

## Fighting a Wrong War

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In this short piece I reflect on the state of things as pertaining to the just-ended elections in Zambia, with a specific focus on the presidential elections because that is where national identity lies. If you cannot identify with the position of President for fifty years in a country you call your own, then there is something deadly wrong; if you perpetually get ruled by presidential candidates whom you have rejected in every election, then you are headed nowhere and the word 'democracy' carries no meaning for you.

### *Facts of the matter*

All sincere and knowledgeable people know that the founding document of Zambia's independence as a Unitary State was [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#). Without that Agreement, there would not have been a country called Zambia as it has been known to the world. As a founding document, the Agreement served as the centre piece of Zambia's constitution at the beginning of her journey as a sovereign political entity. However, it was the subsequent erasure of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) from Zambia's constitution which has had tragic consequences for the country by plunging it into a constitutional crisis which has persisted to the present day. Equally important is the point that the expunging of the Agreement from the Zambian constitution also amounted to a flagrant violation of the Barotse people's human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the blink of an eye, characterised by a stroke of the pen, all the constitutional privileges, protections, rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual, which the Barotse people were meant to enjoy by virtue of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) were suddenly totally obliterated. The same person who had signed the Agreement and taken oath to honour and protect it was the same one who engineered its downfall by seeing to it that it was removed from the country's constitution. I do not know what other people would call this but to me this is blatant dishonesty, betrayal and corruption of the highest order serious enough to have such a leader successfully tried for high treason and imprisoned for a very long time, or even sentenced to death.

What most people do not understand is that by removing [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) from Zambia's constitution, this has meant that one cannot speak about the Agreement and all the rights, privileges and freedoms which it embodied because the action has had the effect of outlawing the Barotseland people's entitlement to those rights, privileges and fundamental freedoms. So, Zambia police and army can then arrest, maim, torture and kill any person who brings up the matter of the Agreement because it is not provided for in the country's constitution any more. This is what makes the action of the Zambian government a violation of Barotseland people's human rights. The people of Barotseland came into the Union carrying a basket of specified rights, privileges and fundamental freedoms; they did not just walk in carrying nothing. This explains why for 43 years, from 1969 to 2012, the people of Barotseland continuously petitioned the Zambian government to put the Agreement back into the Zambian constitution so that their citizenship as Zambians could once again be restored. In response, the Zambian government consistently rejected this polite request, and reacted violently against the people it defined as enemies of the State. So, inevitably, on 27 March 2012 the people of Barotseland resolved that they could and would no longer continue to honour an imaginary treaty which had fallen away many years previously. Indeed, the Zambian government had stated in writing that as far as it was concerned, the Agreement was statute stale and was not worth the paper it was written on. Therefore, there was no other choice than to accept the termination of the Agreement, and by that action begin the process of formerly disengaging from the political farce consummated in 1964; but, alas, the Zambian government has reacted to this with lethal force and incessant acts of terrorism against the people of Barotseland. They are now enforcing an imaginary, make-believe Unitary State by force, while professing to be a democratic and Christian country. This is why I say Zambia is doomed; it has no future; it is soon to implode from within and the centre will soon fail to hold. The reason for this gloomy outlook is something some of us have been singing for

years, *albeit* to a deaf audience ó and every election that passes takes the country closer and closer to that doomø day, to the countryø Armageddon. A country born of deception cannot stand the test of time, and shall not stand the test of time; a country in constant denial cannot stand the test of time, and shall not stand the test of time; a country without capable leaders cannot stand the test of time, and shall not stand the test of time; a country with dishonest leaders cannot stand the test of time, and shall not stand the test of time.

### ***Refusing to see***

There is a difference between *being unable to see* and *refusing to see*. Many Zambians *have refused to see* that a country which was born out of dishonesty, deception and fraud cannot stand the test of time; many Zambians *have refused to see* the injustices meted out consistently and disproportionately onto the people of Barotseland by successive Zambian governments; many Zambians *have refused to see* that their government has committed (and continues to commit) gross human rights violations against the people of Barotseland by, *inter alia*, refusing them to re-establish their own sovereign state after terminating the Barotseland Agreement; many Zambians *have refused to see* the brutality of their government in the face of continued trumped up arrests, torture and killings of the people of Barotseland; many Zambians *have refused to see* the perpetual servitude faced by the people of Barotseland as a result of having their rights and fundamental freedoms violated by successive Zambian governments.

Surely, if Zambians were the same people as the people of Barotseland, some of them would by now shared in the excruciating pain perpetually suffered by the people of Barotseland; some of them would by now have seen and wiped the people of Barotselandø tears streaming down their cheeks every day; some of them would by now have heard the people of Barotselandø cries and comforted them; some of them would by now have listened to the people of Barotselandø silenced voices and answered them; some of them would by now have smelt the people of Barotselandø despair and given them hope; some of them would by now have tasted the people of Barotselandø sorrow and misery ó and lifted their spirits; some of them would by now have stepped forward to comfort the people of Barotselandø haemorrhaging hearts occasioned by the many losses of their loved ones mercilessly butchered by Zambia police and other Zambian security operatives; some of them would by now have dressed up the people of Barotselandø bleeding sores; and some of them would have shared in the people of Barotselandø many stories of grief. But, no! This agony, which the people of Barotseland continue to go through daily, means nothing to the Zambians. They are happy and content to carry on; to celebrate their victory; for them it is business as usual while the people of Barotseland continue to gnash and grind their teeth ó and hope to survive the hardships of each day, to fight another day. All the people of Barotseland want is to be left alone to re-establish the sovereignty of their homeland, motherland, fatherland ó that is all. Why is it such a big problem to allow this to happen?

After the Barotse National Councilø decision to disengage from the rest of Zambia, there was no need for the Barotseland people to participate in Zambiaø elections in January 2015 and again in August 2016. There was really nothing to expect from these elections. The unfortunate thing was that participation in the elections may have had the effect of validating and legitimising them ó notwithstanding that the outcome, especially at the presidential level ó was obvious to those of us who *had not refused to see*. People who were expecting a different presidential election result simply *refused to see*. A corrupt government plants its people in all key places to manipulate and undermine the countryø democratic processes in every way possible. A thief is always one step ahead ó and thatø how s/he is able to steal. If you are not a thief yourself, you cannot catch a thief. Our forefathers used to say, “Do not fight a lion unless you are a lion yourself.” In a corrupt system people have no recourse; no matter how innocent they may be, everywhere they go theyøll simply be met with disappointment and well-orchestrated frustrations; if they insist on their rights they are simply locked up and the key is either thrown away or deliberately misplaced.

The only good thing we can say came out of the just-ended elections was the total rejection of the scheme that the embattled Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE) and President Chagwa Lungu were trying to conjure up concerning the Barotseland Agreement. This scheme was vigorously canvassed by the BRE on behalf of the Patriotic Front. However, the fact that the people of Barotseland trusted a rival party to the Patriotic Front has sent a very loud and clear message to all concerned: ***the people of Barotseland do not want to associate themselves with such an ill-conceived scheme which disrespects the wishes of the people of Barotseland.*** The wishes of the people were clearly contained in the [Barotse National Council Resolutions of 27th March 2012](#). Those resolutions are not vague, they are clear enough for anyone with an average intellect to understand and they are binding because the Barotse National Council was properly convened after following all the required consultative processes in the land.

### ***Epilogue***

However, since the Barotse National Council's acceptance of Zambia's termination of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#), the Zambian government has been working hard to prevent the people of Barotseland from implementing the Council resolutions. The government's first strategy has been to weaken and neutralise Namuso (Barotse government) through the creation of the BRE, which they have so far succeeded to do. The BRE's powers are limited to what their Creator chooses to give it. Through the BRE, the Zambian government succeeded in propagating the deception that Zambia is still the Unitary State that it was in 1964. However, the people of Barotseland have seen the light and, day by day, the only reason they continue to appear to comply with this scheme of things is through Zambia's use (misuse) of its gun powder. Having weakened and neutralised the Namuso, the Zambian government's second strategy is to usher in a watered-down Barotseland Agreement which will allow them to continue ruling the people of Barotseland in perpetuity against their will, while the BRE laughs on the side-lines. But, all these corrupt political machinations will not work because in Barotseland power rests with the people. Anything that side-lines the people is bound to fall flat on its face. This is Imutakwandu, King Lewanika's legacy and especially this year when we commemorate the centenary of his passing. This is not the year to undermine his integrity. He left us true form of democracy and a universal kind of democracy which starts and ends at grassroots level. It does not start and end at Namuso; it starts and ends at the village level.

In the meantime, the people of Barotseland ought to remember and believe that the resolutions of the Barotse National Council to, *inter alia*, accept Zambia's termination of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) has paved way for a permanent resolution of the political impasse which has dogged the Zambian government for over a half century. By virtue of those resolutions, the people of Barotseland have refused to continue to be victims of their circumstances. They are the ones who have been disenfranchised by the Zambian government, so there is no need to place their hopes and aspirations in the hands of anyone else but themselves. The sooner the people realise that it is all in their own hands to make the difference the sooner the day of salvation shall arrive. So, let's all rally behind the resolutions of the [Barotse National Council Resolutions of 27th March 2012](#) and fight to re-establish our lost glory, the glory of our forefathers. We owe it to them. They left us a country; they left us a nation and where is it now? Surely, if that country could prosper then, it should be much easier now for it to prosper now. Look at all the misery that has enveloped the people of Barotseland, as parents fail to dress their children and *njenje nji njenje!* Barotseland is the poorest part of its neighbourhood on all critical indicators of poverty. It is all in our hands to change things for the better for our beloved country and nobody else. Those of you who still wish to frustrate yourselves further by believing in the imaginary country called Zambia, wait for the next elections and get dribbled some more, even worse than this time. Each time will be worse than the previous time. When it happens next time, and it surely will unless we get ourselves out of that slavery, do not say I did not warn you. Like today, you'll still be fighting a wrong war. The right war is to follow the resolutions of the Barotse National Council. In the end, we shall be vindicated by nothing other than that we fought a just war.