

‘My life is One Long Debate’:

Ali A Mazrui on the Invention of Africa and Postcolonial Predicaments¹

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Introduction

It is a great honour to have been invited by the Vice-Chancellor and Rector Professor Jonathan Jansen and the Centre for African Studies at the University of the Free State (UFS) to deliver this lecture in memory of Professor Ali A. Mazrui. I have chosen to speak on ***Ali A. Mazrui on the Invention of Africa and Postcolonial Predicaments*** because it is a theme closely connected to Mazrui’s academic and intellectual work and constitute an important part of my own research on power, knowledge and identity in Africa.

Remembering Ali A Mazrui

It is said that when the journalist and reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor* Arthur Unger challenged and questioned Mazrui on some of the issues raised in his televised series entitled *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1986), he smiled and responded this way: ‘Good, [...]. Many people disagree with me. My life is one long debate’ (Family Obituary of Ali Mazrui 2014). The logical question is how do we remember Professor Ali A Mazrui who died on Sunday 12 October 2014 and who understood his life to be ‘one long debate’? More importantly how do we reflect fairly on Mazrui’s academic and intellectual life without falling into the traps of what the South Sudanese scholar Dustan M. Wai (1984) coined as *Mazruiphilia* (hagiographical pro-Mazruism) and *Mazruiphobia* (aggressive anti-Mazruism)?

How do we pay tribute to such an ‘encyclopedic’ academic and an ‘intellectual pluralist’ whose scholarly contributions not only transcended traditional academic disciplinary boundaries but also broke bondages of academic ‘tribalism,’ making him at once a leading

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political scientist, historian, international relations specialist, global cultural studies scholar as well as a postcolonial theorist? How do we make sense of such a public intellectual who attracted both admiration and hatred in equal measure? These important questions speak to the pertinent issue of how to approach the expansive work of Mazrui. The best way is to take one of the debates in Mazrui's expansive work that of the invention of Africa, meaning of Africanity, and the concomitant complex question of the African condition.

Mazruiphilia versus Mazruiphobia

On the *Mazruiphilia* one finds celebratory works, praises and rankings of Mazrui as global scholar and opinion-maker. For instance the journal *Foreign Affairs* (2005) identified Mazrui as 'One of the top 100 public intellectuals in the world' while David Horowitz (2006) included Mazrui in the list of '101 Most Dangerous Academics in America.' To Edward Said (1994: 239) 'it is no longer possible to ignore the work of [...] Ali Marui in even a cursory survey of African history, politics and philosophy' because he is 'a first class academic authority.' To the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan (2000), Mazrui was 'Africa's gift to the world.' Philip Darby (1997: 18) praised Mazrui as a 'resistance theorist' who has consistently stood 'on the side of rights and justice rather than order and stability.' Colin Leys had all the praises for Mazrui's contribution:

Ali Mazrui is incapable of writing a dull paragraph. No political scientist writing today exhibits an equal virtuosity in the handling of ideas and images, connexions and paradoxes, overtones and undertones and implications. Few have such wide ranging interests in large issues. He breathes enthusiasm and excitement into everything he discusses (Leys 1968: 51).

Some of his admirers identify Mazrui not only as the best-known African scholar but also as 'a pioneer' whose "forays into the construct 'global Africa' was avant-garde in the scholarly literature" (Mittelman 2014: 159). Slayman Nyang from Howard University had this to say about Mazrui:

Ali Mazrui is a controversial but independent and original thinker. He is a master word-monger and certainly does not belong to that class of men who lament that words fail them [...]. It is because of his conjurer's ability to negotiate between the

realm of serious issues and the province of provocative words and concepts, that divide his readers between those who take him seriously, and those who take him lightly (Nyang 1981: 36).

But Paul Banahene Adjei (2004: 96) noted that Mazrui's 'masterly control of English sometimes influences him to evoke certain words that generate controversy. Such situations tend to shift the discussion away from the noble idea to the political correctness of the word.' Indeed his use of the word 're-colonization' as a remedy to what became known as African failed states led to a serious challenge to his ideas by Archie Mafeje (1995) who posed the question: 'If Ali Mazrui is a leading African scholar, who is he leading and where to?' To Mafeje (1995: 17), Mazrui had come full circle by 1994 to be of service to British and American imperialists to the extent of positing recolonization as a solution for Africa. In response Mazrui (1995: 18) explained that he has been concerned about 'Africa's self pacification for about thirty years' which was captured by his use of the concept of *Pax Africana*. He elaborated that his use of the word 'self-colonization' was meant to capture his long-standing concern about 'how can Africa develop a capacity for effective inter-African control, inter-African pacification, and collective self-discipline' (Mazrui 1995: 20). Mazrui further argued in his defence that:

I am advocating self-colonization by Africa. I am against the return of European colonialism and the equivalent of Pax Britannica. But I fear that if Africans do not take control of their destiny themselves, including the use of benevolent force for self-pacification, they will once again be victims of malevolent colonial force by others (Mazrui 1995: 20).

To Mazrui (1995: 20) such an event as the unification of Tanzania and Zanzibar in 1964, was a typical example of 'inter-African colonization.' It would seem Mazrui's use of the term 'recolonization' did not go well with African scholars who still had deep memories of European colonization. But some of Mazrui's admirers have credited him for writing and telling the history of Africa as it is. He has not been shy to take on revered African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere to task for pursuing wrong politics and adopting wrong economic frameworks.

However, what is emerging is that *Mazruiphilia* is countered by a strong *Mazruiphobia* that has produced various negative depictions of Mazrui. James N. Kariuki (1974) questioned Mazrui's commitment to the African cause of freedom and aspirations as well as the relevance of his scholarly interventions as far back as 1974. In the 1960s and 1970s, commitment and relevance was defined as pursuing scholarship and intellectualism that was contributing to the advancement of the African processes of liberation from colonialism and neo-colonialism as well as pushing for a dignified place for Africa in global power structures (Kariuki 1974: 55).

During the course of anti-colonial struggles and even after attainment of political independence, adoption of the Marxist ideas and materialist understanding of society became the major badge of serious commitment to the African cause of liberation and development. But Mazrui (1974: 70) broke rank and condemned Marxism as a threat to African intellectual authenticity, criticising African Marxists of suffering from intellectual dependency and castigating the adoption of Marxism by African scholars as amounting to 'dual westernization.' Committed scholarship and intellectualism today is measured in terms of advancement of gender equality, de-imperialization of what Mazrui termed 'global apartheid,' democratization and human rights, economic development, social justice, and environmental responsibility among other progressive agendas. To argue that Mazrui has not been committed to the advancement of these issues is to be blinded and close-minded by *Mazruiphobia*.

A charge sheet cascading from the camp of *Mazruiphobia* is overly long. Mazrui is depicted as 'an aloof polemicist who is quick to announce and condemn the failures of the continent without suggesting thought-out alternatives.' He is accused of having been sympathetic to such hated African leaders as Moise Tshombe of Congo who instigated secession of Katanga and Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi who during the course of decolonial struggles broke rank with others and established links with imperial and colonial white regimes of southern Africa. This position of Mazrui was interpreted by some African scholars as tantamount to deliberate hurting of African nationalist emotions. For instance, Mazrui in *Towards Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (1967) wrote that 'the use of foreigners to commit some of the atrocities (in the Congo) might cynically but truly be a positive contribution to the realization of future peace.' This might be considered to be

Mazrui's germinal thoughts that finally led him to posit the highly controversial 're-colonization thesis' in 1994. His 're-colonization' thesis was introduced at a time when the African continent was searching for what became known as 'African solutions to African problems.'

Mazrui's criticism of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania of contributing to the failure of the East African federation and turning the University of Dar-es-Salaam into a 'uni-ideological institution' and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana of being a 'Leninist' on the African continent and a 'Tsar' in Ghana, did not go down well with other African scholars (Mazrui, 1965; Mazrui 1966; Mazrui 1967; Kariuki 1974). While Mazrui had a point on the issue of turning a university into a centre of pursuit of a singular ideology of African socialism, his tendency of breaking rank from other African scholars who were sympathetic to Nkrumah and Nyerere's efforts in pushing for pan-African unity and socialism, earned him the label of an 'imperialist agent' and of approaching African issues from a colonial mindset. In a recent obituary, the Kenyan political scientist Peter Anyang Nyong'o and a former student of Mazrui at Makerere University flashed back to the 1960s when Mazrui published two controversial essays on Ghana and Tanzania that provoked fierce debates. This is how he put it:

It was in the columns of *Transition* that Mazrui's two controversial essays on Ghana and Tanzania were first fiercely debated: 'Tanzaphilia' and 'Nkrumah the Leninist Czar.' In the latter essay Mazrui discussed the 'monarchical tendencies in African politics' pointing out that, notwithstanding his socialist radicalism (like Lenin), his style of leadership (with chiefly symbols and a search for legitimacy in a royalist past) Nkrumah was much more like a Russian Tsar than a Marxist radical. For-pan-Africanists like us who believed in Nkrumah's almost saintly leadership of the African revolution, we did not take kindly to Mazrui's exercise in comparative political theory. Some even branded Mazrui as 'an imperialist agent' (Nyong'o 2014:2).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Mazrui advocated what became known as 'Africanization of capitalism' to produce a multi-racial bourgeois class and was opposed to the popular adoption of socialism. His argument was that postcolonial states' first task was to accelerate economic growth before attempting 'to achieve equality in poverty' (Mazrui 1967c: 46; Mazrui 1969). His thesis seems to be that African societies must aim for economic

development first before adopting socialism. To Mazrui the genius of capitalism was in production and that of socialism was in distribution. While there is a lot of sense in some of the issues that Mazrui raised, a charge sheet from other African scholars is given by Kariuki:

Briefly, we can now sum up the charges of the African scholars against Ali Mazrui into three broad categories. First, he is an advocate of the status quo wholly indifferent to the search for beneficial change in the African society, but deeply involved in fabricating intellectual apologia for the conservatives and the reactionaries. Second, he is self-seeking 'scholar' who will neither hesitate to abandon intellectual honesty and integrity in pursuit of personal motives, nor be haunted by a troubled conscience on account of attacking constructive African leaders unfairly and unjustly. Finally, Mazrui's works display a remarkable absence of concern for the African masses. When he is not busy entertaining his erudite audience in the West with academic puzzles, or defending elitism in Africa, or attacking imaginative African leadership, he is content to remain a semi-detached, backward-looking polemicist in the deliberations of colonial liberation (Kariuki 1974: 62-63).

Despite the fact that some scholars doubted Mazrui's commitment to Africa, his 1986 television series entitled *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* generated strong criticism from the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities who condemned the series as an 'anti-Western diatribe.' Ironically, in his native country of Kenya, the series was banned for many years for being too anti-African (Family Obituary of Ali Mazrui 2014). The Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka was also critical of Mazrui's television series, caricaturing the concept of 'triple heritage' as nothing but a 'triple tropes of trickery' charging that African indigenous traditions were denigrated while the positive role of Islamic and Christian traditions were extolled and exaggerated (Soyinka 1991). Soyinka even questioned Mazrui's very 'Africanness' ('*The Africans* was not a series made by a black African') (Soyinka 1991: 180). This personal attack provoked Mazrui to respond by saying:

My African identity is not for you to bestow or withhold—dear Mr. Soyinka [...]. If I was somebody constantly looking for approval from people who were 'blacker' than

me, I would have kept a low profile instead of becoming a controversial African political analyst (Quoted in Adem et al. 2013: 2002, see also Mazrui 1991).

Soyinka (2000) had previously referred to Mazrui as ‘an acculturated Arab.’ This did not go well with Mazrui who considered himself an African. While Mazrui criticised Soyinka for being rude and deceptive, the ‘Mazrui-Soyinka Debate’ raised the sensitive and inconclusive questions of who is an ‘authentic’ African and how ‘Africanity’ is defined. This is a theme that Mazrui delved deeper into from the time of his first publication “On the Concept ‘We Are All Africans’” (1963) and was further explored in his televised series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1986).

If one carefully reads Mazrui’s 1963 article, the message that comes out is that often human subjectivity/identity is born out of being named by others in particular ways: ‘We are what we are because of what we (are made to) think we are’ (Adem 2014: 138). But he resisted Soyinka’s attempts to name him as ‘an acculturated Arab.’ African subjectivity/identity in general has undergone invention and representation cascading from colonial and cultural encounters. Africans have been engaged in a long struggle involving rejecting and resting some demeaning ‘namings’ and ‘representations’ while at the same time seeking for the elusive sovereign subjectivity.

Some of Mazrui’s critics raised questions of methodology and depth of his work. Such critics as Archie Mafeje (1998) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1998) have criticised Mazrui as a scholar whose work is characterised by use of flowery language, rich metaphors and specious correlations at the expense of methodological due diligence. His use of semi-autobiographical methodology of delivery of his work provoked his critics to accuse him of being obsessed with self-promotion, egoism and self-flattery (Adem 2014: 140). Seifudein Adem (2014: 140) defined Mazrui’s approach to writing that included his life stories and academic trajectories as ‘transactional’ methodology. Mazrui defended his approach in 1973 in this way: ‘Because political consciousness is so intricately bound up with growth of a person’s general awareness, political scientists should perhaps devote more time to using their own lives as data for the study of the growth of political consciousness’ (Mazrui 1973: 101).

To be fair to Mazrui, there is evidence that he used diverse methods ranging from institutional and ideational analysis with regard to such themes as pan-Africanism and nationalism; comparative inquiry regarding political thought, political systems, ideologies and state-systems; and auto-ethnography in understanding issues of gender and family (Mittelman 2014: 164). Mittelman (2014: 164) concluded that:

Far from being anecdotal and quixotic, as his adversaries contend, his work presents the macrocosm as the way to see the big picture. Mazrui uses analogical reasoning as a heuristic for connecting concrete phenomena. [...]. Mazrui is a great *conceptualizer* but not a great *particularizer* of empirical evidence. To be sure, he digs empirically. But the excavations are not as empirically thoroughgoing as some observers demand. Methodologically, the litmus is no less than the meticulous production of knowledge (emphasis in the original).

Mazrui's approach was also defended by Omari Kokole (1998: 60): 'Mazrui's tendency to tell his readers about himself and his varied experiences adds something gripping to his discourse.' At another level, Mazrui is portrayed as a polemicist and essayist, who swiftly moved from one issue/theme to another and in the process compromising quality and depth. Adem (2014: 140) defended Mazrui arguing that 'It is nevertheless invalid to suggest that depth of analysis always goes hand in hand with length of manuscript.'

His anti-Islamophobia position has attracted condemnation as 'the author of hateful communiqués,' as anti-Semitic as well as an 'Al-Qaeda intellectual' (Family Obituary on Ali Mazrui 2014). All this condemnation falls within the purview of *Mazruiphobia*.

Mazrui on the invention of Africa

To Seifudein Adem (2014: 135) Mazrui ideas/ 'theory' of 'triple heritage' is 'his most innovative, and possibly, most enduring contribution to scholarship.' This is mainly because it dealt directly with the topical issue of African identity, Africanity and their inventions. Are the roots and identities of African people nested in three 'heritages': African, Islamic, and Western? Heritage is something people are proud of and wish to hold on to it. People are generally nostalgic about their heritage. Are Africans really proud of Islamic and Western heritage, particularly its linkages with the slave trade, imperialism, violent colonial conquest,

colonialism, and apartheid? Perhaps the problem is with the use of the word 'heritage' by Mazrui.

What is also noticeable in Mazrui's academic and intellectual trajectory is a shift from his earlier focus on political philosophy and political sociology in the 1960s and 1970s to the cultural issues. But he never abandoned his interest in identity politics and political thought. Broadly speaking, one can argue that the themes of invention of Africa, definition of Africanity and articulation of the complex 'African condition' were framed by two broad strands namely the post-Enlightenment Eurocentric view and the decolonial perspective which is itself constituted by a diverse family of ideological and intellectual streams.

From Ali Mazrui's books *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (1980 reprinted 1995) and *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1986), the discourse of the invention and idea of Africa speaks to the complex African identity. It is a long-standing discourse that pre-occupied 'colonial imaginists' such as Rudyard Kipling, Lord Fredrick Lugard, Cecil John Rhodes as well as 'decolonial imaginists' such as Marcus Garvey, William EB Dubois, Aime Cesaire, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Albert Luthuli, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela and many others. In Mazrui, it is as much accentuated as it is policised.

Accordingly, since the discourse of the invention of Africa is also an intellectual discourse on African identity, as Mazrui emphasizes its fragmentary identity in his article "On the Concept 'We Are All Africans'"(1963) and elaborated in Lecture 6 of *The African Condition*, it is not surprising that other academics and intellectuals such as Valentin Y. Mudimbe, Chinua Achebe, and Wole Soyinka among many others became actively involved in enriching the discourse, making it a double invention (from outside and inside). Lewis R. Gordon captured this point very well when he argued that that:

It is in this sense that Africa is 'invented.' It is invented by systems of knowledge constituted by the processes of conquest and colonization, which always erupted with discovery, on the one hand, and it is also constituted by the processes of resistance borne out of those events the consequence of which is an effect of both on each other (Gordon 2008: 204).

Gordon (2008: 207) added that 'Africa is not, in other words, simply invented but continues to be invented and reinvented, both inside and outside the terms of African peoples.' The post-Enlightenment Eurocentric discourse has its foundations in Cartesian *ergo cogito* (I think therefore, I am) which produced imperial reason (I conquer therefore I am and paradigm of discovery). On the paradigm of 'discovery' in relation to Africa, the Wole Soyinka has this take:

The African continent appears to possess one distinction that is largely unremarked. Unlike the Americas or Australasia, for instance, no one actually claims to have 'discovered' Africa. Neither the continent as an entity nor indeed any of her later offspring—the modern states—celebrates the equivalent of America's Columbus Day. This gives it a self-constitutive identity, an unstated autochthony that is denied other continents and subcontinents. The narrative history of encounters with Africa does not dispute with others or revise itself over the 'discovery' of Africa. Even her name is not attached to any enterprising nation, power, or individual adventurer. Africa appears to have been 'known about,' speculated over, explored both in actuality and fantasy, even mapped—Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Phoenicians, etc., took turns—but no narrative has come down to us that actually lays personal or racial claim to the discovery of the continent. Ancient ruins, the source of a river, mountain peaks, exotic kingdom, and sunken pyramids, yes, but not the continent itself—as in the case of the Americas. Hundreds have ventured into, explored, and extensively theorized over the continent, but no one has actually claimed to have discovered her (Soyinka 2012: 27).

Does this argument then summon us to think of Africa and African identity as primordial? Can we speak of a pre-colonial African 'authentic' identity and 'authentic' being? Mazrui's concept of 'triple heritage' problematizes the ideas of a primordial and 'authentic' African identity without underplaying the importance of the impact of enduring pre-colonial African culture in the invention of Africa and shaping notions of Africinity.

But we need to take note of what Soyinka (2012: 48) understood as 'the crisis of African emergence into modernity' that had profound effects on the development and fossilization of Africinity as an identity. We need to understand the logic of imperial reason and the

operations of the paradigm of difference. It is in this Eurocentric discourse that the racial paradigm of difference and the politics of alterity are rooted. This is why Mudimbe (2013:11) wrote that ‘As a conceptuality, Africa has been presumed a transparent concept in most politics of alterity and by almost everyone as a key to the assurance of a difference.’

In this discourse the human population was/is racially hierarchized in accordance with assumed differential ontological densities. At the apex is the white race and at the bottom is the black race. Here was born what Dubois (1903) termed the ‘colour line,’ Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007:245) named as the ‘imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism’ and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007:45) described as the ‘abyssal thinking.’ Elaborating on the essence, meaning and implications of the colour line, the leading philosopher of Africana existentialism Lewis R. Gordon argued that: ‘Born from the divide of black and white, it serves as a blueprint of the ongoing division of humankind’ adding that:

The colour line is also a metaphor that exceeds its own concrete formulation. It is the race line as well as the gender line, the class line, the sexual orientation line, the religious line—in short, the line between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ identities (Gordon 2000: 63).

At the centre was the questioning of the very being/very humanity of black people. In summary, African subjectivity/Africanity emerges in the post-Enlightenment Eurocentric discourse of identity as a disabled, deficient and lacking essence/ontology: lacking souls/religion, history, civilization, development, democracy, human rights, and ethics (Grosfoguel 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b). The point is that the Cartesian subject monopolised complete being and sovereign subjectivity for itself and consigned others to a perpetual state of *becoming* if not totally denying humanity to others.

But the post-Enlightenment Eurocentric discourse which presented Africa as a ‘dark continent’ inhabited by a deficient and lacking subjects locked horns with a decolonial perspective that was articulated in various ideological-intellectual terms ranging from Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, African Personality, Pan-Africanism, African Socialism, African humanism, Black Consciousness Movement to African Renaissance (July 1968; July 1987; Hensbroek, 1999; Falola 2001; Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2009; Creary 2012;

Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b). The logic informing the decolonial perspective is provided by Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe:

You have all heard of African personality; of African democracy; of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Satre called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are good as the next man but that we are better (Achebe quoted in Ahluwalia 2001: 68).

The decolonial perspective is informed by the spirit to assert African being. It is largely a response to imperial and colonial discourse on African subjectivity. It was imposed on Africans as an agenda by history of domination, racial discrimination and exploitation. This reality is well-captured by Archie Mafeje:

We would not talk of freedom, if there was no prior condition in which this was denied; we would not be anti-racist if we had not been its victims; we would not proclaim Africanity, if it had not been denied or degraded; and we would not insist on Afrocentrism, if it had not been for Eurocentric negations [...]. Of necessity, under the determinate global condition an African renaissance must entail a rebellion—a conscious rejection of past transgressions, a determined negation of negations (Mafeje 2011: 31-32).

The inscription of Islamic and Western cultures was also accompanied by epistemicides, that is, attempts to eradicate indigenous histories, cultures, religions, and traditions. Generally speaking, the spread of Islam and Christianity was underpinned by violent *Jihads* and *Crusades*. Christian missionaries often worked closely with colonialists in their project of 'pacification of barbarous tribes.' We can, therefore, speak of colonially 'imposed heritages' with reference to Islamic and Western civilization. African culture pre-dated Islamic and Western cultures. At the centre of heritage is identity and roots of a people.

Mazrui's idea of 'triple heritage,' which formed his main contribution to the discourse of invention of Africa, became important because it was joining a genealogy of previous and ongoing engagements with the idea of Africa and Africanity. He was not 'opening a closed file' as Edward Said (1994: 34) wanted us to believe. The file had remained open since the time of colonial encounters and the decolonization process failed to close it. Decolonization and de-racialization projects of the 20th century only partially closed the chapter. Mazrui therefore built his discourse on 'triple heritage' on an existing African archive represented by such thinkers as William Wilmot Blyden in his *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1967) and Kwame Nkrumah in his *Consciencism: Philosophy and the Ideology for Decolonization* (1970). Nkrumah was urging Africa to develop a particular combative and decolonial consciousness building on the concrete African historical and existential conditions that included the impact of Islamic and Western influences.

But Mazrui had begun engaging with the theme of invention of Africa in 1963. In his article "On the Concept of 'We Are All Africans,'" Mazrui began to demonstrate how Africanity as an identity was a complex product of double invention by colonial imperatives and African imperatives. The colonial imperatives included map-making, partitioning of Africa, domination, and promotion of a singular idea of an African people who were collectively thought of as inferior, backward and primitive beings, which inadvertently provoked what Julius Nyerere described as 'African sentiment' as a form of consciousness born out of colonial racial humiliation of the black races. Mazrui demonstrated how African nationalist figures like Nkrumah, Nyerere, Gamal Abdul Nasser and Leopold Sedar Senghor actively played a role in the invention of Africa using such means as the First All-Africa People's Conference held in Accra in December 1958 to 're-member' Africa after 'dismemberment' at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

Mazrui's academic and intellectual interest in complex issues of identity, culture and ideology are traceable to his first publication in 1963. In the television series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1986), Mazrui's entry point was enlightening. His entry point was to explore two schools of African history namely the 'epic school' and the 'episodic school' as an ideal way of introducing the debates on the impact of colonialism in the invention of Africa and making of Africanity. The 'epic school' emphasises the revolutionary if not the civilizational transformation that was introduced on Africa by colonial encounters and colonialism. The

school highlights the violent incorporation of Africa into the world economy through ‘the slave trade, which dragged African labour itself into the emerging international capitalist system’ (Mazrui 1986: 12).

This was followed by colonization with its ‘territorial imperative,’ that is, conquest of African space as well as appropriation and physical occupation of territory. The third element was ‘Africa’s admission into the state system of the world emanating from European Peace of Westphalia of 1648’ (Mazrui 1986: 12). The fourth element was ‘Africa’s incorporation into world culture’ that included imposition of colonial languages. The fifth element was ‘Africa’s incorporation into the world of international law, which is again heavily Eurocentric in origin’ (Mazrui 1986: 13).

Finally, Africa was ‘incorporated into the modern technological age.’ Colonialism even introduced a particular ‘moral order’ that was Western-centric. Thus if one takes into account all these interventions and their implications on the invention of Africa, the conclusion is that there was deliberate ‘dis-Africanization’ and ‘Westernization’ of Africa to the extent that: ‘What Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know about each other, have been profoundly influenced by the West’ (Mazrui 1986: 13). Such colonially imposed identities as Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone are good examples that indicate the influence of the enduring legacy of colonial encounters and colonialism.

Then the ‘episodic history’ as a counter to the ‘epic school of history’ became informed by nationalist historiography that developed in Ibadan and Dar-es-salaam. It was actually the historian J. F. Ade Ajayi of the University of Ibadan who depicted colonialism as an ‘episode’ in African history. Nationalist historiography was ranged against imperial historiography that had denied the existence of African history prior to the colonial encounters (Temu and Swai 1981; Lovejoy 1986; Zeleza 1997). The important point of the ‘episodic school’ is that European impact on Africa was not profound; it was brief, shallow, transitional, and not long-lasting. Capitalism as an economic system was shallow. Consequently, there was continuity of African history from pre-colonial period to the postcolonial period with colonialism having been a brief disruption to continuity. The implication of this interpretation of the impact of colonialism is that that Africans continued to make their own history and to invent

themselves as a people with agency. In the face of these two schools, Mazrui's conclusion was:

European colonial rule in Africa was more effective in destroying indigenous African *structures* than in destroying African *culture*. The tension between new imported structures and old resilient cultures is part of the post-colonial war of cultures in the African continent. The question has therefore arisen as to whether Africa is reclaiming its own (Mazrui 1986: 20).

Mazrui has a point is that postcolonial Africa has been haunted by 'a war of cultures' but whether this cultural crisis is responsible for 'inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption and decay of the infrastructure' is debatable (Mazrui 1986: 12). Is postcolonial Africa suffering from 'failure of transplanted organs of the state and the economy'? Is the decay of infrastructure in postcolonial Africa to be celebrated as a form of African resistance to imposed Western civilization? Mazrui's take is contained in this statement:

Before a seed germinates it must first decay. A mango tree grows out of a decaying mango seed. A new Africa may germinate in the decay of the present one—and the ancestors are presiding over the process (Mazrui 1986: 21).

The idea that Africa has to come to terms with her past is also emphasised in the *Millennium Commission Report* of 2001:

Africa must come to terms with her past. Only this will enable her to establish an honest enabling all parties in this dismal history to inaugurate a new era of interaction. To this end we must establish the total truth on slavery—both the Trans-Saharan and the Trans-Atlantic; the partition of the continent; colonization; even the secretive dumping of toxic wastes on the African continent and call attention to the deleterious effects of these experiences on Africa.

Yet, there are others like Kwame Anthony Appiah who imagine and prefer a postcolonial Africa that is freed from the ancestral constraints in his influential book entitled *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992). Appiah challenged even the

concept of Africanity as fictitious and a racist invention of pan-Africanists and nationalists. He doubted the existence of ‘a metaphysical unity to African conceptions’ and of ‘an African worldview’ (Appiah 1992: xxvii). But as demonstrated by Mazrui and others, African identity is a product of colonial encounters, colonization, and resistance. It is not a primordial phenomenon. At the centre of Africanity is what Mazrui (1980) described as the African condition which is an encapsulation of African postcolonial predicaments.

Mazrui on postcolonial predicaments

There is no doubt that present day Africanity was indeed shaped by a complex and paradoxical combination of indigenous African cultures as well as imposed Islamic and Western cultures. To Mazrui, postcolonial predicaments and instabilities haunting postcolonial Africa are a ‘symptom of cultures at war’ with Africans fighting ‘to avert the demise of Africanity’ (Mazrui 1986: 21). At the centre of these ‘culture wars’ ‘is Africa’s triple heritage of indigenous, Islamic and Western forces—fusing and recoiling, at once competitive and complimentary’ (Mazrui 1986: 21).

Therefore redemption of Africa according to Mazrui (1986: 295) lies in two options: ‘the imperative of looking inwards towards Africa’s ancestors’ and ‘the imperative of looking outward towards the wider world.’ Indigenous African culture is the basis of the inward looking option but ‘is not identical with looking inwards at yesterday’s Africa’ but must gesture towards ‘a special transition from the tribe to the human race, from the village to the world’ (Mazrui 1986: 295).

But this option needs to take into account what Mazrui distilled as the ‘six paradoxes’ of the postcolonial African condition. The first is the ‘paradox of habitation’ which speaks to how a continent that has been identified as the ‘cradle of mankind’ is at the same time the least hospitable today. The second is the ‘paradox of humiliation’ which highlights how Africa is a product of a humiliating history of enslavement, colonization and racial discrimination. The third is the ‘paradox of acculturation’ cascading from imposition of foreign cultural, political, economic and social forms that disturbed and reproduce Africanity as a complex nest of unstable, contested, and conflicting set of identities.

The fourth is the 'paradox of fragmentation' rooted in capitalist economic exploitation that reproduced Africa as a site of underdevelopment, maldistribution and economic disarticulation. The fifth is the 'paradox of retardation' manifesting itself in the form of Africa's failure to act as a unit due to internal weaknesses cascading from national, ethnic, ideological and religious cleavages. The last is the 'paradox of location' that speaks to how a continent which is centrally located but is at the same time the most marginal in global power politics (Mazrui 1980). How does Africa extricate itself from these paralyzing paradoxes? Mazrui does not provide a way out. But his diagnosis is illuminating nonetheless.

The postcolonial predicaments are compounded by a leadership crisis. To Mazrui postcolonial Africa has produced four types of leadership: elder tradition whose symbol was Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya; warrior leadership represented by Idi Amin of Uganda; sage tradition typified by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania; and monarchical tradition that was portrayed by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. These types of leadership produced five styles of leadership: intimidatory; patriarchal, reconciliatory; bureaucratic, and mobilization leader (Mazrui and Mutunga 2003). It would seem these types and styles of leadership had the following outcome:

Almost every other African country which attained liberation from European colonial rule in the 20th century was unable to maintain its democratic order beyond its first decade of independence. Within the first decade either the military captured power, or the elected president became a dictator, or a civil war broke out, or the ruling party outlawed any rival political party and turned the country into a single-party state (Mazrui 2011: 1).

Building on the work of Mazrui it becomes clear that the continuing struggle for democracy is intrinsically the struggle for a democratic tradition of leadership and democratic style of governance. South Africa that Mazrui celebrated as 'truly democratized,' as a country that 'has not outlawed opposition parties,' as a country that has not 'experienced a military coup,' and a country that has not 'permitted the head of state to govern' as a dictator, in his 2011 lecture delivered at the University of Free State, is facing its own challenges such as deepening inequalities, corruption and poor service delivery that speaks to the quality of its democracy and its sustainability.

Approach: Transcending *Mazruiphilia* and *Mazruiphobia*

The best approach is to avoid the traps of falling into *Mazruiphilia* and *Mazruiphobia*. Both *Mazruiphilia* and *Mazruiphobia* tend to promote intellectual close-mindedness. Both processes of calling Mazrui 'names' (*a la Mazruiphobia*) and piling 'praises' (*a la Mazruiphilia*) is not too helpful, scholarly speaking. What is needed is an approach to Mazrui's academic and intellectual work which avoids a totalizing perspective, that is, one that attempts to give a total picture of Mazrui's academic and intellectual identity and his diverse academic and intellectual production. A binary-oriented approach involving choosing sides between *Mazruiphilia* and *Mazruiphobia* must be avoided as it is not enlightening on the impressive intellectual and academic life of Mazrui. In any case, the academy is not expected to be a domain of intellectual and academic consensus. The academy is ideally expected to be a boiling site of diverse ideas. Mazrui was one academic who lived the life of an academic and intellectual that produced diverse ideas and took diverse positions and was basically not pro-establishments.

Mazrui's prolificacy and versatility, makes it difficult to try and box and tag him as a scholar. He wrote more than 35 books, numerous book chapters, hundreds of scholarly articles, as well as many magazine and newspaper commentaries. Mazrui's active academic and intellectual life spans over 50 years. What is noticeable in Mazrui's academic and intellectual interventions is iconoclasm (challenging cherished ideas) and independent-mindedness (maverick). Both are hallmarks of academia and Mazrui cannot be criticised for it. He became a full professor at the age of 34, having risen from lecturer, skipping two ranks of senior lecturer and associate professor.

Mazrui left behind a 'supermarket of ideas' or a 'Mega-Mall' on various topical subjects and pertinent themes. The concept of supermarket of ideas speaks to both the quantity and quality of Mazrui's contributions. As noted by Anthony Clayton (1979: 122) in his review of Mazrui's *The Warrior Tradition in Modern Africa* (1977): 'Like any good supermarket, the quality of the goods vary; the best are very stimulating indeed.' While Clayton was writing specifically about an edited volume with various chapters by different authors, the concept of a supermarket is also relevant to the expansive and diverse work of Mazrui that warrants a selective approach. Mazrui's contribution to the animated debates on invention of Africa, Africanity and African condition (postcolonial African predicaments) is rich enough to enable

a critical reflection on his scholarly legacy. Identity, culture and power practices occupied Mazrui's mind.

Mazrui must be credited for leaving behind an expansive, rich and diverse archive that address various aspects of the idea of Africa, Africanity and the African condition. While some would say that Mazrui used controversy as his pathway to academic and intellectual greatness, there is no doubt that he also played a leading role in pan-African initiatives such as UNESCO African History Project and he was part of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) appointed Eminent Persons Group tasked to push for reparations and restorative justice campaign in the 1980s. What also emerges poignantly is that Mazrui was an independent scholar that did not easily fall into either Marxist, Gramscian or Foucauldian descriptions. He managed to create a 'Mazruism'

The obituaries portray Mazrui as both a 'humanist' and 'futuurologist' because he was able to use political science knowledge to predict some of the major global events of the last half a century or so (Campbell 2014; Adem 2014c). The predictions included the attainment of freedom by South Africa in the 1990s; that some Islamic countries will possess nuclear weapons; the rise of China to a world power and that Islam would replace communism as 'the West's perceived adversary' (Adem 2014c). There is no doubt that Mazrui's expansive academic and intellectual productions will continue to generate debate. Through his work, Mazrui immortalized himself.

Conclusion

The theme of invention of Africa and postcolonial African predicaments is broadly about contested and complex discourses of the idea of Africa, the essence and meaning of Africanity (African identity) and the key contours of the 'African condition.' Mazrui was an active contributor to these complex issues despite the fact that towards the end of his academic and intellectual career, he increasingly focused on the equally topical and important theme of Islamophobia. He increasingly became identified as 'a spokesperson for Islam in the West' (Adem 2014a: 132). Mazrui justified this shift by arguing that in contemporary history 'negro-phobia' has de-escalated while 'Islamophobia' has escalated to the extent that the colour line has been superseded by the culture line (Adem 2014a: 132; see also Mazrui 1990, 1997). Part of Mazrui's evidence for the sign of de-escalation of the

colour line was the election of Barack Obama as the first African American President of the United States (Adem 2014a: 132). But one remains unconvinced on whether 'negro-phobia' has indeed de-escalated enough to the extent of warranting a shift to Islamophobia or whether the colour line and the culture line are not entangled paradoxically. As in life, Mazrui's in death will continue to exert influence on the way we think, and many of his concerns, as in Africanity and the 'African condition' will continue to be subjects of debates.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, let me thank you and the university once again for this great honor. Thank you.

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