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## WALKING IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE COLONIAL MASTERS: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEASANT FOOD PRODUCTION IN MALAWI, 1961 – 1994

### ABSTRACT

*The first three decades of post-independence Malawi was a period of remarkable agricultural transformations. Under the leadership of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the country made agricultural interventions that had implications on peasant food economy. Here I examine the extent to which Banda's interventions affected peasant food production in Malawi from 1961 to 1994. While most scholars consider Banda's regime as a period of either remarkable economic prosperity or economic stagnation and brutality, I draw attention to the complex, dynamic, varied and contested ways by which Banda's agricultural policies affected the peasants in rural Malawi. Although Banda's interventions appeared to have brought economic prosperity especially in the period prior to the late 1970s, I argue that the success was transient, benefitted a few progressive farmers, and thus, was tantamount to "growth without development" among most poor peasants. The study calls for a deeper analysis of the much resented autocratic leadership that presided over the earlier post-independence Africa era.*

**Key Words:** Malawi, agricultural development, food production, peasants, SAP

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature in the historiography of post-colonial Malawi, a small country located to the southeast of southern Africa, considers the regime of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the first president of the Republic of Malawi, as a period of either remarkable economic prosperity or economic stagnation and

brutality.<sup>1</sup> This binary characterisation of the effects of Banda's agricultural interventions, however, obscures the complexity of the country's economic and food security landscape of the time.<sup>2</sup> In large measure, it downplays the dynamic and varied ways by which Banda's agricultural policies affected the peasants in the rural parts of the country.<sup>3</sup> Studies done elsewhere in the region seem to suggest that the impacts of state interventions on peasants in colonial and post-colonial Africa were complex, dynamic and varied with time, class, gender as well as social geography.<sup>4</sup> As rational beings, peasants also resisted, negotiated and adapted to the forces that impinged on their food economy.<sup>5</sup>

Here I examine the extent to which Banda's agricultural interventions affected peasant food production in the country. I begin from 1961, when Africans formed a majority in the colonial government, and end in 1994, when Banda, who has gone down in history as the father of the Malawi nation, lost elections giving way to the introduction of a multi-party system of government. While Banda's interventions appeared to have brought economic prosperity especially in the period prior to the late 1970s, I argue that the success was transient, benefitted

- 1 For further details about this line of thinking, see for example, S Thomas, "Economic developments in Malawi since independence", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 2 (1), 1975, pp. 30-51; JB Liebenow, "Food self-sufficiency in Malawi: Are successes transferable?". In: M H Glantz, (ed.), *Drought and hunger in Africa: Denying famine a future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 369-392; H Kayuni, "Malawi's economic and development policy choices from 1964 to 1980: An epitome of "pragmatic unilateral capitalism", *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 20 (2), 2011, pp. 112-131. This was disputed by DH Humphrey, "Malawi's economic progress and prospects", *East African Economic Review* 5 (2) 1973, pp. 71-104; J Kydd and R Christiansen, "Structural change in Malawi since independence: Consequences of a development strategy based on large-scale agriculture", *World Development* 10 (5), 1982, pp. 355-375; M Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect: Rural producers and the state in Malawi and Zambia". In: D Birmingham and P Martin (eds.), *History of central Africa: The contemporary years since 1960* (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 167-202; E Mandala, *End of Chidyerano: A history of food and everyday life in the lower Tchiri valley in Malawi, 1860-2004* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005).
- 2 In this paper, I use the term food security to describe the state of having sufficient food for an active and healthy life. See, for example, Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Food Summit Report, Rome, 1996.
- 3 In this paper, I used the term peasants to describe African rural producers who use their own land largely to produce crops to meet subsistence needs. For details see, A Isaacman, "Peasants and rural social protest in Africa". In: F Cooper (etal) (eds.), *Confronting historical paradigms: Peasants, labour and the capitalist world system in Africa and Latin America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 1-120.
- 4 For details, see for example, J Gibling, *The politics of environmental control in North-Eastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); S Berry, *No condition is permanent: The social dynamics of agrarian change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1993); H Moore and M Vaughan, *Cutting down trees: Gender, nutrition and agricultural changes northern province of Zambia, 1890 - 1990* (Portsmouth, BH: Heinemann, 1994).
- 5 For details about peasant political actions, see for example, Isaacman, "Peasants and rural social protest in Africa"; S G Bunker, *Peasants against the state: The politics of market control in Bugisu, Uganda, 1900-1983* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

a few progressive farmers, and thus, was tantamount to “growth without development” among most poor peasants.<sup>6</sup> Development, which in essence entails improvement of the living standards of the majority ordinary citizens, seemed to have benefited a tiny minority while the majority of the peasants grappled with poverty and food insecurity. The “economic miracle” was also contingent on climatic conditions, economic circumstances and the political will of the western powers rather than mere policy prescriptions. As a reward for standing against the spread of communism in the region, western powers from within and overseas, generously provided funding for Banda’s interventions between 1964 to the late 1970s. In the wake of economic crises, rainfall variability and rapid population increase as well as withdrawal of western support after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the South African apartheid government from the late 1980s, it became extremely difficult for Banda to sustain his development policies and maintain food security among the peasants.

As was the case in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, although independence provided better prospects for the expansion of food economy, the paper further observes that Banda’s inheritance of colonial structures of economic and political domination limited these prospects.<sup>7</sup> Like the colonial masters, Banda pursued policies that favoured estate owners and progressive farmers at the expense of the poor peasants. As noted by Richard Sandbrook and Judith Barker, Banda’s proclivity to colonial heritage overshadowed the success of his agricultural and food security initiatives in the country.<sup>8</sup> Like his regional contemporaries, Banda was also subjected to the precondition of structural adjustment economic principles to access western support which subsequently adversely undermined his agricultural policies.<sup>9</sup>

6 For details about the concept of “growth without development”, see for example, J Stalon, “We must address political economy of growth without development in Africa”. In: United Nations Development Programme, *Our perspectives*, UNDP, October 2015; M Vandemoortele, “Growth without development: Looking beyond inequality”, Briefing Paper, Overseas Development Institute, 2009.

7 See for details, Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; ML Bowen, *The State against the peasantry: Rural struggles in colonial and post-colonial Mozambique* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); N Jacobs, *Environment, power and injustice: A South African history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); A Mlambo, *A history of Zimbabwe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); D Coltart, *The struggle continues: 50 years of tyranny in Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2016).

8 See, R Sandbrook and J Barker, *The politics of Africa’s economic stagnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); F Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The past of the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); M Meredith, *The fate of Africa: From hopes of freedom to the heart of despair: A history of fifty years independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

9 F Heidhues and G Obare, “Lessons from structural adjustment programmes and their effects in East Africa”, *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* 50 (1), 2011, pp. 55-64; R Chattopadhyay, “Zimbabwe: Structural adjustment, destitution and food insecurity”, *Review of African Political Economy* 27 (84), 2000, pp. 307-316.

Using evidence from the Lake Chilwa basin of southern Malawi, the study begins with an exploration of the agrarian populist approach that Banda adopted in the run-up to independence in 1964. The second section demonstrates the paradox of the much-appraised 1964 and 1978 food production achievements that are attributed to Banda. Section three explores the growth of food shortages and the extent to which structural adjustment as well as the end of Cold War politics combined to bring down Banda from the country's presidency in 1994.

## 2. AGRARIAN POPULISM: BANDA'S FOOD PRODUCTION APPROACH, 1961-1964

The establishment of an African majority in the colonial government of Malawi, then Nyasaland, after the 1961 general elections marked a new beginning in the country's agricultural history.<sup>10</sup> Since the establishment of colonialism in 1891, the colonial state in Malawi, as with those in other parts of the region, took away arable land from Africans, subjected African residents in white settler estates to *thangata* system, and compelled Africans to adhere to conservation measures in agricultural production.<sup>11</sup> Through the *thangata* system, for instance, settler farmers asked Africans residing on their estates to provide labour services in lieu of the land they occupied.<sup>12</sup> These developments were causative to the growth of African nationalism which culminated in declaration of State of Emergency on 3 March 1959. During the Emergency, the colonial government arrested several nationalist leaders and banned the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), a political party by which the Africans had since the mid-1940s agitated for self-rule.<sup>13</sup> But the Devlin Commission that investigated the events leading to the Emergency exonerated the nationalists, and subsequently, called for general elections of which the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) that replaced the defunct

10 Note that Malawi officially achieved independence on 6 July 1964 and became a Republic on 6 July 1966. However, following the state of emergency, the colonial state organised general elections in 1961 to allow Africans to participate in the government of the country. Unofficially, this marked the beginning of self-government.

11 For details, see, for example, I Phimister, "Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia land husbandry act review", *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 19 (2), 1993, pp. 225-239; E Kramer, "The early years: extension services in peasant agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe", *African Historical Review* 49 (1), 1997, pp. 91-103.

12 For details about *Thangata* System, see for example, J McCracken, "Peasants, planters and the colonial state: The case of Malawi, 1905 - 1940", *Journal of Eastern African Research and Development* 12, 1982, pp. 21-35.

13 Malawi National Archives (hereafter MNA), PCC 1/2/5 State of Emergency Diaries Provincial and District Operations Committees, 1958 December -1959 April. See also, Nyasaland Protectorate, Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry of July 1959. See also, *The Nyasaland Times*, 28 July 1959.

NAC overwhelmingly won and formed a majority in the colonial government in April 1961.<sup>14</sup>

Although the country was until 1964 not yet granted independence, the colonial government gave some of the African leaders, including Kamuzu Banda, cabinet posts. For most peasants, African participation in the colonial government signalled the end of massive land alienation, coercive conservation and adverse regulation of maize production and marketing, which affected food production throughout the colonial period.<sup>15</sup> Banda, too, took advantage of the cabinet post to pursue an agrarian populist tradition to meet the aspirations of these peasants in the country.<sup>16</sup> Banda elaborated on this freedom in his New Year's celebratory message of 1962. He stated, "The year, which has just passed, 1961, saw the beginning of the realisation of our dreams and desires for freedom and independence. For all practical purposes, we, the Africans of this country, now control the government of the country."<sup>17</sup>

Earlier during his political rallies, Banda had pledged to prioritise peasant agriculture by restoring the land that the colonialists took from the peasants, providing them with farm input subsidies, and restoring power to chiefs who fell out of grace with the colonial administrators during nationalist struggles.<sup>18</sup> After the elections, as Minister of Natural Resources and Local Government, Banda committed himself to his electoral pledge by reversing the colonial policies that affected poor peasants in the country.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Banda restored power to chiefs, Kumtumanje and Mlumbe, who were dismissed by the colonial state for openly resisting conservation and the imposition of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Zomba district.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he abolished the Sakata and

14 MNA, Nyasaland Protectorate, Report of the Devlin Commission, 1959. See, L. Mair, *The Nyasaland elections of 1961* (London: Athlone Press, 1962).

15 Interview: Author with J Mbedza, Zomba, 9 November 2016.

16 Agrarian populism refers to a political movement dedicated to defending and promoting the agricultural interests of the common people such as the peasants. For details about the concept of agrarian populism, see for example, E Green, "Agrarian Populism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Malawi", *African Studies Review* 54 (3), 2011, pp. 143-164; T Brass, "The agrarian myth, the "new" populism and the "new" right", *Economic and Political Review* 32 (4), 1997, pp. 27-42; J Fox, "Agrarian reform and populist politics: A discussion of Stephen Sanderson's agrarian populism and the Mexican state", *Latin American Perspectives* 12 (3), 1985, pp. 29-41; A Chayanov, *The theory of the peasant economy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); T Brass, *Peasants, populism and postmodernism: The return of the agrarian myth* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

17 *Malawi News*, 4 January 1962.

18 Malawi Congress Party, *1961 Manifesto* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1960), p. 2.

19 MNA, 78093/2M/8.834C, Agriculture in Nyasaland General Policy – Memo from the Minister to all Officials in the Ministry, 15 December 1961.

20 MNA, 78093/2M/8.834C, Agriculture in Nyasaland General Policy.

Namitembo councils which, in the absence of two chiefs, took care of peasants' agricultural affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Banda formulated bills that repealed the controversial legislations that restricted peasant production in the country. For instance, as early as 1962, Banda formulated the Land Use and Protection Bill, African on Private Estates Bill and the Farmers Marketing Ordinance. The Land Use and Protection Bill replaced the Natural Resources Ordinance of 1952. Unlike the former, this bill ended *Malimidwe* (conservation) and Master Farmers' schemes and championed the use of persuasion and education in enforcing agricultural extension in the country.<sup>22</sup> The Africans on Private Estates Bill ended the *thangata* system and called for rapid redistribution of estate land to peasants affected by land shortages in the country. Banda advised estate owners through the new bill to "either sell the land to the government or to farm it through the employment of wage labourers".<sup>23</sup> The Farmers Marketing Ordinance replaced the Agricultural Produce and Marketing Ordinance of 1952 and formed the Farmers Marketing Board (FMB). The ordinance delinked the Board from the Agriculture Department and increased African representation from three to eleven.<sup>24</sup>

Although the bills were not passed as Acts, their formulation generated a great deal of excitement among the peasants who had lost large tracts of land to the settlers with a large proportion of them restricted to forced labour through the *thangata* system on the settler estates.<sup>25</sup> One of the peasants in Zomba, Rodrick Mulaudzi, said that, "We celebrated the news. For us, this was the truest fruit of self-government. Our struggles were really not in vain".<sup>26</sup> Similarly, peasants celebrated Banda's offer of £400 000 from which the state acquired over 60 000 hectares from the British Central Africa (BCA) company and Bruce Estates for redistribution.<sup>27</sup> With regard to the formation of the FMB, Alfred Nansenga, who was a farmer in the basin in the 1960s, pointed out that, "with a larger African representation, peasants assumed that the Board would offer better prices for their produce."<sup>28</sup>

Banda's populist approach was also manifested in the development plan that was passed after these legislative changes. Through the plan, Banda promised to increase the productivity of peasants by constructing irrigation schemes and providing agriculture credits of fertilisers and equipment for the

21 MNA, NSZ 4/1/7 Zomba District Annual Reports, 1954-1961, Report 1961.

22 Nyasaland Protectorate, Opening Speech by Banda, Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 31 May 1962.

23 Nyasaland Protectorate, Opening Speech by Banda.

24 Nyasaland Protectorate, Farmers Marketing Ordinance, May 1962.

25 J McCracken, *A history of Malawi, 1859-1966* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012), p. 393.

26 Interview: Author with R Mulauzi, Zomba, 17 November 2016.

27 Malawi Government, *Development Plan, 1965-1968* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1965).

28 Interview: Author with A Nansenga, Zomba, 17 November 2016.

production of maize, groundnuts and rice in the country's wetlands.<sup>29</sup> He also pledged to revamp the old colonial schemes at Khanda and Njala, and construct new ones at Domasi and Bimbi in the northern part of Zomba.<sup>30</sup> A Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) movement was introduced in 1963 to train the peasants in agriculture and community development from its bases established at Nasawa in Zomba, Makhanga in Nsanje, Amalika in Thyolo, Mapanga in Blantyre, Neno in Mwanza, Ngapani in Mangochi, Lipinda in Mangochi, Mwalawoyera in Dedza, Kaporo in Karonga, and Ngerenge in Rumphhi.<sup>31</sup> Banda promised to locate enterprising MYP graduates in the irrigation schemes that were to be established in the country.<sup>32</sup>

However, Banda's agrarian populist approach did not absolutely represent a complete break from colonial structures of economic domination and was coercively implemented. Old agricultural structures and operations still existed in post-colonial Malawi. For instance, although he abolished *thangata* in the southern region, Banda maintained the visiting tenant system in the central region where he owned tobacco estates.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, while he abolished Malimidwe programmes, Banda ironically maintained soil conservation practices, which, during the colonial era, were the bone of contention among the country's peasants.<sup>34</sup> Through the FMB, Banda also continued to control the pricing of African produce. In fact, he reintroduced the colonial system of setting lower prices for peasants relative to world markets. "The Board," Dunduzu Chisiza, the Secretary to Finance argued, "cannot perform only the function of stabilising prices; it must also help the government in siphoning off money from the growers for further development." "This, he contended, "would be facilitated by a provision in the bill that allowed the Board to invest or lend the money it accumulated perhaps to the Ministry of Finance if it found itself in difficulties".<sup>35</sup> By making these compromises, Banda wanted to take advantage of labour and revenue insurance provided by the colonial structures. Although Banda was unable to implement most of the policies in the interim to independence, John

29 Nyasaland Protectorate, *Development plan, 1957-1962* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1957).

30 Nyasaland Protectorate, *Development plan, 1957-1962*.

31 Malawi Government, Act No. 23 of 1965, The Young Pioneers Act, Malawi Gazette Supplement, No 4C, 11 May 1965.

32 MNA, GRS 14/20/2/31 Volume I Settlement Branch, 1970-71.

33 Visiting tenant system involved the estate owners' engagement of peasants from other districts to grow tobacco in their estates. The owners gave them plots, inputs *and* sometimes food on the agreement that they buy the tobacco. The estate owners deducted from source credits of food and inputs, which they would have given out. For details, see, McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p.396.

34 JS Nankumba, "Evolution of agricultural policy in Malawi and the national rural development programme (NRDP): A historical review, 1891-1980" (Aberystwyth: University College of Wales, 1981), p. 40.

35 Nyasaland Protectorate, Speech by Dunduzu Chisiza, Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 7 March 1962

McCracken argued that they laid down structures of peasant marginalisation that came to characterise his entire political regime.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. GROWTH WITHOUT DEVELOPMENT: BANDA'S FOOD PRODUCTION ACHIEVEMENTS, 1964 - 1978

Soon after the country achieved political independence in 1964, Banda began to openly shift his development approach from agrarian populism to elitism. He implemented policies that favoured largely estate agriculture and a few progressive farmers also known as *achikumbe*. As early as 1964, Banda openly questioned the productivity and contribution of the poor peasants to national development.<sup>37</sup> Despite using 90% of land holding and being allocated second largest share of budgets, Banda argued that the peasants only contributed 10% to the country's GROWTH DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) as opposed to the estates whose contribution was 25%.<sup>38</sup> As was the case in colonial Zimbabwe, Banda criticised the poor peasants' land husbandry practices as ecologically destructive.<sup>39</sup> The customary land tenure by which the peasants owned land made it difficult to hold the peasants responsible for sustainable land use. Banda persistently compared development to what was happening on the estates rather than in the peasantry.<sup>40</sup> Among the local producers, he isolated *achikumbe*, who distinguished themselves from the other peasants through steady and high standards of farming, as his favourite producers, and hence rightful recipients of agricultural extension. He awarded them with the prestigious *achikumbe* certificate.<sup>41</sup> Mostly, the *achikumbe* consisted of former master farmers of the colonial period. Even the crop inspection tours that were often conducted by Banda to appreciate the agricultural performance of the peasants witnessed him solely visiting farms belonging to *achikumbe* that agricultural officers identified as model farmers in rural Malawi.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, Banda worked towards reducing chiefly power over land matters to give way for the elites to own customary land. For instance, he formulated the Registered Land Act and Local Land Board Act in 1965

36 McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p.398.

37 CISANET, "Rethinking agricultural extension in Malawi", CISANET Policy Paper, Lilongwe, 2006.

38 See for example, R M Mkwandawire, "Markets, peasants and agrarian change in post-independence Malawi", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 4 (1-2), 1984, pp. 89-102; A Sofranko and F Fleigel, "Malawi's agricultural development: A success story?", *Agricultural Economics* 3, 1989, pp. 99-113.

39 See for example, Phimister, "Rethinking the reserves"; Kramer, "The early years".

40 See, Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect", p. 180.

41 Malawi Government, *Guide to Agricultural Extension in Malawi, 1980-1981* (Lilongwe: Extension Aids Branch, 1980).

42 Interview: Author with Nansenga, Zomba, 17 November 2016.



to consolidate the land tenure of *achikumbe* and estate owners. While the Registered Land Act provided for the establishment of settlement schemes and allowed peasants to register their land, the Local Land Board gave powers to local politicians and agricultural officers to redistribute land in the rural areas.<sup>43</sup> Although the new legislation did not mark the beginning of a free market of customary land, it further reduced the traditional powers of chiefs as sole distributors of land, and exclusively created an environment for the expansion of *achikumbe* in the country.<sup>44</sup>

A year after the country became a Republic in 1966 (since then known as Malawi), Banda passed the Customary Land (Development) Act to empower the state to declare any customary land as a development area.<sup>45</sup> As in the colonial period, Banda used this legislation to alienate customary land for the development of estates, irrigation schemes and other government projects. The state used this Act to grant land to 80 estates in Zomba, Machinga and Mulanje districts in 1970, and the number of estates rose to 200 in 1979 and 625 in the late 1980s covering an area of 53 100 hectares.<sup>46</sup> Table 1 below presents the growth of estates in the region between 1970 and 1989.

**Table 1: Estates in the Chilwa Basin, 1989**

District	No of Estates	Estates' Area	Total District Area
Machinga	365	40 200	596 400
Mulanje	27	2 000	171 500
Zomba	233	10 900	258 000

**Source:** Malawi Government, ADD Estates Files, 1970-1989

The post-colonial government also alienated 1 048 hectares of customary land for the construction of irrigation schemes in the areas of T/As Mposa and Mwambo in the Chilwa basin.<sup>47</sup> The constructed schemes were Likangala, Khanda, Njala, Segula, Chilikho, Bimbi, Chibwana, Mikoko and Domasi.<sup>48</sup> Njala

43 MNA, GRS 13/105/65 Malawi Land Act, 1965.

44 See, Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect", p. 183.

45 Malawi Government, Customary Land (Development) Act of 1967.

46 Malawi Government, ADD Estates Files, 1970-1989 (Zomba: Department of Lands and Evaluation, 1989).

47 The schemes constructed by the government in the Lake Chilwa basin were among the sixteen irrigation schemes it constructed across the country between 1967 and 1984. For more details, see, Malawi Government, National Irrigation Policy and Development Strategy.

48 For details about the development of these irrigation schemes see, B Nkhoma and W Mulwafu, "The experience of irrigation management transfer in two irrigation schemes in Malawi", *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth* 29, 2004, pp. 1327-1333; B Nkhoma, "Irrigation development and its socio-economic impact on rural communities in Malawi", *Development Southern Africa* 28 (2),

and Chilikho were upgrades of the schemes that were abandoned by the colonial government on political, ecological and economic grounds. Banda's government constructed the irrigation schemes with funding from the World Bank, British Aid and Taiwanese Technical Aid.<sup>49</sup> Unlike other leaders from the region, Banda also received generous financial support for these agricultural developments from Britain, the US and apartheid South Africa as a reward for his unique stand against the spread of communism as well as his friendship with the white minority government of South Africa.<sup>50</sup> At each scheme, the government established infrastructure that included local markets, health centres and primary schools to provide social services to the irrigation farmers. Table 2 shows a list of irrigation schemes and their acreage in Zomba and Machinga districts between 1968 and 1982.

**Table 2: Acreage of Irrigation Schemes in the Chilwa Basin, 1968-1972**

Scheme	Hectares	T/A	District
Likangala	400	Mwambo	Zomba
Domasi	475	Mposa	Machinga
Khanda	70	Mwambo	Zomba
Njala	53	Mwambo	Zomba
Segula	30	Mwambo	Zomba
Chilikho	20	Mwambo	Zomba

**Source:** Malawi Government, National Irrigation Policy and Development Strategy, 2000.

Outside the irrigation schemes, the government organised the *achikumbe* into farmers' clubs. It used these clubs to provide the *achikumbe* credits for agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, seeds, insecticides, work-oxen, and farm implements. The government delivered extension services through the irrigation schemes and farmers' clubs. The table below shows a list of farmers' clubs that existed in Zomba between 1970 and 1978.

2011, pp. 209-223; B Nkhoma and G Kayira, "Gender and power contestations over water use in irrigation schemes: Lessons from the Lake Chilwa basin", *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth* 92, 2016, pp. 79-84.

49 Malawi Government, *Developing Malawi* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1971).

50 For details, see for example, P Banda, "Hastings Kamuzu Banda: How the Cold War sustained bad leadership in Malawi, 1964-1994". In: BG Jallow (ed.), *Leadership in post-colonial Africa: Trends transformed by independence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 27-44.

Table 3: Farmers' Clubs in Zomba West, 1970–1978

Place	Club Name	Membership
Nkupu	Bwaila	10
Chipini	Chipini	20
Namadidi	Namilongo	32
Maele	Maele	20
Chinkwezule	Chinkwezule	20

Source: MNA GRS 2/9/5 Zomba Farmers Clubs, 1970–1980.

The other way by which Banda favoured the elites at the expense of poor peasants was the marketing of agricultural produce. For instance, Banda formed the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) in 1971 to replace the Farmers Marketing Board, which had facilitated the marketing of peasants' produce in the country since 1962.<sup>51</sup> ADMARC opened 110 depots within the Lake Chilwa basin, with one located in each of the irrigation schemes and the Ecological Planning Areas (EPAs). The functions of these Admarc depots included the selling of foodstuffs at subsidised prices during food shortages to all Malawians.<sup>52</sup> As in most parts of Africa as well as the colonial Maize Control Board (MCB), the government used ADMARC to gain monopoly over the marketing of peasants' crops and to stabilise produce prices in country.<sup>53</sup> By maintaining marketing monopoly, most African governments argued that they would strategically stabilise produce prices and create "buffer stocks and increasing those stocks through imports".<sup>54</sup> Thus, ADMARC used to buy peasants' produce at low prices for sale at higher prices. Unfortunately, the government used the profits raised by ADMARC to expand estate agriculture by giving loans to estate owners.<sup>55</sup>

The effects of Banda's agricultural policy were mixed. By the late 1970s, the policy seemed to have stimulated economic growth and increased the levels

51 Malawi Government, *Agricultural Development and Marketing Act of 1971*.

52 Interview: Author with W Alabi, Agricultural Extension and Development Officer (AEDO), Nsondole EPA, Zomba, 13 December 2016.

53 For details on how governments in Africa used marketing boards to gain monopoly over the peasants' produce, see for example, N Breslin, "USAID, the state and food insecurity in rural Zimbabwe: The case of Gokwe", African Studies Seminar Series (University of the Witwatersrand, 15 March 1993); TS Jayne, "Consumer response to market liberalisation in urban Kenya", *Food Policy* 22 (5), 1997, pp. 447–458; JR Pletcher, "The political uses of agricultural markets in Zambia", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 24 (4), 1986, pp. 603–617; N Nyairo, *Impact of agricultural market liberalisation on food security in developing countries: A comparative study of Zambia and Kenya* (MSC, University of Helsinki, 2011); See also, M Hubbard (ed.), *Developing agricultural trade: New roles of government in poor countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

54 Hubbard (ed.), *Developing agricultural trade*.

55 Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect", p. 190.

of food production in the country. During this period, the production of rice rose from 129 tonnes in 1969 to 2 555 tonnes in 1977. The total number of irrigation farmers in the Chilwa basin grew from 279 in 1969 to 2 241 in 1977.<sup>56</sup> The adoption of fertiliser usage also increased through credits offered by ADMARC across the rural areas. For example, the farmers whose use of fertilisers in the late 1950s hardly exceeded 183 tonnes, registered use of 10 834 tonnes of fertilisers in 1967 which grew to 43 939 tonnes in 1977.<sup>57</sup> At Domasi and Likangala irrigation schemes, the input credits given to farmers rose from Mk 8 316.5 in 1972 to Mk 44 399 in 1977.<sup>58</sup> Because of these developments, the World Bank and the IMF, which supported most of the projects as a counter-measure against the spread of communism, declared Malawi as a shining example of the fastest growing economy in the region.<sup>59</sup>

While these figures suggest remarkable growth, evidence from the Chilwa basin indicates that the benefits to the peasants were varied. Although the country seemed to register remarkable growth, most of the rural population grappled with adverse levels of poverty, hunger and starvation. Isaac Mphepo contended that the government achieved this growth at the expense of the human rights, personal liberty and freedom of the peasants.<sup>60</sup> In general, Banda's agricultural development policy accentuated social inequality and differentiations among the peasants. The programmes benefitted a tiny majority of *achikumbe* who were relatively richer while the majority had no access to extension and credits of inputs. As of 1978, only 300 *achikumbe* existed in the Chilwa basin.<sup>61</sup> While the *achikumbe* enjoyed food security, most of the peasants survived on patronage and casual labour.<sup>62</sup> Patronage and casual labour left the peasants with insufficient time to effectively work in their gardens. The net result was that these peasants perpetually became vulnerable to hunger on a more frequent basis.

As noted by Wycliffe Chilowa, the *achikumbe* were the ones who benefitted more from the sale of produce at the ADMARC markets.<sup>63</sup> They owned relatively larger land holdings, either from irrigation schemes or outside the schemes, and were able to produce surplus food crops for sale at ADMARC markets. While they sold produce at these markets, most poor peasants, who largely comprised of

56 MNA, 13/105/4 Monthly Reports, Settlement Schemes, 1969-1977; MNA GRS 600/1/13 Settlement Aspects, August 1979.

57 Malawi Government, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1977.

58 MNA, GRS 631 Settlement Aspects, 1969-1978.

59 For details, see for example, JG Liebenow, "Food self-sufficiency in Malawi: Are successes transferable?". In: MH. Glantz (ed.), *Drought and hunger in Africa: Denying famine a future* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 369-392.

60 Interview: Author with I Mphepo, Machinga, 14 December 2016.

61 MNA GRS 2/9/5 Zomba Farmers Clubs, 1970-1980.

62 Interview: Author with G Kachinagwa, Zomba, 9 December 2016.

63 W Chilowa, "The impact of agricultural liberalisation on food security in Malawi", *Food Policy* 23 (6), 1999, pp. 553-569.

female-headed households, acted as buyers of foodstuffs from ADMARC markets. According to the agricultural surveys of 1978, most of them owned gardens of less than half a hectare and could not afford fertilisers.<sup>64</sup> Even in years of normal weather, the harvests of these peasants hardly lasted to the sixth month of a year. Consequently, they survived through off-farm casual work on the farms or irrigation plots of *achikumbe* and estate owners. For most women, the sale of local beer and commercial sex became an alternative source of income.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, irrigation schemes had negative socio-ecological effects on some of the peasants from the Lake Chilwa basin. First, it led to loss of wetlands, which safeguarded some peasants from food insecurity especially among those who largely relied on winter cultivation for food production. Although the government gave priority to those who lost their land in the allocation of scheme plots, the poor peasants had to meet additional ambivalent conditions such as Malawian citizenship, agricultural industry, good social behaviour, community relations, and freedom from debts.<sup>66</sup> These conditions disqualified most of the resource poor peasants from accessing plots from the schemes. As such, irrigation schemes were mostly accessible to *achikumbe* and the graduates of the MYP who settled on the schemes. Second and related to the above, the schemes led to the disruption of the socio-cultural structures and institutions especially those linked to chiefly powers and matrilineage. The Customary Land (Development) Act of 1967 prevented chiefs from exercising their traditional powers of land distribution in the areas where the government established schemes. Although the chiefs attended the plot allocation committees, their presence on these committees had a nominal impact as political officials and government officers undermined their authority in these committees. In addition, matrilineage leaders lost control over the alienated land.<sup>67</sup>

However, peasants were not passive to these developments. Some poor peasants were reluctant to join the schemes. These peasants also resented the Taiwanese who were engaged by the government in the construction of the schemes. They believed that the Taiwanese “ate” human beings, dogs and snakes, things commonly regarded as taboos.<sup>68</sup> The peasants further looked down upon the Taiwanese as relatively second-class “whites” due to their inability to speak English. One peasant noted that, “We expected white people to speak English and live a relatively higher life, but these Taiwanese did not. They were shabbily dressed, and lived like local poor Malawians. We feared that after

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64 Malawi Government, Annual Survey of Agriculture, 1980-1981 (Zomba: National Statistical office, 1982).

65 Interview: Author with M Misonkho, Phalombe, 16 December 2016.

66 MNA, GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects, 1979.

67 MNA, GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects.

68 Interview: Author with A Chapita, Chair of WUA at Domasi scheme, Machinga, 14 December 2016.

eating our dogs and snakes, they would begin to eat us. We could not work with such people.”<sup>69</sup> Another peasant argued that, “We were told by a friend that these Taiwanese belonged to Taiwanese outcasts. Some of them were prisoners. Taiwan was using its diplomatic agreement to dump these outcasts that congested their country.”<sup>70</sup> Despite being unfounded, the stereotypes significantly affected production relations between the Taiwanese and poor peasants. The latter were unwilling to participate in the irrigation schemes between 1967 and 1974 such that by 1972, local farmers cultivated only 20% of the land earmarked for the Likangala irrigation scheme. This was also true at the Domasi scheme where only 14 rich peasants registered for irrigation plots while over 1 000 plots remained uncultivated in 1973.<sup>71</sup>

Some chiefs who lost land also resorted to opening their own irrigation schemes where they could continue to exercise control over access to land and water. They charged rentals which were paid mostly in kind by peasants who were allocated plots in the schemes. Popular chiefly schemes were located at Chanyumu and Lingoni in TA Mposa, Domasi in GVH Mpheta, Naisi in GVH Khanda and Likapa in GVH Mbalu.<sup>72</sup> At Likangala, GVH Mbalu allocated Likapa wetland near Likangala scheme to his subject chiefs, Chidothi, Ramusi and Mbalu.<sup>73</sup> In Domasi area, GVH Mpheta owned the largest chiefly scheme in the Chilwa basin. Although the scheme had been in existence since the colonial times, it became more organised after the establishment of the Domasi irrigation scheme in 1972.<sup>74</sup> The chief granted land for the establishment of Domasi scheme after pressure from E. Mussa, a MCP Member of Parliament of the area.<sup>75</sup> However, the GVH offered the valley closer to Domasi river which was flood prone, less fertile and populated. He reserved absolute control over the most fertile *dambos* to the eastern part of the area connected to lake Chilwa where he operated his scheme.<sup>76</sup> Unlike in Domasi scheme, peasants from the chiefly schemes at first cultivate using residual moisture but later began constructing canals to divert water from the rivers for irrigation. However, the existence of public and chiefly schemes created competition over water for irrigation during times of water shortages.<sup>77</sup>

69 Interview: Author with F Kachepa, Machinga, 14 December 2016.

70 Interview: Author with Mphepo, Machinga, 14 December 2016.

71 MNA, GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects, 1979.

72 For details, see, D Kambewa, “Patterns of access and use in wetlands: The Chilwa basin”, BASIS CRSP Report, Madison - University of Wisconsin, October 2004.

73 Interview: Author with C Pensulo, Zomba, 15 December 2016.

74 MNA, GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects, 1979.

75 MNA, GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects.

76 Interview: Author with L Tayimu, Zomba, 15 December 2016.

77 For details, see, W Mulwafu and B Nkhoma, “The use and management of water in the Likangala irrigation scheme complex”, *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth* 27, 2002, pp. 839-844; W Mulwafu, “Water use and conflicts in some rivers in lake Chilwa basin”. In: P Mvula *et al*, *Towards*

However, it was difficult for the poor peasants to show open resistance to government policies during the MCP era. Banda subjected any person who dared challenge his policies to political torture. In most rural areas, the government located members of the MYP, Youth League and Women League to act as MCP's political watchdogs. For instance, the MYP dealt with anybody that behaved contrary to the ideologies of MCP within the irrigation schemes.<sup>78</sup> The government did not allow peasants who failed to purchase party affiliation cards to cultivate in irrigation schemes, sell their crops at ADMARC markets nor to get medical services from the health centres in the schemes. Furthermore, the government used its political affiliates to lead development and agricultural committees and to silence peasants who wanted to revolt against its policies.<sup>79</sup> One of the groups of people who suffered terribly was that of the Jehovah's Witnesses, a religious movement that renounced the purchase of party cards and participation in political affairs of the country. Their renunciation of party cards did not sit well with the MCP regime and as a result, the government banned the movement from the country in 1972. This resulted in the arrest of its members, thirty of whom were evicted from the area while their plots were reallocated to other farmers.<sup>80</sup> Yet despite these human rights violations, for strategic reasons, western powers continued to unquestionably support Banda's development interventions in the country.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4. END OF HONEYMOON: THE GROWTH OF FOOD SHORTAGES IN MALAWI, 1978–1994

From 1978 onwards, peasants, especially those who were poor, began to experience acute food shortages. The major contributory factor had to do with the economic crisis the country underwent between 1978 and 1983. The economic crisis was triggered by the falling world prices of tobacco exports, rising oil prices and the disruption of traditional transport routes through Mozambique due to the civil war that broke out in the mid-1970s.<sup>82</sup> The crisis caused a drop

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*defragmenting management systems of lake Chilwa basin* (Western Cape: PLASS, 2014); Nkhoma and Kayira, "Gender and power contestations over water use in irrigation scheme, pp. 79–84.

78 Interview: Author with W Kalambula, Zomba, 9 November 2016.

79 MNA GRS 600/1/13, Settlement Aspects, Likangala Scheme, 1979.

80 Interview: Author with GVH Mpheta, Machinga, 14 December 2016.

81 See, Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect".

82 For details about the causes of the economic crisis, see for example, J Kydd, "Malawi in the 1970s: Development policies and economic change". In: Centre for African Studies, *Malawi - An Alternative Pattern for Development*, Conference Proceedings (Edinburgh: University of the Edinburgh, 1984); G. Mhone, *Malawi at the crossroads: Post-independence political economy* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1992); T Mkandawire, "Agriculture, employment and poverty in Malawi", In: E Chirwa, *et al.*, "Agricultural growth and poverty reduction in Malawi: Past performance and recent trends", ReSAKSS Working Paper No 8, Southern Africa, October 2008.

in the country's growth rate from 8.3% in 1978 to 3.9% in 1979 and -1.1% in 1980, and -4.7% in 1981.<sup>83</sup> Faced with inadequate funds, the government began to compromise most of its agricultural operations and peasant food production interventions such as irrigation development and provision of credits for inputs to farmers in the country.<sup>84</sup>

While the economic crisis slowed down Banda's agricultural policy, its food security impacts was accentuated by rapid population increase and recurrences of droughts and floods. According to the 1987 census, the Malawi population grew from 4 039 583 in 1966 to 5 547 460 in 1977 and to 7 988 507 in 1987.<sup>85</sup> Droughts and floods were historically recurrent problems, however, there was an intensification of these events from the late 1970s. Droughts occurred in 1978, 1980, 1984, 1987, and 1992 while floods in 1982, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991. The worst of these events occurred between 1988 and 1992.<sup>86</sup> In the absence of donor support, it became difficult for Banda to shield the peasants from the eventual food shortages.

To cope with food shortages, the government restructured its extension delivery system and adopted structural adjustment programmes (SAP). With funding from the World Bank, the government launched a National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) in 1978 to improve agricultural infrastructure and extension delivery systems in the country.<sup>87</sup> In principle, the state intended to undertake projects that were smaller and less intensive than those of the 1960s in order to reach out to more smallholder farmers. The objectives of the NRDP were to increase smallholder production for export and feeding of the urban population through the provision of inputs and services. The project also aimed at preserving natural resources by encouraging high standards of crop husbandry and soil conservation and maintenance of forests through replanting trees in reserves and on customary and estate lands.<sup>88</sup>

Through the NRDP, the state divided the country into eight Agricultural Development Divisions (ADD) that acted as centres for extension planning and rural development. The regions were termed Agricultural Development Divisions (ADD) and they included Karonga, Lilongwe, Salima, Machinga, Blantyre and the Lower Shire. The lake Chilwa basin fell under Machinga and Blantyre ADDs.

83 Mkandawire, "Agricultural Employment".

84 LA Msukwa, "Food policy and production: Towards increased household food security". Research Report, Centre for Social Research, Zomba, Malawi, 1994.

85 Malawi Government, *Population Census Report* (Zomba: National Statistical Office, 1987). Note that Malawi conduct census every 10 years beginning from 1966.

86 MNA GRS 15/14/4/II National Disasters and Operations, 1987-1990. Report on the World Bank Disaster Assessment Mission in Malawi, 31 May - 10 June 1989.

87 Malawi Government, National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) in Malawi (Lilongwe: Ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources, 1978).

88 See, Malawi Government, National Rural Development Programme.



Within the ADDs were Rural Development Projects (RPD) centres, followed by Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) and Sections. The peasants interacted with the agricultural extension workers in all matters related to agriculture, food security, nutrition and conservation in the sections. The Chief Agricultural Officer (CAO) who headed the NRDP was responsible for extension, training, land husbandry, crop production, marketing, nutrition and conservation. While Programme Managers headed the ADDs, Regional Agricultural Officers managed RDPs. In total, there were 30 RDPs and 180 EPAs in the country. Whereas in the past agricultural officers visited farmers through clubs, however, the government adopted a Block Extension System by which peasants were grouped into geographical units from which extension officers trained farmers about agricultural production and food security every fortnight.

As far as the economic crisis of the 1980s was concerned, the government adopted the SAP as dictated by the World Bank and IMF.<sup>89</sup> In large measure, the programme involved liberalisation of agricultural marketing services and prices of some agricultural produce. Through the policy, the government stopped the provision of fertiliser subsidy to farmers and encouraged privatisation of public agricultural enterprises.<sup>90</sup> The government reduced funding to most of its agricultural projects such as extension services and irrigation schemes.<sup>91</sup> In the same vein, the World Bank and IMF demanded the restructuring of ADMARC to remove its monopsony over the marketing of peasants' crops. In response, the government passed the Agricultural (General Purpose) Act of 1987, which resulted in the closure of most of the ADMARC markets in the rural areas.<sup>92</sup> Within the Lake Chilwa basin, the government closed 80 of its 110 depots.<sup>93</sup> In Phalombe district, the government only maintained seven of the 24 depots.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, the NRDP and SAP accentuated rather than reduced food shortages. For instance, except for committee members and *achikumbe*, majority of the peasants in the rural parts of the country reluctantly participated in the extension programmes provided through the block system as stipulated by the NRDP. Most peasants considered the results of the system as products of scarce and expensive inputs far beyond their reach. The government, too, adopted top-down approaches in its interventions and treated the peasants more like

89 For details, see, E Green, *Kudziteteza ku njala: Liberalisation of the agricultural markets and its impact on the smallholder farmers – The case of Malawi* (Lund: Lund University Press, 2000).

90 Chirwa, et al, "Agricultural growth and poverty reduction in Malawi", pp. 7-8.

91 See, J Chilowa and E Chirwa, "Impact of SAPs in social and human development in Malawi". In: J Chilowa (ed.), *Bwalo: A Forum for Social Development* (Zomba: Centre for Social Research, 1997), pp. 49-68.

92 Malawi Government, *Agricultural (General Purpose) Act of 1987*.

93 Interview: Author with E Salima, Zomba, 15 December 2016.

94 See, Malawi Government, *Food security and nutrition bulletin* 1 (1), 1989.

recipients of agricultural extension than development partners.<sup>95</sup> While the new technologies were good, selective consultation and the use of coercion affected their acceptability among the poor peasants in the country.

As in most parts of Southern Africa, this situation was made worse by SAP which by generally advocating reduction of funding, forced the government to compromise efficiency in the delivery of agricultural extension.<sup>96</sup> For instance, the government reduced the number of its extension officers such that instead of the required 750 households, each extension worker began to take care of more than 3 000 peasants.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the government froze fuel allowances that extension workers used during field visits and laid off most groundsmen who maintained agricultural offices in EPAs and irrigation schemes.<sup>98</sup> Overwhelmed by such heavy workloads, agricultural extension workers started taking two months to make their traditional periodic visits to rural peasants. Ganizani Kamanga argued that,

We did not know what was happening. We had no idea whether there was an economic crisis or not. What we saw was that the state transferred some of the extension workers but it made no replacement. In the past, the coming of a new extension worker followed every transfer. But this time no immediate replacement was made.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, the closure of ADMARC depots from 1987 denied most peasants reliable markets at which to sell their produce or buy foodstuffs at subsidised prices in times of food scarcity. While ADMARC used its profits to finance estate agriculture, it also sold maize at low prices to the peasants. In times of food shortages, ADMARC was the only reliable market where the peasants accessed cheaper maize. Although the WB and IMF assumed that private traders would take over this responsibility, not many traders came forth to buy peasants' produce especially from those who were located deep in rural areas due to transportation and logistical challenges.<sup>100</sup> Most of them operated from Zomba and Blantyre, and as such, it became difficult for them to visit the remotest areas to sell food

95 Interview: Author with W Shaibu, G Kambona and M Fulaye, Agricultural Extension Development Officers, Zomba, 15 December 2016.

96 For regional scholarly assessments of the SAPs see for example, Chattopadhyay, "Zimbabwe: Structural adjustment, destitution and food insecurity", pp. 307-316; S Kapunda, "Structural adjustment and food security in Tanzania", *Utafti* 2(1), 1994, pp. 43-58; S Kawewe and R Dibie, "The impact of economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP) on women and children: Implications for social welfare in Zimbabwe", *The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 27 (4), 2000, pp. 79-107.

97 Interview: Author with A Dizinga, Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator (AEDC), Machinga, 14 December 2016.

98 Interview: Author with A Jangiya, AEDC, Zomba, 9 December 2016.

99 Interview: Author with G Kamanga, Zomba, 9 December 2016.

100 Interview: Author with I Mulongoti, Zomba, 9 December 2016.

grains to the peasants. Those who dared to visit the areas sold the grains on local periodic markets at prohibitive prices.<sup>101</sup> In 1988, for example, traders were selling a 90 kg bag of maize at K32 instead of the official price of K22. Each bag could feed an average of 4-5 persons a month.<sup>102</sup> Since most of the peasants were poor, the rise in food prices created serious concerns for household food security.<sup>103</sup> “We were not happy with the closure of ADMARC”, said Elizabeth Phiri, a peasant who resided Zomba during this time. “ADMARC used to sell maize and farm inputs to us at cheaper prices compared to the prices at the open market. Its closure was like condemning us to hunger and starvation”.<sup>104</sup>

Subsequently, maize production began to go below the food requirements of the country’s population from 1985. This was worse in the 1991/2 agricultural season when the available maize was three times below what the country required.<sup>105</sup> Table 4 shows the annual trend of maize production and the country’s requirements from 1980 and 1992.

**Table 4: Annual Trend in National Maize Production, 1980-1992**

Year	Maize (Metric tonnes)	Total Requirement <sup>106</sup>
1980/1	1 237 000	1 143 000
1981/2	1 244 000	1 211 000
1982/3	1 369 000	1 251 000
1983/4	1 398 000	1 292 000
1984/5	1 355 202	1 334 000
1985/6	1 294 560	1 378 000
1986/7	1 218 480	1 436 000
1987/8	1 426 890	1 467 000
1988/9	1 508 820	1 516 000
1989/90	1 342 810	1 582 000
1990/91	1 589 810	1 617 000
1991/92	656 650	1 620 000

**Source:** Malawi Government, *Food Security and Nutrition Bulletin* 3 (3), 1992. L. Msukwa, “Food security and production”.

101 Interview: Author with M Phuliwa, Zomba, 16 December 2016.

102 Malawi Government, *Food Security and Nutrition Bulletin* 1 (1), 1989.

103 Malawi Government, *Food Security and Nutrition Bulletin* 1 (1), 1989.

104 Interview: Author with E Phiri, Zomba, 9 December 2016.

105 Malawi Government, *Food Security and Nutrition Bulletin* 3 (3), 1992, pp. 1-2.

106 The total maize requirement is calculated by multiplying the estimated number of households by 945, the estimated amount of maize required by a five-member household. See, J Christiansen and S Worth, *National early warning system for food security quarterly bulletin* (January 1991). See also, Msukwa, “Food security and production”.

The growth of food shortages from the mid-1980s, however, was not unique to Malawi. There had been growing global and regional concerns over the growing food crisis in Africa.<sup>107</sup> However, scholars of political economy note that, while population increases and ecological disasters, such as droughts and floods, had the potential to cause food shortages in the country, their impact is often accentuated by long-term processes of political, social and economic changes rather than the ecological disasters of the times.<sup>108</sup> In the Malawian context, in addition to the economic crisis and the resultant SAP, the state had taken away arable land from most of the poor peasants and left them with no access to credits for agriculture inputs.<sup>109</sup> Under these circumstances, most peasants could not amass sufficient food reserves to cushion them in times of crop failure. The closure of the ADMARC markets in 1987 and the failure of private traders to supply rural peasants with maize worsened their food security.<sup>110</sup>

Because of food shortages, the World Bank and IMF began to relax their SAP agricultural conditions beginning from 1992. Among other things, the banks began to allow the government to reopen ADMARC markets in the remotest parts of the country and provide poor peasants with 10% input subsidies. However, the World Bank and IMF urged Banda, for the first time, to observe human rights in order to access funding towards these projects.<sup>111</sup> The call for Banda to adhere to good human rights records, which the western powers endeavoured to ignore since the country's attainment of independence, had more to do with changes in the international political economy than mere concerns about peasants' ecological, political and economic plight. The fall of communism in 1989, the 1992 end of the civil war in Mozambique and the on-going negotiations for the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, resulted in the western support of Banda becoming strategically irrelevant.<sup>112</sup> Prior to the end of the Cold War, western powers supported Banda who stood at odds with other regional leaders by publicly opposing communism and supporting white minority rules in the region.<sup>113</sup> However, Banda's failure to meet the criteria in the early 1990s resulted

107 See, S Berry, "The food crisis and agrarian change in Africa: A review essay", *African Studies Review* 27 (2), 1984, pp. 59-112.

108 See, A Sen, *Poverty and famine: An essay on entitlements and deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); M Watts, *Silent violence: Food, famine and peasantry in Northern Nigeria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); J Giblin, "Famine and social change during the transition to colonial rule in North-Eastern Tanzania, 1880-1893", *African Economic History* 15, 1986, pp. 85-105; D Wyle, "The changing face of hunger in Southern African history, 1880-1980", *Past and Present* 122, 1989, pp. 159-199; G Maddox, "Mtunya: Famine in central Tanzania, 1917-1920", *Journal of African History* 31 (2), 1990, pp. 181-198.

109 Maddox, "Mtunya: Famine in central Tanzania, 1917-1920."

110 The state closed Admarc markets as part of structural adjustment programmes in 1987.

111 Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect", p. 199.

112 Vaughan, "Exploitation and neglect", p. 199.

113 For details, see, Banda, "Hastings Kamuzu Banda", pp. 27-44.

in the withdrawal of western support and change of the west to finance pressure groups that agitated for Banda's removal from political power. This materialised in 1994 when Banda lost general elections to Bakili Muluzi of United Democratic Front (UDF). This marked the end of the three decades of Banda's regime.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The foregoing account has demonstrated the extent to which Banda's agricultural policies affected peasant food production. Contrary to the earlier historiography which characterised Banda's regime either as an "economic miracle" or "economic retrogression", this article has drawn attention to the complex, dynamic, varied and contested ways by which Banda's agricultural interventions affected peasant food production. Although Banda's agricultural policies promised economic prosperity, the study has argued that their success was limited by his autocratic leadership and colonial heritage. The impacts of the policies on the peasants also varied with time, class and gender, and that, despite Banda's brutality, the peasants were not passive victims of state marginalisation. From the early 1980s, the SAP, rainfall variability and the changing international political politics combined to undermine the sustainability of Banda's interventions.

While these findings resonated with peasant experiences in the region, the paper has shown that unlike other leaders, Banda's proclivity to western capitalism and support of white minority governments in the region gave him an upper hand in accessing financial support from western powers to sustain his agricultural interventions. However, this relatively made him a victim of the changing international political economy of the late 1980s and early 1990s, as Britain and the US, could no longer shield Banda's poor human rights records after the fall of the Soviet Union and the apartheid regime in South Africa.

By making these arguments, the study demonstrates the extent to which global forces interacted with local circumstances to shape the trajectory of food production in post-independence Africa. It also calls for a deeper analysis of the much resented autocratic leadership that presided over African states during the three decades of the independence era. Thus, multiple factors need to be considered in analysing the experiences of the early post-independence states in Southern Africa.