

Paradigm Shift: Saving Africa Listening and Answering the Call of Nature

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In a chapter titled “The Cobra’s Heart”^[1] in his book, “The Shadow of the Sun”^[2] Ryszard Kapuscinski, a Polish author, describes with incredible poignancy characteristic of the entire work, the original and main problem of Africa.

“...Everything about the internal politics of Africa’s states is intricate and entangled. This stems directly from the fact that European colonialists, dividing Africa among themselves under Bismarck’s leadership during the Berlin conference, crammed the approximately ten thousand kingdoms, federations, and stateless but independent tribal associations that existed on this continent in the middle of the nineteenth century within the borders of barely forty colonies. Meantime, many of these kingdoms and tribal groups shared a long history of conflict and wars. And here, without being asked their opinion on the matter, they suddenly found themselves within one and the same colony, subject to the same (and foreign) authority, the same laws” ^[3]

He writes.

It is an extremely rare feat to find, captured with unparalleled efficacy in just one paragraph, the root-ills of Africa as Kapuscinski has done. One would have to be unusually “entangled” with Africa, as in “being in love with Africa,” to accomplish that. Ryszard Kapuscinski was, is.

Four significant issues can be boiled out of this paragraph: 1) colonialism, employing its most potent instrument, 2) “Balkanization,” to achieve 3) de-“sovereignization” of the indigenous peoples of Africa, forcefully substituting a non-consenting artificial centralized 4) abstract citizenship.

Whereas Colonialism needs no explanation, “Balkanization,” on the other hand, does: it is a most misused word, when and where used. Balkanization is not the natural falling apart of, or division / separation of, a working or non-working union, even by force. Balkanization is a calculated malicious, malignant and sinister weapon, whose operation is heart-achingly ruthless, goals nakedly exploitative, and results wastefully devastating in terms of human life. Balkanization is the deliberate creation by an intruder (such as a colonial power), of divisions among people of otherwise natural affinity, and between peoples with otherwise natural boundaries, in order to re-group the people into non-consenting arrangements, with the goal of causing just enough on-going friction and internecine strife to prevent the victimized from coming together to confront the intruder, yet retaining enough forced cooperation to prevent outright chaos, anarchy and paralysis, so as to achieve complete and smooth exploitation and dispossession of the people—all this, throttled with finesse in a manner that only the well-oiled colonial mechanism can.

All over colonized Africa, Balkanization was occurring. And, it was not just about the desecration of natural physical boundaries, but also, the breeching of psychosocial boundaries and the creation of new ones. In Nigeria—that quintessential African country—for example, peoples with distinct and major linguistic, cultural and religious “boundaries” residing in their own natural territories and domains were forced together as “one country” as created by the then colonial British administration, thereby breeching both physical and non-physical boundaries. In “Sometimes in April”^[4] a HBO (Home Box Office) drama-movie depicting the Rwanda genocide of 1994, one learns of the colonial masters actually deliberately creating a new class / subgroup from a people of the same heritage, then nurturing this subgroup into a “chosen people” class, thus drawing the envy, ire and wrath of the “passed-over” group; and thus setting the perfect stage for the atrocities and horrific blood-letting that followed much later. But in Nigeria, the British did not have to create a new and preferred class: they simply chose, stated and showed their preference for the Muslim Northern Nigeria, to whom they bequeathed the wholesale right, as a class, to rule Nigeria in perpetuity, regardless of elections and their results. These are all examples of Balkanization, the engine of colonialism, the bane of Africa.

Africa was stripped, by colonialism, of the natural sovereignties enjoyed by the indigenous peoples naturally grouped into each its own natural nationhood; thus to force approximately “ten thousand” functionally independent sociopolitical such units into about forty colonial constructs, fashioned thousands of miles and many oceans away from Africa, to be ruled with a typically colonial hand by typically colonial masters. No one asked for permission by, or the consent of, the Africans. These colonies later became most of Africa’s so-called independent countries of today. In taking away the Africans’ natural nationhoods—natural identities and natural loyalties—colonialism deliberately intended to take away

their human dignity and self-respect: it succeeded in doing so.

What was substituted for the original natural order of Africa and Africans in this design? A centralized colonial government, to which Africans of distinct and naturally different nations were supposed to transfer their total allegiance and loyalties, while being heavily indoctrinated and coerced into “dropping” their “tribal” loyalties and ethnic identities, in favor of a centralized citizenship of this colonial construct. Thus was Balkanization complete and total.

Colonialism left the African continent starting about half a century ago: that is obvious and celebrated. What was not, and is still not, recognized is what colonialism left behind in Africa. No, it is not its “legacy”, like a romanticized “gift”—beneficial or malevolent—of a parting lover, or a tenacious ghost of its old self. Colonialism is gone from Africa, but it left all the colonial constructs in place, including the Balkanized Africa and the horrific Balkanization processes, results and goals: in short, Colonialism as foreign policy is gone from Africa, but the colonial “computer” program is still running in Africa’s computer. Only operators switched—from foreigners to indigene-surrogates; the operation is still in place and intact. Exploitation and dispossession of Africa continues today unabated and sometimes, unabashed, because the program is still running. But most of the heartache now is the pained irony that it is Africa’s leaders, elite and political class who are the ones operating the colonial programs today using the colonial constructs set up by departing colonial administrators.

This one condition alone is the cause of the ongoing contemporary manifestation of the original problem of Africa as caused by colonialism. It is even more serious than the original problem. One can describe the condition as that of ignorance—by those who speak for, and rule, Africa. This class does not understand that it is carrying out the same instructions and orders of the departed colonialists. It is the same instruction-set which caused odious and often reprehensible results for indigenous Africans. It is the same program-set which took without consent and with gross impunity the sovereignties, the nationhoods, the identities and the dignity of Africans. Worse still, this class of Africans is willing to plunge Africa / Africans into civil war if necessary, inter-state war if called for, and willing to torture and kill masses of fellow Africans if it comes to that, just to achieve the sustenance of erstwhile colonial masters’ program. Yet, they remain ignorant of what they are actually doing: they have no idea that this is in fact what they are doing.

It should come as no surprise that Africa as is today is for the most part unruleable, mired in perpetual dysfunction. Only force, mutual blackmail and distrust keep it alive—barely, but troubled nonetheless—in its dysfunction. That is because Balkanization is so unnatural that every natural inclination and urge is to negate its operation, neutralize its effect and oppose its goal. The indigenous peoples of Africa have no choice but to challenge and reject and react against indolent Balkanization: it is as much a subconscious reaction as it is deliberate. African leaders and the ruling class, on the other hand, uninformed regarding their role, tenaciously defend Balkanization: how great is their ignorance! That is why Africa remains an unstable continent; and what a monumental waste and loss for both Africans and the world! It does not have to be so.

One would like to brag about the world (humanity) having come a long ways in the last half-a-century or so, the assumption being that we should have better problem-solving skills to complement better problem-identification regime. True or not, such is not as important as humanity making a commitment to just plain *honesty*: effective problem management starts with honesty. This is the moral compass of the paradigm shift required to rescue Africa. Honesty is natural.

In all honesty, “what is colonialism?”—a rhetorical question which is at the heart of the Africa problem. Working from honesty, it should be common sense that at any level—personal or national—one should be willing to pay the fair market price for what one needs where one finds it, a process that should take place in mutuality between the “have” and the “have-not.” Even the terms of payment can be worked out to include any mediums and or means acceptable to both parties, including even barter and other exchange-arrangements. Should the identified solution to a need be found unaffordable, honesty calls for creativity, re-think and adjustment of means and ways in order to re-define the situation or failing that, to live within present realities. This should not invoke a colonial mentality-solution. The fact is that those countries of the world playing colonial roles today can truly afford to pay a fair price for what they need from less advantaged countries. Why not? It is the honest thing to do, and it results in less conflict and carnage.

Honesty demands that today’s African leaders, rulers, their supporting elite and political class admit that whatever they are doing is not working. Ever since so-called Independence of African countries, Africa as a whole and especially in parts is being plunged deeper and deeper into the abyss and darkness. It is not for lack of will or lack of trying on the part of these classes: it is just because they are spending their effort on, and defending, a malignantly flawed structure designed as such by colonialists to work against Africans. It does not take much insight to realize that all African leaders have failed; and not much insight to make the connection that it is the system—the structure—which they have been defending that is the problem. As such, their defense of the source of the problem has become a problem of its own—a bigger problem which

needs to be solved, by their first admitting such oversight and next, changing their behavior.

It takes simple honesty to understand that a person's natural identity is tied to his or her family and ethnicity; natural loyalty runs basically along the same lines. Of course, a person or groups of people may act otherwise, but it is always by choice and for a clearly advantageous and or beneficial realignment. But when coercion is involved, and the foisted artificial identity is not able to replace the genuine natural relationships, in the face of mounting problems, the wise course of action is to abandon the abstract creation for the natural—the real thing, because of obvious realities.

In “connecting” all these “honesty-dots,” what is implied, and what results is that:

- 1) the natural sovereignty of each ethnic African nation is a reality to be restored and ratified.
- 2) the natural nationhood of each indigenous African nation is a reality and should be restored and respected
- 3) the natural Independence of each indigenous African nation is a reality which ought to be restored and recognized.
- 4) The natural choice of loyalty and the natural identity of Africans which thus far evidently run along family and ethnic lines is a reality which ought to be the accepted standard and norm for Africa.
- 5) Ongoing colonialism is unnecessary because parties can negotiate today with mutuality how to pay for and satisfy needs, between the needy and the supplier; and the costs are affordable.

When connected, these dots therefore map out a terrain where terrible Balkanization is thus defeated finally—and reversed; and colonialism is terminated for good. This constitutes a paradigm shift—for Africa and for the rest for the world.

Can this new paradigm be folded into a reality-envelope of practical ideology, and or a construct of tried and tested models applicable in the world today? This question is answered definitely in the affirmative by the respected body of work presented in “Fourth World Geopolitical Reader I: International Relations and Political Geography between Nations and States”[5] by Drs. R.C. Ryser & R.A. Griggs (Eds.). This primer formally introduces the terms, “Nations” (indigenous and natural sociopolitical units) and (versus) “States,” the political abstraction created by the peoples of a nation for the people's governance; the primer goes on, among other subjects, to trace the history and life of Nations and (oftentimes, their own) States, their struggles and accommodations.

Borrowing from these concepts, one begins to see the original ethnic nations and groups in Africa as each a real sovereignty endowed with its own natural “nationhood,” properly referred to as a “Nation”; while what is commonly called a “country” is actually technically a “State,” that abstraction originally created by the colonial masters to rule, to govern and to represent the peoples—without the peoples' input or consent, and today, run by indigenous African leaders. Drs. Ryser and Griggs describe many of the important dynamics and friction (including wars); and settlements between Nations and their own States or even other States, Nations and other Nations within or outside of the same State.

In this light, the problems of Africa can be seen and modeled as the age-old problem of Nations versus States. Each individual indigenous African Nation can resolve its problems with its State in a way that is most acceptable and most practical for that Nation, and the resultant accommodation preserves the natural rights of sovereignty and nationhood for the Nation, even if such a Nation submits to the subtending State, as compared to other outcomes such as outright self determination for the Nation leading to separation and independence from the State. Nation versus Nation issues can also be similarly modeled and resolved.

(Indigenous)Nations-versus-States definition and issues have become formalized under the moniker of “Fourth World”[6]; the Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS)[7] is an organization in the forefront of extensive studies, education and research in these dynamics, and also, in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. CWIS specializes in providing consultation and conflict resolution services and access to indigenous peoples' knowledge and ideas[8] working with this paradigm.

Without the “Fourth World” regime as noted above, the new paradigm for Africa would seem utopian, even naïve, but mostly impractical. But now, it is clear that this paradigm for rescuing Africa is practicable, because it is based on the ideology of Nations-versus-States, and there is an active and dynamic effort in place to evaluate and resolve such conflicts, with real examples of the trajectories of Nations and States engaged in similar conflicts, all incorporated into the “Fourth World” dynamics.

Gone are the days when Africa and the world should be looking up to old colonial masters to solve the problems of Africa.

It is clear that while capable of imposing their wills with effectiveness on hapless African countries with camouflaged malevolent intent often disguised in patronage, these powers and principalities have not demonstrated any willingness to truly admit and face up to the root-cause of Africa's problems, of which they are the author. There is no longer any reason to listen to patronizing talk of "destabilization of Africa" (as if Africa was stable to start with), should any meaningful solutions be sought out and considered for Africa. No, Africans are not going to kill themselves all if allowed to seek out and sort out their own relationships based on their natural ethnic nationalities as the basic sociopolitical unit; after all, Africans, for all the aggression they are accused of, have never started or caused a World War or a continental war, or a large regional war. When they have, it is always because of the direct influence of colonization. And, the concerns about troubling major population shifts should Africa restructure are overblown; controlled settlements resulting in desirable restructuring using the Nations-Vs-States models will unlikely cause such population dislocations, because dealing with such issues will, of necessity, be included in the terms of any meaningful and serious settlement.

The world has watched behemoths such as USSR restructure drastically into its constituent Nations, and most Principalities encouraged and welcomed that. Yugoslavia went through drastic restructuring, and the world supported and accepted the Nations which were redeemed out of that troubled State. Just recently, the Nation of Cataluña finally got out of the State of Spain, the last of several States within which it objectingly and protestingly found itself in the last one thousand years or so.

Finally, the argument is often presented today that most States / countries are trying to unite, not split, and the example of the European Union (EU) is often cited. This is a false argument. The basis of EU is individual sovereign and independent nations or States which will never yield their sovereignty or independence or nationhood to the Union. In any case, Europe as a continent, for the most part, is functioning well—despite wars—unlike the continent of Africa; and the reason why Europe is functioning and stable is not because of EU, but because of strongly independent individual countries and sovereignties of even various sizes. EU is an economy-driven union, not a sociopolitical union. To the contrary, large unions in the world today are falling apart, or are so vulnerable and threatened—that's the trend.

We must begin to see Africa as a continent of indigenous Nations (Fourth World member) which needs to come to grips with the States originally imposed by colonialism and presently maintained by ignorant African leaders and sustained by force over the Nations. Sometimes these States subtend the Nations, at other times, the States add to the Balkanization split and burden of the Nations and keep them so hobbled. The self-evident natural order of things is that Nations initiate, form and sustain States to the extent that people in collectivity and for common purpose form governments; and not the other way around: the Indigenous Nations of Africa must be recognized as such and must be allowed to determine their States and or what relationship they want to have with pre-existing States. The natural loyalty and identity of Africans is with their ethnic Nations: this is incontrovertible; forcing them to give this up for State-identity has been tried and is currently being practiced, but this has not worked. African leaders must wake up and understand that there is no longer an excuse for ignorance leading to, and or, the defense of oppressive colonial programs.

There are now identifiable "Fourth World" resources and mechanisms available to aid the indigenous Nations of Africa with achieving their goals vis-à-vis the States. These resources need to be supported, expanded and tapped into. There are also real models—of success; and of failures which offer redeeming lessons. Since erstwhile colonial powers can definitely afford to pay fair market prices for what they need, the ongoing use of colonial tactics and plans and mentality to procure their State needs should stop: the practice is dishonest.

Speaking of which, "honesty is the best policy" [9], still. Honesty, in fact, is the key to solving Africa's problems. The entire world, ex-colonial masters, African leaders, Africa's elite and political /ruling class—all must commit to honesty and its practice. As do the common Africans. Honesty is natural: it will help us see the natural things and lead us to do the natural things using natural tools.

In summary, the paradigm shift which brings resolution to "Africa's Problem" allows for the root-issue and the different components thereof to be addressed and solved successfully in a civilized manner. To the extent that colonialism is / was the major author and driver of that Africa's Problem (and it undeniably was and still is), understanding the real motivation and goals of colonialism and addressing them is a forte of this new paradigm. Surprisingly, a motto as simple (but powerful) as: "*Pay the fair market price, negotiated mutually between the relevant parties, for your needs*" takes care of the primal driver for colonialism, especially now that it is quite obvious that colonial powers can afford fair payment for their needs. This is not naïve: it simply is about honesty, of which even a tiny dose goes a long way in bringing enlightened solutions. The destructive engine of Balkanization, exposed for what it is, is taken care of in several ways, in this fresh paradigm. Firstly, African leadership, rulership and even the masses have their eyes opened as to the fact that thus far, they have defended and are defending a horrific program implanted by colonialism, a program whose only goal is to spirit away Africa's natural—and yes, even human—resources and deposit them on the shores of the colonial masters,

nor matter the cost to Africa. Not only that, since that program was specifically designed to keep Africans fighting among themselves, in the first place, retaining and defending it means that there will never be stability in Africa. It is thus in Africa's best interest to abort the support of that construct. Second, the partitions based on colonial Balkanization principle will no longer be accepted or respected, choosing instead the natural sociopolitical groupings based on natural indigenous sovereignty and nationhood as the sovereign unit. The restoration of these natural sovereignties and nationhoods also restores the dignity and right of choice and of self determination of indigenous African Nations, allowing them what was earlier taken away from them, without their consent, by colonialism, with such a denial now defended and maintained by ignorant post-colonial African leadership.

The new paradigm goes ahead to locate these issues within the natural and well-developed dynamics and framework of "Nations Versus States," a universal human dynamics not peculiar to just Africa, but applicable to the entire world. Thus, the Africa Problem is seen for what it really is: (Indigenous African) Nations Versus States—States subtending and or foisted over them without their prior consent. Placing Africa Problem within this framework ensures the success of the paradigm, because, clearly, there are models for solutions at various levels and with various endpoints with mutually satisfactory resolution for both the Nations and States in question. And there are resources and help available! (See Footnote # 5). This natural and human dynamics and framework has been captured by the new movement, "Fourth World."

"Fourth World" has found a visible cause within its alley: Africa. And, Africa, huge as it is, presents at least one point of entry and starting engagement: Biafra-Nigeria (a subject for another discourse). Can "Fourth World" step up at this time, and take charge? Nothing will promote the existence of "Fourth World" and its functions as "the case for Africa" will, should it formalize its involvement therein. Obviously, that is the recommendation of this author.

In conclusion, the true nature and Spirit of Africa is diversity and stark variegation: attempting to blunt that in any way shows, not wisdom but, dire small-mindedness. The Indigenous Nations of Africa, by their natural constitution, embody that natural diversity; the few man-made forced States offend such Spirit. To do the honest thing is our moral task for today, for the sake of Africa and its peoples; and yes, for the sake of even the entire world.

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[1] "The Cobra's Heart" (Chapter) p.50 from the book, "The Shadow of the Sun," by Ryszard Kapuscinski. First Vintage International Edition, 2002. Vintage Books, a subsidiary of. Random House. Inc.

[2] "The Shadow of the Sun," by Ryszard Kapuscinski. First Vintage International Edition, 2002. Vintage Books, a subsidiary of. Random House. Inc.

[3] Ibid p.50-51

[4] "Sometimes in April" (2005) an HBO Drama Directed by Raoul Peck

[5] "Fourth World Geopolitical Reader I: International Relations and Political Geography between Nations and States" [5] Ryser, R. (1995) R.C. Ryser & R.A. Griggs (Eds.). Center for World Indigenous Studies. Olympia,WA: DayKeeper Press.

[6] Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS): <http://www.cwis.org>

[7] Ibid

[8] Ibid

[9] Original author unknown.