that this study focuses exclusively on issues closely linked to the port project, and it is by no means a comprehensive examination of the political or economic histories of the two nations.

### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There have been considerable efforts to investigate the reasons why Malawi's quest for an outlet to the Sea through the Nsanje inland port is elusive. The most prominent study of these was conducted in 2019 by Kayuni, Banik, and Chunga and published in 2021. Drawing on a range of methodological approaches including extensive literature review as well as over fifty interviews with key informants, the study found that Malawi's quest to deal with its geo-political disadvantage of being landlocked often appears to collide with Mozambique's national interests and that despite making economic sense, the tactics of 'megaphone diplomacy' that the Malawian president pursued with Mozambique resulted in the failure of the project [8]. Megaphone diplomacy is defined as the activity in which political figures or decision-makers use the media to subtly address the opposing side in a dispute when it is considered impractical or unfavourable to address them directly [8].

In 2015 a study based on the analysis of six key documents including the Anglo-Portuguese Convention of February 26, 1884 and the SADC Protocol on Shared Water Resources, revised on 7 August 2000, concluded that the Nsanje port project failed because Bingu wa Mutharika ignored the importance of bilateral and multilateral relations by blaming the port authorities in Mozambique for the shortage of fuel in 2008 and rejecting a proposal to import electricity from Mozambique from the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric dam [9]. The study suggests that, despite rocky historical relations, an apology by Malawi to Mozambique for the wrongs of Bingu would have helped Malawi to navigate on the Zambezi. It ultimately suggests that to solve the controversy, it will require SADC to come up with ways like introducing a law on the navigation of rivers in the region [9].

In 2013 a study noted that although the two nations have socioeconomic ties, their historical relationship has been challenging, which stands in stark contrast to Mozambique's cordial relations with its other neighbours [10]. The study claims that relations deteriorated when wa Mutharika falsely shifted blame for fuel scarcity in Malawi to the port authorities in Mozambique in and around 2009. Thus, the main problem affecting the Mozambique-Malawi relations was President Bingu wa Mutharika.

A lot has happened since these studies were conducted. For instance, a feasibility study Mozambique demanded for was conducted and concluded that the project is technically feasible but not financially viable without investment from beneficiary countries of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia [11]; Malawi has declared that Nsanje port is not a priority for the government;

Mozambique is considering to start navigating the waterway as they have plans to ship coal on the Zambezi [38]; Mozambique inaugurated a \$154 million interconnector construction project of a 400 kilovolt transmission line through which it will supply Malawi with 50 megawatts of power [12]; and Mozambique has granted Malawi permission to build a dry port near the port of Nacala in Nampula province, a concession of space being hailed as a direct result of deepening bilateral relations [13]. This paper seeks to build on the previous studies with the aim of explaining why Malawi still does not stand a better chance of navigating on the Zambezi.

## **5. CONCEPTUALISING HISTORY**

The term "history" has not been defined by scholars in a clear and widely accepted way. Some define history as literature, others as studying archives, and still others as an explanation of the present revelation and an awareness of the past [14]. Notwithstanding, in this paper history is considered in two ways. Firstly, history is taken generally as the study of life in the past in all its aspects and in relation to present developments as well as future hopes. Secondly, as it concerns this paper, history means political history. Political history is a discipline that explores changing economic, social and cultural structures as prerequisites and targets of policy [15].

The cause and effect relationship between the past and the present is lively presented in history as historians use all forms of evidence to examine, interpret, revisit and reinterpret the past in order to understand the past and present as well as predict the future [16]. This renders history crucial in the understanding of present day problems both at national and international levels. Furthermore, it appears that history influences foreign policy as government officials, whether intentionally or inadvertently, draw on their knowledge of the past to address what is happening today by using the past to illuminate the context in which crucial decisions are made. Thus, history provides a set of lessons that can be applicable to the present by analogy [17]. Hence, in the present paper, there is a history-policy relationship which is a source of great insight thereby making history the key that unlocks the motives and characteristics of the players in the bilateral relations between Malawi and Mozambique.

Some have countered that history's lessons are not always applicable, that its message is unclear and its influence is constrained by more contemporary factors [17]. Nevertheless, using the Shire-Zambezi navigation project as a lens, this study makes the case that history matters in foreign policy and that the history-foreign policy nexus is evident in the relations between Malawi and Mozambique.

## **6. THEORETICAL GROUNDING**

This paper critically analyses the Malawi-Mozambique relations using a realism perspective. Despite being quite an older theory, realism has no defined and explicit set of assumptions and propositions as it is often considered as an orientation with room for different 'theories' that are used differently in different disciplines [18]. In international relations, the theory was propounded by Carr and Morgenthau, in 1939 and 1948 respectively, and it was used in explaining state behaviour and foreign policy. The theory was developed further by Waltz in 1979 and Donnelly in 2005 [19]. Generally, realists assume that all states act only in their self-interest in an environment defined by anarchy. Anarchy means the absence of a supranational authority which regulates the conduct and behaviour of states within the international system [20]. Thucydides' famous quote, "The strong do as they will, the weak suffer what they must", succinctly summarises realism as sovereign entities pursue and protect their national interests by any means, even using military, economic or political aggression [21].

This paper adopts the representative definition of realism espoused by Waltz which stresses the elements of the ruler's and the state's interest providing the spring of action; the necessities of policy arising from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities to come up with policies that will best serve a state's interests; and success being defined as preserving and strengthening the state [22]. Waltz further argues that states believe that it is unsafe to be dependent on other states and perceive interdependence as a weakness, thus making states to focus on being independent and having other countries being dependent on them.

Realism is not devoid of criticisms. Firstly, realism is considered too pessimistic for focusing on selfishness and power seeking. Some have argued that the theory downplays cooperation and overlooks other important actors in international relations by placing much emphasis on the rulers and states [23]. The theory is also criticised for ignoring the role of international institutions, economic interdependence and international law [24]. This paper adopts realism as an explanatory theory that may be applied to improve the interpretability of empirical knowledge and to better understand actors' activities and motives.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology chosen for this study is qualitative. The study uses previously published research including books, periodicals, newspapers, articles, magazines, internet websites, policy documents and government publications. In addition, data was obtained from online interviews with 15 key participants from Malawi. The majority of the participants are history aficionados, a few of them also happened to be history teachers and several of them have written about topics pertaining to the Shire-Zambezi navigation project in different platforms. Themes and descriptions grounded in logic and reasoning were used to analyse the data collected.

## **8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

For convenience of presenting, the results are primarily given from a Malawian perspective in periods that correspond to the leadership at a specific time.

### **8.1 Colonial Period (1891 – 1961)**

During the time when the British were ruling Malawi and the Portuguese were in power in Mozambique, disputes erupted between Great Britain and Portugal over territories in Africa, specifically over free navigation on the Zambezi and Shire [9]. A number of treaties were signed and the most prominent of these were the Anglo-Portuguese Convention of August 26, 1890) and the British Ultimatum of November 14, 1890. The British Ultimatum of November 14, 1890 provided the British with a hundred-year concession of a portion of land in the Lower Zambezi known as Chinde and free navigation on the Zambezi waterway [9]. Thus, it can be concluded that during the period of colonisation, navigation on the Shire-Zambezi waterway was taking place and valid treaties existed.

### **8.2 Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1961 – 1994)**

It is important to note that the decolonisation process in Malawi took place earlier and was constitutional whereas in Mozambique it was relatively late and violent. Malawi got its independence from the British in 1964, the same year an African-led armed guerrilla group in Mozambique, the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), resorted to armed struggle as a way of liberating the Mozambican territory from Portuguese colonisation. In the years that followed, the Portuguese engaged in a war against FRELIMO. The then president of Malawi,

Kamuzu Banda, had good relations with the Portuguese-controlled Mozambique. In 1961, after Kamuzu Banda had won elections, Portuguese officials sent Jorde Jardim, a prominent Portuguese politician and businessman, to Malawi in order to discuss the economic advantages Malawi would experience by cooperating with the Portuguese colony, particularly from the port of Nacala and the northern railway line [25]. It is often thought that the Portuguese sought to take advantage of their agreement with Banda to enhance their market penetration especially of their oil refining [25]. The relationship between Banda-led Malawi and the colonisers of Mozambique was so strong that Banda visited Portugal. It is believed that what was discussed during Banda's visit to Lisbon was the control of Mozambican nationalists (FRELIMO) in Malawian territory, hence Banda went to Lisbon 'to trade the nationalists for the railway' [26].

The Portuguese also reinforced the historical ideology that the Maravi 'empire', predominantly made up of the Chewa and to which Banda belonged, used to include the northern part of Mozambique. Thus, Banda had an idea of territorial aggrandisement by taking the northern part of Mozambique and used this to justify his closer relations with Portugal [25]. Banda-led Malawi provided logistical and military support to Portugal during the FRELIMO fight for independence. However, the Portuguese lost the fight and Mozambique gained its independence in 1975.

After independence, Mozambique quickly went into a civil war from 1977 to 1999. FRELIMO-led Mozambique fought against the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), a Mozambican opposition political party and militant group, which was supported by apartheid South Africa [26]. At this time Banda had cemented diplomatic ties with white South Africa by establishing an embassy in Pretoria and encouraging South African state visits, and he went on to support South African-backed guerrillas in Mozambique [27]. Several times negotiations initiated by FRELIMO yielded no positive results. In 1986, on the return from a meeting in Zambia, whose agenda was Malawi's strong relations with the apartheid regime, a plane crash that resulted in the death of Mozambique's president, Samora Machel, took place on a hillside in Mbuzini in north-eastern South Africa [26]. Mozambique and its allies believed that Malawi and South Africa were involved in leading the plane off course by using a very high frequency Omni-directional range signal which acted as a decoy beacon transmitting on the same frequency as Maputo airport, which had power failure that fateful night [28]. A month prior, on September 11, the heads of state of Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, had visited Blantyre, Malawi, to persuade Kamuzu Banda that the people of Malawi had interests that were similar to those of other SADC members and that Malawi's reckless actions could have unanticipated consequences. Kamuzu Banda, however, remained unmoved.

Most of the participants in the study were of the view that Malawi helped RENAMO in the hope that they will grant her the promises the Portuguese made, of connecting Malawi to the coast and giving her the northern part of Mozambique. Furthermore, the support Malawi provided to the Portuguese colonisers and the opposition guerrilla movement, RENAMO, created distrust on the part of FRELIMO, the ruling party in Mozambique to this day.

### **8.3 Bakili Muluzi (1994 – 2004)**

Under President Muluzi, Malawi's relations with Mozambique improved. Transportation of imports and exports were the mainstay of the relations and many Malawian analysts saw the relations as only benefiting Mozambique [1]. The study found that, there were also talks of Malawi buying electricity from Mozambique. The main observation is that during the era of Bakili Muluzi the issue of navigating the Shire-Zambezi waterway was not openly introduced.

#### **8.4 Bingu wa Mutharika (2004–2012)**

A lot of what is related to the Nsanje inland port happened during the presidency of Bingu. However, relations did not become hostile overnight. During Bingu's first term Mozambique and Malawi made a number of agreements including a Bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement eliminating tariffs on various items in 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of the Shire-Zambezi Waterway in 2007 and another Memorandum of Understanding on the Nacala Development Corridor in 2010 [10]. Tensions started to escalate with the global financial crisis of 2008 which initiated a number of economic challenges in Malawi including fuel shortages. Bingu is accused of putting the blame for fuel shortages on Mozambican port authorities, a move which negatively affected relations [10].

Furthermore, during Bingu's official visit to Mozambique in 2009, a brawl between Malawian and Mozambican border guards took place in the northern Niassa Province of Mozambique. Following this Mozambique treated Bingu's visit coldly forcing him to leave the country early without even telling the local authorities [29]. What followed was a series of tit for tat actions including Malawi denying about 750 Mozambican citizens living in Nsanje District in Malawi to vote on 28th October 2009 during the Mozambique General Elections and Bingu wa Mutharika refusing to import electricity from Mozambique arguing that only Mozambique stood to benefit [10]. Ultimately, Mozambique denied passage to the barge destined for Malawi in October 2010. Others have suggested that the relations changed over time from being non-politicised to being politicised [30]. Most participants argued that the rocky history between FRELIMO and Malawi is to blame. Some believe that President Bingu wa Mutharika did not follow proper procedures and Mozambique was also frustrated because Malawi refused to buy electricity from Mozambique despite an agreement having been reached with Bingu's predecessor.

#### **8.5 Joyce Banda (2012–2014)**

After the sudden demise of President Bingu wa Mutharika in April 2012, Joyce Banda came to power. Banda's presidency brought warmer relations marked by deeper bilateral relations. Her first state visit was to Mozambique, a move that was widely seen as an attempt to 'mend fences' between Malawi and Mozambique. Presidents Joyce Banda and Armando Guebuza reached an agreement on feasibility, environmental and biodiversity assessments on the Shire-Zambezi [30]. A USD1.1 billion heavy haul freight line from Tete to the port of Nacala via Malawi was also inaugurated during Joyce Banda's administration [1].

#### **8.6 Peter Mutharika (2014–2020)**

Most participants pointed out that the brother of Bingu wa Mutharika, Peter Mutharika, made it his mission to bring his brother's aspirations of Nsanje port back to life when he assumed office in 2014. However, little was done to open the port, and most of the communication between the two nations concerned the Nacala Development Corridor's expansion. Tensions escalated in 2017 after it was reported that Malawians were shot by Mozambican soldiers in Mangochi district for unclear reasons [31]. Thus, although Peter Mutharika showed interest in the port, not much was done during his presidency and tensions were high.

#### **8.7 Lazarus Chakwera (2020 – Present)**

Chakwera has made great efforts to strengthen ties between Mozambique and Malawi. He has declared that Nsanje port is not a priority for the government right now and he has inaugurated a USD154 million interconnector construction project of a 400 kilovolt (KV) transmission line

through which Mozambique will supply Malawi with 50 megawatts of power [12]. The President of Mozambique, Filipe Nyusi, has been visiting Malawi and Chakwera has gone to Mozambique on several occasions. Most respondents pointed out that this relatively good relationship has started bearing fruits as Mozambique has granted Malawi permission to build a dry port near the port of Nacala in Nampula province. Others pointed out that this is a continuation of Bakili Muluzi's policy which largely benefitted Mozambique.

### **8.8 Findings Not Necessarily Corresponding To Leadership Periods at a Specific Time**

The study also found the behaviour of Mozambique towards the port project suspicious. In 2010, in the months leading to the opening of the inland port, Mozambique announced plans to rehabilitate the port of Beira and improve the country's road network of that region, rather than rehabilitating Chinde port which has virtually no facilities since it was severely damaged in 2000 and 2001 by floods [32]. This can be seen as a clear message that Mozambique does not intend to make the port at Chinde operational and that Malawi has to use the one at Beira instead. Recently, after president Lazarus Chakwera declared that Nsanje port is not a priority for the government of Malawi anymore and after he inaugurated the \$154 million interconnector construction project of a 400 kilovolt transmission line through which Mozambique will supply Malawi with 50 megawatts of power, the relations between Malawi and Mozambique have improved greatly [12]. Most of the interviewees pointed out that Mozambique is giving Malawi small gains, that further increases her dependency on Mozambique, for providing her with huge business opportunities. This is in agreement with the realist theory which stipulates that states focus on being independent and having other countries being dependent on them [22].

The other finding is that FRELIMO has been in Power in Mozambique since independence in 1975 and there has been little change in policy. For some respondents, this means that Mozambique's foreign policy towards Malawi has not really changed over the years. Some respondents pointed out that FRELIMO has not forgotten what Malawi did in the past especially during the presidency of Kamuzu Banda. Thus, for many, FRELIMO-led Mozambique will always resent Malawi and antagonise the Nsanje inland port for access to the sea was promised to her by the Portuguese colonisers.

Furthermore, the study found that the primary focus of the relations between Malawi and Mozambique is on services, specifically port and railway infrastructure, as opposed to trade, investment and migrant labour [33]. Since the time of Portuguese colonisers, Mozambique has developed its transport sector to the point of becoming an important sector in Mozambique, with main ports developed to serve regional trade: Nacala as an outlet for Malawi, Beira for Zimbabwe, and Maputo, for South Africa's Gauteng region and for southern Zimbabwe [32]. Some have argued that the ruling elite in Mozambique are also heavily involved in the concessions around the Beira and Nacala ports thereby influencing policies that affect these ports [34]. Thus, the opening of the Nsanje port collides with the national economic interests of Mozambique as well as that of the ruling elite. This perhaps explains why Bingu thought diplomacy would not work for the foreign policy of any nation is often determined by the interest of the dominant class controlling the machinery of governance in that nation [35].

The other finding is that there are no valid treaties on the navigation of the Zambezi River. The only treaties on the navigation of the Zambezi were signed in the 1890s when disputes erupted between Great Britain and Portugal [9]. The Anglo-Portuguese Convention of August 26, 1890 and the British Ultimatum of November 14, 1890 are the most prominent of these treaties. The British Ultimatum of November 14, 1890 provided the British with a hundred-year concession to navigate on the Zambezi. Hence, as it stands there is no legal ground for Malawi to claim the



right to navigate on the Zambezi for the concession expired in 1990 and at international law Malawi stands no chance as legal rules are in favour of transit nations and navigation depends on the consent of the transit nation and existing bilateral treaties [36].

In a nutshell, the findings have shown that political relations between Mozambique and Malawi have fluctuated a lot through time. This fluctuation has not provided a solid basis of trust on which to build a good relationship between the two countries. In addition, Mozambican government policy has been focused on megaprojects and transport priorities that seem better positioned economically to serve Malawi and the wider regional hinterland, thereby making the relations between Malawi and Mozambique basically concerned with services, mainly port facilities and railway transportation rather than with trade or investment. Some authors have argued that any land-locked nation that wishes to access the sea by navigating in channels that run in another country is at the mercy of the transit state and negotiations depend on the prevailing relations between the states [37]. In the present study, Malawi's economic survival depends on the country's strong and good relations with neighbouring countries, especially Mozambique since she provides the shortest route to access the Indian Ocean.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Malawi's efforts to have an inland port are utterly in contradiction with the economic interests of Mozambique and faces a huge tide of history which induces resentment for Malawi on the part of Mozambique. Not only did Malawi support the colonisers of Mozambique before and during the fight for independence, but she also supported the opposition group to the current ruling party during the post independence civil war. Furthermore, Mozambique has always seen Malawi as a consumer of its services especially port and transportation facilities. All these combine to make it impossible for Malawi to navigate the Zambezi as it would mean Mozambique has to fulfil the promises of the colonisers to Malawi, help an ally to a foe and invest in building other port facilities in Chinde, thereby reducing traffic and revenue at already existing ports. Thus, history is an obstacle hindering Malawi from accessing the 'God's highway into Africa' as it motivates Mozambique to focus on its self-interests and overlook the benefits on the part of Malawi.

Based on the findings and conclusions the present study recommends the following: Firstly, the government of Malawi should learn from the Nsanje port project and avoid allocating resources to projects that have not been subjected to a thorough feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis. Secondly, Malawi has to continue on the diplomatic track it is with Mozambique where it is not trying to force the Nsanje inland port, but aims at achieving small gains by appeasing Mozambique. This foreign policy has already started bearing fruits as Mozambique has allowed Malawi to build a dry port near the port of Nacala with the aim of speeding up customs clearance of goods and making transport logistics more flexible. This will help to create competition between Tanzania and Mozambique on the provision of port services thereby providing Malawi with a basis to negotiate for better terms. Hence, the Nsanje inland port must be put on hold and perhaps wait for an opportune time when Mozambique will be ready for navigation on the Zambezi be it after a new crop of leaders has taken power or when they themselves start navigating as they have plans to ship coal on the Zambezi. Last but not least, Malawi should find something to do with the structures that were built in Nsanje which can best be described as a "white elephant". For instance, the site can be dredged to practice cage fish farming and use the other structures for processing the fish. However, it goes without saying that a proper feasibility study is indispensable before doing anything on the project this time around.

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