

Cry my beloved Barotseland—Zambian dictatorship and failure of modern African governance systems

by Sibimbi Maibiba

The bigger picture that comes to the fore in all of this drama is the failure of Zambia as a unitary state and the failure of the democratic system as a model of governance for Africa in particular. This constructed system forced upon us by the western-European-white-elites as a way to continue to plunder our natural resources after the second world war is at a cross roads. It is now left to us to redefine who we are and what we want, take back what was stolen and create a better model. This is not about African dictators or unfair treatment to opposition leaders, it is about whether Africa has the courage enough to lead itself, using the best practices of its past to inform a more enlightened future for all.

Bear with me for one minute, if I say that Barotseland is the underlying major player in this whole drama to take back original systems of governance, would you believe me? There is a system of governance which still survives to this day in Barotseland but on paper it has been relegated as a second class system, just as we, the black body, rich or poor is relegated to being a second class citizen globally due to the racist colonial project. African systems of governance operate primarily on a metaphysical level, a symbolic world which is where you can find African, black consciousness as it still holds primacy in that worldview. Let's look at this current historical moment between HH and Lungu closely.

This legitimation drama of Africa is what we are actually looking at and it has come to a tipping point through these two actors HH and Lungu are pointing us to examine what is truly legitimate Africa or the illusion of Africa projected on us. Look at the context of the power struggle itself and you will see it is all about who would be the "President" of Barotseland. So deep is the cultural memory of Africa that these men fought to the death to have primacy at a traditional African ritual or ceremony, Kuomboka, that still after thousands of years expresses who we are as Africans. That is the catalyst for this whole conversation, which of these colonized ego's could get to Limulunga, the royal winter capitol, first. If it had been HH as President, I don't doubt for a minute that Lungu himself would be in detention today. Another thing I don't doubt for a minute is that Lungu's state of emergency is aimed at crushing all dissent and in particular, fifty years of dissent from Barotseland because of Zambia's unilateral abrogation of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#), the basis on which the unitary state of Zambia was established. As we speak Barotseland is under military occupation and activists are being smoked out. When a state uses military force it is a sure sign it is a failed state. What would you expect when the basis on which the unitary state of Zambia was established is unilaterally abrogated by one of the parties to that agreement, that party being no other than the government of Zambia itself? Who would ever expect a house to stand when the foundation on which it was built is removed?

I am willing to suffer abuse for bringing these issues up because I know my ancestors and their histories and the political development of my own ancestral land and know its true symbolic worth. For fifty three years, I have lived under the shadow of who I truly am or ever could be as a black body, having been born on the other side of a midnight treaty in 1964 which created Zambia. Zambia was a fiction created out of the mind of the white man, created after an agreement between Barotseland on one part—an African sovereign state with a sophisticated system of governance for centuries, which was clinging onto its sovereignty and protectorate status under threat of invasion for one hundred years. Yes that same Barotseland whose co-founding father was King Lewanika, father of the Pan African Movement and African National Congress in 1902. Namesake of Lewanika Mandela whose father Nelson knew exactly who he

was naming him after. The great great grandfather of many of us--and Northern Rhodesia on the other part to form Zambia.

This is the point in time we need to personally dis-member and return, re-member and chart backwards in order to go forward. As Great Britain unravels before our very eyes, “Zambia” too is unraveling and must remember its brief colonial past when it was an illegally occupied colony of Northern Rhodesia—named after its architect Cecil Rhodes chairman of the British South Africa Company (BSAC). “Zambia” must remember, like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and others that successive Presidents were puppets of corporations and that they are maintained as such for the purpose of appropriation of our unbelievable wealth and enslavement of our hardworking people into a monetary system that only beefs the northern cradle. Remember we still have all the resources. BSAC, British East India Company, Dutch East India Company, etc. and their administrators also put in place educational systems that ensured you or I would never remember our past or have access to it unless, like me, you forsook life and limb and crawled around in the basement stacks of western libraries for that evidence for twenty-five years.

We can start by going back to [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) and going backwards from there to create our own reformation. You cannot build a house on sand or without foundation and expect it to stand. The very foundation of Zambia is no more and for many states in Africa are shaky because they are illegitimate. Africa needs control of its own fiscal economies and the only way forward, as painful as it may be, is to dismantle the colonial constructs and rebuild our territories by redefining who we are first philosophically. It's getting hot so take off the wigs, ties and suits for a minute and get busy getting to know your roots. When I spent time in Slovenia and saw how peaceful the Balkans had become after a bloody war to dismantle a similar Soviet occupied system, I feel certain that there is a future for Barotseland and Africa. We need not be afraid or ashamed of our brilliant diversity and feel we don't need to shed a drop of blood on both sides to get to that place. The shedding of blood has been one sided against Barotseland thus far, which has chosen a pacific resolution in contrast to Zambia's violence. If we focus on our metaphysical world first—the place that was first discredited and destroyed—the place where we have all the power, the time has come to free Barotseland from Zambia colonialization as a natural outcome of the unilateral abrogation of [the Barotseland Agreement 1964](#). Free Barotseland! Free Africa!