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MAJOR WORKS:

Cultural Forces in World Politics (London and Portsmouth, NH: J. Currey,  
1990).

ALI A. MAZRUI  
(24 February 1933 →)  
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~~BIRTH: Mombasa, Kenya, 24 February 1933~~

~~EDUCATION: B.A. (with Distinction) University of Manchester, England; M.A. Columbia University, New York, U.S.A.; Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.) Oxford University, England.~~

~~AWARDS: Elected Honorary Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1985; Reith Lecturer of British Broadcasting Corporation, (BBC) London, 1979; Senior Fellow, Michigan Society of Fellows, 1978-1982; Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, 1973-1976; Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, 1972-1973; First prize at the Birmingham International Film Festival for "The Africans"—Best Film in the Social Sciences and Sociology category, 1987; Honorary degree, Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA, 1987.~~

~~MAJOR WORKS: The Africans: A Triple Heritage (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown Co., and London: BBC, 1986); The Africans: A Reader, Senior Editor [with T.K. Levine] (New York: Praeger Publishing House, 1986); Nationalism and New States in Africa [with Michael Tidy] (London and Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984); The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis [The Reith Lectures] (London: Heinemann Educational Books, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); The Warrior Tradition in Modern Africa [Editor] (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978); Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa (London: Heinemann Educational Books, and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978); State of the Globe Report, 1977 [Edited and Co-Author for World Order Models Project] (Alternatives, Vol. III No. 2,~~

December [1977]; Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977, and Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978); A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective (New York: The Free Press, 1976); The Political Sociology of the English Language: An African Perspective (The Hague and Paris: Mouton and Co., 1975); Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy (Beverly Hills, CA, and London: Sage Publications, 1975); World Culture and the Black Experience (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1974); Africa in World Affairs: The Next Thirty Years [Co-Edited with Hasu Patel] (New York: The Third Press, 1973); The Trial of Christopher Okigbo [Novel] (London: Heinemann Educational Books, <sup>African Writers Series 1972</sup> and New York: The Third Press, 1972); Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, <sup>Press</sup> 1972); Protest and Power in Black Africa [Co-Edited with R.I. Rotberg] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Violence and Thought (London: Longmans, and New York: Humanities Press, 1969); Towards a Pax Africana (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship (London: Longmans, 1967); The Anglo-African Commonwealth (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1967).

Uganda  
Kenya  
Tanzania

Order  
needs  
to be  
revised

Ali A. Mazrui is easily Africa's most prolific and probably also its most controversial scholar. His extraordinarily <sup>productivity</sup> ~~prolific~~ career is <sup>evident in the</sup> ~~in part~~ attested to by the <sup>approximately</sup> ~~approximately~~ twenty books he has to his name. ~~What's~~ In addition <sup>more</sup>, if he found the time to pull together a variety of his unpublished papers, Mazrui could, if he was so inclined, add five or even more books to this already impressive list of publications. It would seem a 24-hour day is too brief <sup>for</sup> ~~and unfair~~ to this illustrious son of Kenya's ancient Muslim city of

Mombasa, where Mazrui was born over half a century ago. ~~As one who has worked closely with Mazrui for almost a decade, and having observed his work habits, I would hazard a guess that Mazrui is capable of keeping three full-time secretaries busy (and complaining) with work.~~

As a writer, Mazrui has addressed ~~such~~ a wide spectrum ~~and diverse range~~ of issues and ideas ~~that one is dazzled by it all.~~ For many of his admirers, ~~the record of Mazrui's~~ <sup>His</sup> innumerable publications <sup>reveal</sup> suggests that there is little ~~doubt~~ regarding the fertility of his mind, his imaginative powers, and his immense capacity for intellectual work. ~~Mazrui's vast~~ <sup>His</sup> writings in political science can, ~~at the minimum,~~ be grouped <sup>in</sup> under the following broad categories: (a) comparative politics; (b) international relations; (c) political theory and political philosophy; (d) political sociology; and (e) socio-linguistics and literary studies. For Mazrui's African and non-African critics (and he has quite a few) ~~on the other hand,~~ his extremely high speed of creativity is ~~a major problem and loss of~~ <sup>a defect rather than</sup> an asset. How can one possibly shift from an analysis of "The Poetics of a Transplanted Heart," (an article Mazrui wrote for the once vibrant intellectual magazine, Transition, based in Kampala) to an investigation of "Mini-Skirts and Political Puritanism" (an article written for Africa Report)? <sup>But</sup> Is Mazrui's writing speed intellectually dangerous? How can one think and write at such a breakneck speed?

The burden of proof rests with those who would claim that writing slowly necessarily results in greater profundity and depth. Those scholars (African as well as non-African) who have been rather slow in writing have not necessarily produced more impressive contributions than Mazrui. Yet, some of

<sup>1</sup>. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Poetics of a Transplanted Heart," Transition (Kampala) No. 35 (1968) pp.51-58, and "Mini-Skirts and Political Puritanism," Africa Report (Washington, DC) October 1968.

Mazrui's detractors ("professional Mazrui bashers" as he himself prefers to call them) contend that his compulsive tendency to write and lecture relentlessly reveals a major weakness--the inability to engage in research and to gather data before capturing his own scholarly observations, findings, and thoughts in writing.

Throughout his wide-ranging career, Mazrui has consistently refused to be restricted, by others and as well as by himself, to a narrow field of specialization. ~~The rejection of such a limited sphere of interest,~~ <sup>That by rejecting limitations,</sup> ~~Some of Mazrui's critics~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~would probably argue,~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~has been at the cost of~~ <sup>sacrificed</sup> intellectual depth and genuine scholarly sophistication. Because ~~it seems~~ he does not spend enough time on one theme or sub-field, ~~and because he is rather eclectic,~~ <sup>these critics claim</sup> ~~it has been argued that Mazrui's style and approach permits him to only scratch~~ <sup>Some</sup> ~~the surface.~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~It is true that~~ <sup>a number</sup> ~~many of Mazrui's~~ <sup>some</sup> readers wish he would return to ~~some~~ of the issues and questions that he has raised in the past, but ~~for which it seems he never finds~~ <sup>seems to</sup> ~~the~~ time to do so. Mazrui continually tantalizes and excites the mind. He also keeps moving on to new horizons. He could ~~very well~~ be labelled, with some justification, an "intellect teaser."

Mazrui also maintains an enormous volume of correspondence--sufficiently large to constitute, for many people, a full-time vocation. Some of this correspondence concerns debates with intellectual adversaries. ~~At other times~~ <sup>Some of it</sup> ~~it is simply to~~ <sup>involves merely</sup> acknowledge ~~the~~ <sup>ing greetings from</sup> ~~felicitations of~~ <sup>some</sup> of his many admirers. ~~But these illustrations are only the tip of the iceberg of a breathtaking~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~scale of personal correspondence.~~ <sup>is truly remarkable.</sup> ~~This side of Mazrui's~~ <sup>his immersion in a</sup> ~~correspondence~~ <sup>derived from</sup> culture--is probably a ~~derivative~~ of his Westernization. Not many Africans or Muslims worry unduly about responding to each and every letter addressed to them. Mazrui does not typify them. Future biographers ~~of Africa~~ <sup>of Mazrui</sup> may

one day want to examine this <sup>side of his literary productivity.</sup> ~~material from one of Ali's more regular~~  
~~correspondents. The question is when does he find the time and the staying-~~  
~~power to do all these myriad things?~~

A major characteristic of Mazrui <sup>his</sup> is ~~the enormous~~ capacity for  
generating debate and controversy ~~that he possess.~~ It is partly this  
tendency, typically characteristic of Mazrui, which seems to create on the one  
side, ~~determined and enraged critics,~~ as well as a relatively reverent  
constituency on the other. <sup>His</sup> ~~The~~ provocation Mazrui engages in is usually  
carefully thought out, including an anticipation of likely hostile responses  
and ~~well~~ preparation for rebuttal when the occasion arises. One fascinating  
example is Mazrui's <sup>early</sup> ~~earliest~~ article<sup>s</sup> entitled "Nkrumah, the Leninist Czar,"  
published in Transition in the mid-1960s. <sup>ze</sup> The very title of the article is  
in ~~itself~~ unusual and was carefully calculated to stimulate critical thinking  
and examination of the legacy of one of Africa's post-colonial heroes <sup>and</sup>  
~~statesmen.~~ If one is a Marxist-Leninist, how ~~can~~ can one also be a Czar? <sup>at</sup>  
~~the same time?~~ This apparent contradiction betrays Mazrui's <sup>fascination</sup> ~~obsession~~ with  
paradoxes and <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ inclination to illustrate how things that may, on the  
surface, appear vastly different from each other, even the opposite of each  
other, are, when probed to their depths in reality, reconcilable. ~~That is not~~  
<sup>Indeed,</sup> ~~to mention that~~ they may be curiously similar in some fundamental respects.

In the essay on Nkrumah, Mazrui's argument was that by leading the  
(former British colony of) Gold Coast to independence, Nkrumah was a great  
Gold Coaster. Also, by being a deeply dedicated proponent of the continental  
unity of Africans ~~all over Africa~~ and a great source of inspiration for and

2 "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar Transition (Kampala) No. 26 1966,  
translated in Marathi (Indian language).

force behind continental pan-Africanism, Nkrumah was also a great African. However, Nkrumah invested far more time, energy, and resources on the dream of continental unity than he seemed to have invested in enhancing Ghana's own socio-economic well-being and development. Thus, as Nkrumah increasingly became a tyrant who behaved more like a monarch (hence a Czar), and as his ideology and ~~his~~ political behavior moved increasingly to the left, borrowing overtly from Lenin ~~Marxist and style~~ (hence a Leninist), Nkrumah came to combine the seemingly contradictory attributes of a Czar and a Lenin. To some extent, Nkrumah, Mazrui suggested, even became a fusion of the two. The controversy generated ~~in the 1960s and later~~ by Mazrui's brief piece on Nkrumah clearly illustrates ~~how~~ how ~~particulate~~ Mazrui can be ~~(although he is a great debater and stimulating intellectual companion/interlocutor) and more~~ ~~how he tends to excel~~ in provoking critical thinking and <sup>energetic</sup> genuinely engaging debates.

Mazrui's writing style—elegant, tasteful, artistic, <sup>memorable and</sup> highly quotable <sup>and</sup> ~~rather highly memorable~~—also contributes to the longevity and passion of the debates he unleashes. Mazrui breathes life and excitement into most of the things he writes about. It was not entirely in jest that one of his critics, in a sophisticated evaluation, stated that "Ali A. Mazrui is incapable of writing a dull paragraph." ~~It is usual with Mazrui to~~ <sup>He</sup> writes zestfully, <sup>producing</sup> <sup>flacy</sup> and vigorous <sup>prose.</sup> ~~writing seems an apt characterization of most of Mazrui's work.~~

<sup>Adept</sup> ~~A genius~~ at thinking quickly and synthesizing ideas on his feet, Mazrui is a witty, articulate, and dangerous intellectual adversary, especially in public exchanges. One is well-advised to think through carefully any intellectual combat strategies before confronting Mazrui for he seems to floor

3 (Colin Leys, Transition (Kampala, Uganda) No. 34 (January 1968).

his foes with a startling ease. ~~It was a fellow Mswahili from Mombasa who, without exaggerating too much, once noted of his compatriot, "I have never known him getting the worse of any argument [sic]...."~~<sup>4</sup>

Mazrui's most potent intellectual weapon is perhaps his capacity to x-ray ideas and arguments and to quickly point out the internal contradictions and irrationality of an adversary. He is a master player of this game. He reminds one of what the celebrated German sociologist Max Weber termed an "exposer of nonsense."

By identifying two broad and seemingly contradictory tendencies in Nkrumah, Mazrui was doing what has since become his consistent trademark--the business of attempting to reconcile paradoxes. For example, Mazrui's BBC Reith Lectures of 1979 (subsequently published in an expanded version as a book entitled The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis) revolved around six major paradoxes: (1) although Africa was the first habitat of man, the continent has been the last to be made truly habitable; (2) while Africans may not be the most brutalized of all peoples, they are probably the most humiliated in modern history; (3) African societies are not the closest to the West culturally, but they are experiencing the most rapid pace of Westernization this century; (4) even though Africa is not the poorest of the regions of the world in resources, it is the least developed of the inhabited continents; (5) whereas Africa is not the smallest of the continents, it is probably the most fragmented; and finally, (6) the paradox that Africa is the most central of all continents in geographical location, but politically and to some extent militarily it may be the most marginal.

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<sup>4</sup> Mohamed Hyder, "Mazrui, Showman or Showpiece," Africa Events, Vol. 2 No. 10 (October 1986) p. 46.

Akin to Mazrui's fascination with paradoxes is <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ tendency to state things in a paradoxical or dialectical way, or to invert what others may have said before. For example, "Hitler was at once the greatest enemy of the Jews in history and the greatest (if unconscious) friend of the concept of 'Israel.'" <sup>se</sup> Or "...Although the Second World War was...politically liberating for Africans..., that same war was an important stage in the incorporation of Africa into the world capitalist system [i.e. Africa's economic <sup>thereby leading to</sup> enslavement]."<sup>se</sup> Or, once more, "It is after all equally true [in an inversion of Lord Acton's famous dictum, 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely']<sup>se</sup> that powerlessness corrupts—and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely."<sup>se</sup>

Side by side with the exploitation of paradoxes as analytical tools is Mazrui's recurrent use of analogies as <sup>a</sup> heuristic devices. For example, <sup>his</sup> ~~Mazrui's~~ comparison of Nigeria's soldier-states<sup>man</sup> Yakubu Gowon to the U.S.'s Abraham Lincoln, ~~Israel~~<sup>se</sup> or of Kenya's Tom Mboya to the U.S.'s John F. Kennedy, or ~~the appellation~~<sup>to</sup> of Ali Shariati as "Iran's Jean Jacques Rousseau," or even ~~the description~~<sup>to</sup> of Lebanon as the "first Israel" (or ~~sometimes the description~~<sup>examples</sup> of a "Christian Israel"), are all ~~examples~~<sup>examples</sup> of a recurrent tendency to understand and to instruct by associating ~~and comparing~~ seemingly unrelated ideas and categories.

5 Ali A. Mazrui, "Zionism and Apartheid: Strange Bedfellows or Natural Allies?", Alternatives: A Journal of World Policy, Vol IX No 1 (Summer 1983) p. 80.

6 Mazrui, The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis, op. cit. p. 76.

7 Mazrui, "The Third World and International Terrorism: Preliminary Reflections," The Third World Quarterly (London) Vol. 7 No. 2 (April 1985), p. 352, and his "New Nuclear Weapon States and Their Impact on Third World Regional Conflicts," Chapter in Sadruddin Aga Khan (Ed.), Nuclear War, Nuclear Proliferation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) p. 152.

Mazrui's love for reuniting qualities that may appear to be contradictory as manifested in, say, ~~The African Condition~~ recurs in most of his other works including his latest <sup>work</sup>, The Africans: A Triple Heritage (the Reith lectures of 1979 probably influenced the BBC's choice of Mazrui as the presenter of the TV series, The Africans, telecast in 1986), both in the nine-part series public television program and in the book version accompanying the series. Mazrui's television debut thrust him to what is probably the pinnacle of controversy in his spectacular career. Mazrui's provocative views on the three legacies influencing the African experience and identity: <sup>1</sup>Indigenous, Islamic, and Western (especially the negative impact of the West) <sup>1</sup>irritated many conservatives in the West and a <sup>great number</sup> ~~whole range~~ of fellow Africans.

<sup>The Director of</sup> ~~Within~~ the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Mrs. Lynne Cheney, denounced Mazrui's series as an "anti-Western diatribe" and as "pro-Qaddafi." The NEH even went to the extent of removing its name from the list of credits to the series. It is not difficult to imagine how, ~~in his~~ characteristic ~~Mazrui~~ humor and style, <sup>Mazrui must</sup> the professor could have chuckled ~~at~~ <sup>over</sup> the ~~fact~~ <sup>irony</sup> that by removing its name from the list of credits and by noisily refusing to donate some \$60,000 for promoting the program, the NEH had unintentionally but nonetheless effectively contributed to the promotion of the series well in excess of the sum it had refused to make available. As a result of the controversy generated by the NEH, far more people had their curiosity aroused and many who otherwise would not have even noticed the series subsequently watched the nine-part program in its entirety.

Ultimately ~~In this~~ TV series, Mazrui places the blame for most of Africa's manifold problems (political, economic, social, etc.) at the doors of the three culprits--Western imperialism, <sup>African</sup> ~~African~~ ecology, and poor judgment and

lack of vision on the part of Africa's own leaders. It is curious how many viewers of the series preferred to arbitrarily select only one of these culprits and to respond as if Mazrui had intended to hold not all three, but only one of them responsible for Africa's predicament.

The dynamics of the controversy that ensued are rather fascinating in themselves. At one time, ~~Black~~ American ultra-nationalists charged that Mazrui's series amounted to a betrayal of the black race by one of its own. But when these same ~~Black~~ critics discovered that Reaganite ultra-right-wingers in the U.S. had denounced the series, they quickly decided to reassess their position. ~~The black ultra-nationalists evidently did not like their Reaganite bedfellows. As a result, they reversed their earlier criticisms of Ali Mazrui's series. These Afro-Americans were pleased to learn that the series had succeeded in irritating some Reaganites.~~ The last thing they wanted to happen was for them as marginalized ~~Black~~ Americans to share the same irritation with those they probably regarded as their worst enemy-- conservative right-wingers. Perhaps Mazrui's greatest gift to Africa and its descendants in the diaspora is the soul-searching and re-examination of ideas that his consciously provocative work has generated, not only in Africa itself, but, to some extent, worldwide. His TV series, the most internationalized and <sup>globally</sup> ~~potentially most widely~~ known ~~globally~~ of all his works, has to be placed at the heart of this legacy.

These two major works (Reith Lectures and the TV series, The Africans) initiated serious debates <sup>not only</sup> ~~mostly~~ in the West, but in Africa <sup>itself</sup> ~~itself~~ as well. It is an intriguing attribute of the Mazrui phenomenon that most of his readers either like his work deeply or else dislike it intensely. In the latter case, the hostility is sometimes so intense that it stretches to the



opposite side of the Atlantic (he was at Columbia in New York for only a very brief stint--a year--for his M.A.), since the 1970s Mazrui has become, in a professional sense, very Americanized. <sup>This</sup> ~~The~~ Americanization includes the decision, following his flight from Amin's Uganda, to settle ~~and reside~~ in the U.S. But it is probably in terms of professional behavior that Mazrui is ~~is~~ his most American. The tendency to write feverishly, almost as if he ~~is~~ seriously believed in the slogan of American academia, "publish or perish" ~~is~~ is more American than British. Indeed, the British, among whom Mazrui was a student for almost a decade, do not place special emphasis on heavy publishing as necessary credentials for survival in their academic community.

Because he ~~has~~ been so uncontestedly prolific, it is arguable that had Mazrui decided not to write another paragraph some ten years ago or so, by that time, he had already published enough to be assured a permanent appointment as a tenured professor anywhere in the world, including the United States. Yet, the restless writing continues unabated. It is almost as if his very professional life depended on a tenure review by his peers to be held next month. This almost obscene productivity is probably partly personal and would have occurred even if Mazrui had opted to remain in Africa. However, <sup>By</sup> simply living in the U.S., <sup>his</sup> <sup>toward productivity</sup> ~~the~~ tendency has been further reinforced by the ~~American~~ academic environment ~~of the United States~~ and provided with considerable infrastructural support. It is arguable that one of the ~~(unintended)~~ benefits of Mazrui's life in exile has been the enhancement of his <sup>prolificity</sup> ~~productivity~~ that became possible with the help of the facilities of a developed industrial society.

There is some truth in the charge that because Mazrui does so many things at the same time, his vast writings often seem to need more ~~substance and~~

solid supportive<sup>ing</sup> data than he ~~seems to provide~~. Partly because at any given movement Mazrui has too many balls in the air to catch, it seems that he sometimes tends to offer less by way of evidence and substance than what some would ideally desire. In a way, partly because he has written on almost all social and political issues of importance to Africa and Africans and, to some extent, the rest of the world, Mazrui's overall legacy will, in the end, probably be less forceful and less concentrated than, considering his brilliance, one would have preferred. There are times when one wishes Mazrui, if only to tell us more about what he got us interested in in the first place, would return and pick up some of his earlier ideas and thoughts. By

attempting to be a jack-of-all trades, Mazrui has, in a sense, denied scholarship as well as himself the best that his gifts <sup>might</sup> could ~~probably~~ have yielded had his scholarly and intellectual activities been more focussed,

~~placed, so to say, in "one basket."~~ What would probably have been a more enduring and a more compelling contribution of the kind which seems only possible when provided with the benefit of a much narrower field of specialization and a more sustained concentration is not what Mazrui is all

about. This is at once his strength (versatility) and his weakness (too scattered). Yet clearly, Mazrui possesses the kind of potential that could have established him as Africa's equivalent of what the U.S.'s Hans J. Morgenthau became to the field of International Relations or what Germany's Max Weber became to Sociology. However, it would seem that potential has instead been spread rather thinly across a bewildering spectrum of disciplines and subdisciplines. It is ~~simply~~ not easy to sustain self-sufficient theoretical

coherence when one casts one's intellectual net so widely. It is probably more the ~~kind of~~ questions that Mazrui has raised ~~and theorized~~ on all kinds of

issues, ~~and ideas~~, and less the theoretical thrust of his wide-ranging contribution that will constitute the backbone of the Mazrui legacy in academia, both in Africanist circles and beyond.

~~It also seems that~~ There are times when Mazrui ~~also appears~~ <sup>seems</sup> to engage in intellectualizing for the sake of intellectualizing. ~~Periodically, it is a~~ <sup>And,</sup> kind of "art-for-art's sake" tendency. That is probably one reason why Mazrui's first boss at Makerere, Professor Colin Leys, accused him of preferring brilliance to discipline. Or, to put it somewhat differently, Leys was asserting that Mazrui is more of an intellectual (one fascinated by ideas) and less of a scholar (not a meticulous gatherer of evidence and facts). In fairness to the man, Mazrui is in reality a little bit of both, although the overall balance would seem to tilt in favor of intellectualism.

There is also the problem of internal consistency whenever one writes as much as Mazrui does. For example, the seven strategies that ~~Mazrui~~ <sup>he</sup> recommends for combating underdevelopment in Africa (namely indigenization, domestication, diversification, horizontal interpenetration, vertical counterpenetration, domestic austerity in the Third World, and encouraging northern extravagance), while insightful and suggestive, do pull in mutually contradictory directions. Mazrui ~~does not attach any weight to these seven~~ <sup>can at times be the victim of his own parad.</sup> strategies nor does he rank-order them, or tell us whether this strategy should be pursued one at a time or in some kind of combination. Are some of the strategies more fundamental than others? Which strategy(ies) is dispensable? For example, the strategy of, say, indigenization would seem to be somewhat incompatible with that of vertical counterpenetration. <sup>8</sup> How does one codify these potentially conflicting strategies?

<sup>8</sup> See Ali A. Mazrui, op.cit.

## Mazrui's Focus on Cultural Variables

If ~~Ali~~ Mazrui is the most prolific of ~~the majority of~~ Black Africa's social scientists, he is probably also the most "cultural." While ~~Mazrui~~ <sup>he</sup> does not entirely ignore the role of material forces in African ~~realities and phenomena~~, it is very clear that he places far greater ~~significance and~~ importance on the ~~role of African~~ <sup>the impact of</sup> culture and its impact on African realities and behavior than most of his peers often care to do. <sup>This</sup>

~~The~~ preoccupation with "culture" as opposed to an emphasis on the ~~material or economic factors~~ is ~~in part~~, reflected by how often the term "culture" or "cultural" appears in ~~several~~ <sup>the</sup> titles of ~~Mazrui's many~~ <sup>his</sup> books.

~~Perhaps~~ Apart from the word "Africa" itself, no other term is more recurrent.

~~in Mazrui's titles than the category "culture" (or cultural).~~ In fact,

Mazrui's longest book carries both terms in its title, A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective. In this book, Mazrui recommends a

~~provocative~~ strategy for attaining world peace and social justice ~~which is~~ based on the concept of world culture rather than on the dream of, say, world government.

<sup>A</sup> ~~In terms of the rest of his analysis,~~ Mazrui's fascination with cultural phenomena tends to encourage him to look into ~~the African or~~ "indigenous" sources of the African condition, ~~and experience~~. For example, while radical or leftist African social scientists would tend to examine and analyze Idi Amin's rule in Uganda in almost purely class and economic terms, Mazrui, more than most Africanists, did instead attempt to understand Idi Amin primarily from the rather neglected point of view of Amin's Kakwa-cum-Islamic cultural heritage. In other words, rather than look outside Uganda in order to understand and explain the phenomenon of Idi Amin, Mazrui instead sought to

examine the personality of the man and the environment that produced him.

~~By contrast, an interesting illustration of the materialist orientation at play in the analysis of Amin's Uganda probably would be Mahmood Mamdani's radical, if also less powerful, study entitled Fascism and Imperialism in Uganda. Mamdani concludes that Amin was no more than an agent initially of Western, and subsequently also of Soviet, imperialisms. For Mahmood, one can not fully understand Amin's rise to power and eight years of ruthless rule without concentrating on how Northern imperialism established, exploited, manipulated, and later disowned Amin. While it is true that Idi Amin operated in an international system characterized by the competitive imperialisms of the Soviet bloc versus the Western powers, there was, however, a lot in Amin's character and behavior which was either personal and idiosyncratic ~~to the man~~ and/or partially rooted in the Field Marshall's own Kakwa-cum-Islamic heritage.~~

To some leftist analysts, the cultural aspects of socio-political behavior are essentially part of the superstructure, basically a reflection of factors far more concrete and far more fundamental than themselves. ~~To that extent,~~ Culture is, therefore, relatively unimportant to most economic determinists. By contrast, by focussing on the more elusive, ~~more~~ perceptual and ~~more~~ cultural factors which would otherwise have been lost if the materialist approach was permitted to go too far (as so often is the tendency among the leftists in African scholarship), Mazrui's cultural approach restores some of the healthy balance needed in understanding the African experience in all its comprehensiveness. ~~For example,~~ Mazrui's article, "The Resurrection of the Warrior Tradition in African Political Culture: From Shaka the Zulu to Amin the Kakwa," attempted to examine the Zulu and the Kakwa

sources ~~as well as based, respectively,~~ of the behavior of these two important figures in Africa's modern history.

9 For many of his readers, especially the critics, <sup>T</sup> the fact that Mazrui, ~~seemingly~~ deeply Westernized as he appears to be, should, in the majority of his works, pay careful and sustained attention to African culture would at first appear to be ~~enigmatical. It is true that there are aspects of Mazrui and never has been.~~ <sup>puzzling. But he is not distanced from that culture</sup> that betray how deeply Westernized the man is. Quite apart from having received most of his education in the Western world, his decision after fleeing from Idi Amin's Uganda to settle in the heartland of international capitalism (in the U.S.A.), not to mention the twenty-year old marriage to an English woman, the bourgeois, Western-type lifestyle of most African academics of which he is a part would, on the surface, suggest some distance from African culture. Yet at a closer look, Mazrui emerges as more than just a deeply Westernized African. While the tendency, in especially his early works, to consult predominantly Western sources and scholars in his work could be regarded as probably a measure of his Westernization, the charge of fundamental Westernization based on the kind of scholars he initially cited and consulted, is at best, only half true.

First, when Mazrui initially entered the field in the early 1960s there were relatively few fellow Africans already established in the field to either consult or quote. <sup>His early</sup> The earlier tendency to ~~use~~ use non-African sources was, <sup>rather heavily in his writing</sup> therefore, in part a result of the predicament of operating at a time when there were rather few fellow African scholars, <sup>to consult or quote.</sup> This fact is often under-recognized by those who charge that Mazrui is too Westernized a scholar who seldom consults African writers to possess legitimacy as a truly African Africanist. Secondly, Mazrui is not always citing Western scholars because he

is in agreement with all that they say. On the contrary, the evidence ~~could~~

~~could~~ suggest that Mazrui's evaluation of European scholars is almost evenly mixed. Thirdly, some of the things in ~~Mazrui's~~ <sup>his make-up</sup> ~~Mazrui's~~, which may at first sight appear to be a reflection of how deeply Westernized ~~the man is~~ <sup>he</sup>, are, in reality, part of his African and Islamic heritages rather than ~~being~~ <sup>+</sup> purely Western in derivation. This phenomenon is perhaps most clearly reflected in ~~Mazrui's~~ <sup>his</sup> use of creative literature in his social science works, ~~to which we now turn.~~

### ~~The Literary Tendency in Mazrui's Political Science Writings~~

There are ~~perhaps~~ <sup>perhaps</sup> very few mainstream social scientists, not just in Africa but world-wide, who draw on ~~and use~~ material from creative literature—poems, plays, novels, etc. <sup>Quotations</sup> more often than Mazrui does. ~~The names and quotes~~ <sup>from</sup> of the works of major literary figures, ~~mostly~~ <sup>mostly</sup> Western and ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> African, such as ~~William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Thomas Paine, Jean-Paul Sartre, George Bernard Shaw, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Tennyson, Oscar Wilde, John Milton, Giacomo Puccini, Chinua Achebe, Aimé Césaire, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Okot p'Bitek, Leopold Senghor, Ayi Kwe Armah, James Baldwin, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o,~~ appear ~~over and over~~ <sup>repeatedly</sup> in his books and articles, ~~most of them literary sources are~~ <sup>most of them literary sources are</sup> ~~again in most of Mazrui's works.~~ Clearly, most of the creative figures are ~~western~~ <sup>western</sup> not only Western, but also happen to be at the heart of the West's literary ~~and app.~~ <sup>and app.</sup> tradition. The resort to such literary sources by Mazrui in his social science works is, therefore, at least in part, ~~an aspect of Mazrui's cultural Westernization.~~ <sup>reflecting to some extent his</sup>

However, not many Western political scientists themselves (especially American political scientists) use fiction in their professional writing to the extent that Mazrui does. Certainly within the department of Political

Science at The University of Michigan, Mazrui is, in a sense, a literary oddity. Among his peers, Mazrui is not only the most literary of all his sixty or so colleagues at Michigan, but he is perhaps also the only one. Mainstream political science, especially within the United States, has tended to be heavily quantitative and highly behavioral. The place for metaphors, imagery, poems, novels, and other literary tendencies is virtually marginal in the mainstream orientation of the discipline, especially within its heartland, the U.S.

But he does this only

Yet, if Mazrui quotes heavily from Western and Westernized African poets,

novelists, and playwrights in his political science work, he does it only

through his education

partly because he has absorbed these pieces and recollects them with

enthusiasm. An often overlooked factor is that as a product of the Swahili

culture of coastal Kenya, Mazrui would have <sup>developed</sup> had, in any case, a predilection

for poetry and verbal rhythm even if he had not gone to Western-type schools.

The Swahili are great lovers of words and poetry. And Swahili <sup>written forms of</sup> poetry and

literature ~~more broadly~~ were in existence several centuries prior to the

European intrusion on Africa. The alphabet used in the early years was the

Arabic script. ~~These highly linguistically vivacious people, the Swahili,~~

~~learned to capture their songs and poems on paper with the help initially of~~

~~the Arabic script a couple of centuries ago and only much later shifted to the~~

Roman alphabet <sup>adopted.</sup>

Moreover, <sup>among</sup> the ~~Swahili~~ Swahili peoples, conversation is an art, and elegance

in that art is highly regarded. Therefore, it is not ~~entirely~~ too far-fetched

to suggest that Mazrui's abundant writing is, in part, motivated by <sup>a</sup> the desire

to communicate, to converse with others, as it were. This attribute he owes <sup>may</sup> to

the Swahili culture.

The unusual utopian novel written by Mazrui entitled The Trial of Christopher Okigbo is only partly Western. Equally crucial to the formation of this kind of futuristic fiction, set in an African afterworld, is a Swahili literary tradition in which fantasy, theology and ethical concerns are intermingled. The tale takes the form of a debate in heaven over major moral issues. Christopher Okigbo, the Nigerian poet who died in combat in Nigeria's civil war, serves as the focal point for arguments concerning the political commitment of the artist. Here the content, structure and style of narration are as much African as they are Western. Mazrui's novel is a syncretic work fusing Christian, Islamic and indigenous cultural elements. So what may at first sight appear to be an excessive use of Western literary figures and forms is in reality a manifestation of what Mazrui himself would probably call "The Triple Heritage" at work. No genuine attempt at understanding Mazrui's work can afford to neglect such interesting interactions.

To be eclectic, to selectively borrow aspects of one school of thought while rejecting others, to synthesize a new and distinctive position of his own--these have been the hallmarks of Mazrui's contributions to political science and literature. His life, which he once ~~summarized~~<sup>g</sup> summarized as "one long debate," has been an unrelenting quest for synthesis.

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## — Ali A. Mazrui

(24 February 1933 – )

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Ali A. Mazrui is one of the most prolific and most controversial African writers. He has addressed a wide spectrum of issues and ideas, and his publications reveal the fertility of his mind, his imaginative powers, and his immense capacity for intellectual work. His writings in political science can be grouped in the following broad categories: comparative politics; international relations; political theory and philosophy; sociology; and sociolinguistics and literary studies. To Mazrui's critics his proficiency is a defect rather than an asset. How can one shift from an analysis called "The Poetics of a Transplanted Heart" (an article Mazrui wrote in 1968 for *Transition*, based in Kampala) to an investigation of "Mini-Skirts and Political Puritans" (*Africa Report*, October 1968)? Is Mazrui's writing speed and range intellectually dangerous?

The burden of proof rests with those who would claim that writing slowly necessarily results in greater profundity and depth. Those scholars (African as well as non-African who have been

rather slow in writing have not necessarily produced more impressive contributions than Mazrui. Yet some of Mazrui's detractors ("professional Mazrui bashers" as he prefers to call them) contend that his compulsion to write and lecture relentlessly reveals a major weakness—the tendency not to engage in research and to gather data before putting his scholarly observations and thoughts into writing.

Ali Al'Amin Mazrui was born in Mombasa, Kenya, on 24 February 1933 and was the son of Al'Amin Ali Mazrui, a judge of Islamic law, and Safia Suleiman Mazrui. After receiving his early education in local schools, the young Mazrui left for England to study at Huddersfield College of Technology in Yorkshire, then at the University of Manchester, where he earned his B.A. in 1960. Having won a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship, he attended Columbia University in New York, receiving his M.A. in 1961. He then returned to political analyst, a job he held on a part-time basis from 1962 to 1965, also writing and broadcasting for Radio Uganda. Foundation awarded him a research grant in 1965, and Mazrui earned his D. Phil. at Oxford University the following year. Beginning in 1963 he had lived in Kampala, Uganda, and became head of the department in 1965, then (after his return from Oxford) dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1967. Mazrui also taught in the United States as a visiting professor at several schools, including the University of Chicago, Northwestern, UCLA, and Harvard. In 1973 he accepted a full-time professorship in political science at the University of Michigan. He currently lives in Ann Arbor with his wife, Molly Vickerman Mazrui, a teacher whom he married on 27 October 1962, and their three sons.

Throughout his wide-ranging career Mazrui has consistently refused to be restricted, by others ~~and~~ as well as by himself, to a narrow field of specialization. Some of his critics argue that by rejecting limitations, he has sacrificed intellectual depth and genuine scholarly sophistication. Because he does not spend enough time on one theme or subfield, these critics claim that Mazrui only scratches the surface. Some of his readers wish he would return to certain issues and questions he has raised in the past, but he never seems to find time to do so. Mazrui continually tantalizes and excites the reader's mind; he also keeps moving on to new horizons.

Mazrui maintains an enormous volume of correspondence—sufficiently large to constitute, for many people, a full-time vocation. Some of this correspondence concerns debates with intellectual

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adversaries. Some of it involves merely acknowledging greetings from his many admirers. But the scale of his personal correspondence is truly remarkable. This side of Mazrui—his immersion in a correspondence-based cultural exchange—is probably derived from his Westernization. Not many Africans or Muslims worry unduly about responding to every letter addressed to them. Future biographers may want to examine this side of his literary productivity.

A major characteristic of Mazrui is his capacity for generating debate and controversy. His provocations are usually carefully thought out, including an anticipation of likely hostile responses and preparation for rebuttal when the occasion arises. One example is Mazrui's early article "Nkrumah, the Leninist Czar," published in *Transition* in 1966. The very title of the article is unusual and was carefully calculated to stimulate critical thinking and examination of the legacy of one of Africa's postcolonial heroes. If one is a Marxist-Leninist, how can one also be a czar? This apparent contradiction betrays Mazrui's fascination with paradoxes and his inclination to illustrate how things that may, on the surface, appear vastly different from each other, even the opposite of each other, are reconcilable when probed to their depths. Indeed they may be curiously similar in some fundamental respects.

In the essay on Kwame Nkrumah, Mazrui's argument is that by leading the former British colony of the Gold Coast to independence, Nkrumah was a great Gold Coaster. Also, by being a deeply dedicated proponent of the continental unity of Africans and a great source of inspiration for and force behind Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah was also a great African. However, Nkrumah invested far more time, energy, and resources on the dream of continental unity than he seemed to have invested in enhancing the new nation of Ghana's socioeconomic well-being and development. Thus, as Nkrumah increasingly became a tyrant who behaved more like a monarch (hence a czar), and as his ideology and political behavior moved increasingly to the left, borrowing overtly from Lenin (hence a Leninist), Nkrumah came to combine the seemingly contradictory attributes of a czar and a Lenin. To some extent, Nkrumah, Mazrui suggests, even became a fusion of the two. The controversy generated by Mazrui's brief piece on Nkrumah clearly illustrates how Mazrui excels in provoking critical thinking and energetic debates.

Mazrui's writing style—elegant, tasteful, artistic, memorable, and highly quotable—also contributes to the longevity and passion of the debates he

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unleashes. He breathes life and excitement into most of the things he writes about. It was not entirely in jest that one of his critics, Colin Leys, states "Ali A. Mazrui is incapable of writing a dull paragraph." He writes zestfully, producing racy and vigorous prose.

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Adept at thinking quickly and synthesizing ideas on his feet, Mazrui is a witty, articulate, and dangerous intellectual adversary, especially in public exchanges. His most potent intellectual weapon is his capacity to see through ideas and arguments and to point out quickly any internal contradictions or irrationality. He reminds one of what German sociologist Max Weber once termed an "exposer of nonsense."

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By identifying two broad and seemingly contradictory tendencies in Nkrumah, Mazrui was doing what has since become his consistent trademark—attempting to reconcile paradoxes. For example, Mazrui's BBC Reith Lectures of 1979, subsequently published in an expanded version as *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (1980), focus on six major paradoxes: (1) although Africa was the first habitat of humankind, the continent has been the last to become civilized; (2) while Africans may not be the most brutalized of all peoples, they are probably the most humiliated in modern history; (3) African societies are not the closest to the West culturally, but they are experiencing the most rapid pace of Westernization in this century; (4) even though Africa is not the poorest of the regions of the world in resources, it is the least developed of the inhabited continents; (5) Africa is not the smallest of the continents, but it is probably the most fragmented; and (6) Africa is the most central of all continents in geographical location, but politically and to some extent militarily it may be the most marginal.

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Akin to Mazrui's fascination with paradoxes is his tendency to state things in a paradoxical or dialectical way, or to invert what others may have said before. For example, as he says in his 1983 essay "Zionism and Apartheid," Hitler was at once the greatest enemy of the Jews in history and the greatest (if unconscious) friend of the concept of "Israel." In *The African Condition* he writes: "Although the Second World War was...politically liberating for Africans...that same war was an important stage in the incorporation of Africa into the world capitalist system thereby leading to Africa's economic enslavement." Inverting Lord Action's well-known dictum about power, Mazrui asserts that "powerlessness corrupts—and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely" ("The Third World and

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International Terrorism, *Third World Quarterly*, April 1985).

Side by side with the exploitation of paradoxes as analytical tools is Mazrui's recurrent use of analogies as heuristic devices. His comparison of Nigeria's soldier-statesman Yakubu Gowon to Abraham Lincoln, or of Kenya's Tom Mboya to John F. Kennedy, or of Lebanon to the "first Israel" (or a "Christian Israel") are all examples of a recurrent tendency to understand and to instruct by associating seemingly unrelated ideas and categories.

Mazrui's love for uniting qualities that may appear to be contradictory is evident from his early work to his latest books, including *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1986). The Reith Lectures of 1979 probably influenced the BBC to choose Mazrui as the writer and presenter of the television series *The Africans*, telecast in 1986, a nine-part series with the book version accompanying it (both series and book also available in the United States). Mazrui's television debut thrust him to what is probably the pinnacle of controversy in his career. Mazrui's provocative views on the three legacies influencing the African experience and identity—indigenous, Islamic, and Western (especially the negative impact of the West)—irritated many conservatives in the West and many of his fellow Africans.

The director of the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Lynne Cheney, denounced Mazrui's series as an "anti-Western diatribe" and as "pro-[Muammar] Qaddafi." The NEH even went to the extent of removing its name from the list of credits for the series. Mazrui must have realized and appreciated the irony that by removing its name from the list of credits and by noisily refusing to donate some sixty-thousand dollars for promoting the program, the NEH had unintentionally but effectively contributed to the profitability of the series well in excess of the sum it had refused to make available. As a result of the controversy generated by the NEH, far more people had their curiosity aroused, and many who otherwise would not even have noticed the series subsequently watched the nine-part program in its entirety.

In this series Mazrui ultimately places the blame for most of Africa's problems (political, economic, and social) at the doors of the three culprits: Western imperialism, African ecology, and poor judgment and lack of vision on the part of Africa's leaders. Many viewers of the series preferred to select arbitrarily only one of these culprits and to respond as if Mazrui had intended to hold not all three, but only one of them responsible for Africa's predicament.

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The dynamics of the controversy that ensued are fascinating in themselves. At one time some Black American ultranationalists charged that Mazrui's series amounted to a betrayal of the black race by one of its own. But when these same black critics discovered that Reaganite ultraright-wingers had denounced the series, they quickly decided to reassess their position. The last thing they wanted to do, as marginalized black Americans, was to share an irritation with those they probably regarded as their worst enemies—conservative right-wingers. Perhaps Mazrui's greatest gift to Africa and its descendants is the soul-searching and reexamination of ideas that his consciously provocative work has generated, not only in Africa itself but, to some extent, worldwide. His television series, the most internationalized and globally known of all his works, has to be placed at the heart of this legacy.

These two major works (Mazrui's Reith Lectures and *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*) initiated serious debates not only in the West but in Africa as well. Most of his audience either like his work deeply or dislike it intensely. In the latter case the hostility is sometimes so intense that it stretches to the point of irrational hatred. Balanced or middle-of-the-road positions are rare among responses to "Mazruiana." An even more intriguing phenomenon is that some of Mazrui's ardent critics seem to be unfamiliar with his works. This category includes people who have never read his works but feel strongly about them on the basis, not of disagreement with his ideas, but rather of a stereotyped perception of Mazrui that they have somehow acquired. Perhaps no other scholar from Africa incites such passionate responses among people who have neither familiarized themselves with his writings nor met him. What these tendencies reveal is how debates and discussions initiated by Mazrui tend to take on a life of their own. In the end some of these debates retain very little of what Mazrui's ideas were. To some extent Mazrui himself invites this kind of reaction. One has to be unusually reserved or inhibited to remain silent about the many ideas Mazrui communicates either orally or in writing.

Although Mazrui was educated mostly at schools in Kenya and England, since the 1970s he has become, in a professional sense, very Americanized. This Americanization includes the decision, following his flight from Idi Amin's Uganda, to settle in the United States. But it is probably in terms of professional behavior that Mazrui is most American. The tendency to write feverishly is more American than British. Indeed, the British, among

whom Mazrui was a student for almost a decade, do not place special emphasis on heavy publishing as necessary credential for survival in their academic community. Because of his living in the United States, his tendency toward productivity has been further reinforced and provided with considerable infrastructural support. One of the benefits of Mazrui's life in exile has been the enhancement of his prolificity due to the facilities of a developed industrial society.

There is some truth in the charge that because Mazrui does so many things at the same time, his many writing projects often seem to need more solid supporting data than he provides. By attempting to be a jack of all trades, Mazrui has, in a sense, denied scholarship as well as himself the best that his gifts might have yielded had his scholarly and intellectual activities been more focused. It is not easy to sustain theoretical coherence when one's intellectual net is cast so widely. The questions Mazrui has raised on all kinds of issues, less than the theoretical thrust of his wide-ranging contribution, will constitute the backbone of the Mazrui legacy in academia, both in Africanist circles and beyond.

There are times when Mazrui seems to engage in intellectualizing for the sake of intellectualizing. And there is also the problem of internal consistency whenever one writes as much as Mazrui does. For example, the seven strategies he recommends for combating underdevelopment in Africa, indigenization, domestication, diversification, horizontal interpenetration, vertical counterpenetration, domestic austerity in the Third World, and encouraging northern extravagance, while insightful and suggestive, do pull in contradictory directions. Mazrui can at times be the victim of his own paradoxes.

If Mazrui is the most prolific of black Africa's social scientists, he is probably also the most "cultural". While he does not entirely ignore the role of material forces in Africa, he places far greater importance on the impact of culture on African realities than most of his peers do. This preoccupation is reflected by how often the terms *culture* or *cultural* appear in the titles of his books. Apart from the word *Africa* itself, no other term is more recurrent. In fact Mazrui's longest book has both terms in the title: *A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective* (1976). In this book Mazrui recommends a strategy for attaining world peace and social justice based on the concept of world culture rather than on the dream of world government.

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Mazrui's fascination with cultural phenomena tends to encourage him to look into indigenous sources of the African condition. For example, rather than look outside Uganda in order to understand and explain the phenomenon wrought by Amin, Mazrui instead sought to examine the personality of the man and the environment that produced him. While Amin operated in an international system characterized by the competitive imperialism of the Soviet bloc versus the Western powers, there was a lot in Amin's character and behavior that was either personal and idiosyncratic or partially rooted in his Kakwa-cum-Islamic heritage. To some leftist analysts the cultural aspects of socio-political behavior are essentially part of the superstructure, a reflection of factors far more concrete and fundamental than the aspects themselves. Culture, is, therefore, relatively unimportant to most economic determinists. By contrast, by focusing on the more elusive perceptual and cultural factors that would otherwise have been lost if the materialist approach was permitted to go too far (as so often is the tendency among the leftists in African scholarship), Mazrui's cultural approach restores some of the balance needed in understanding the African experience in all its comprehensiveness. In Mazrui's article "The Resurrection of the Warrior Tradition in African Political Culture: From Shaka the Zulu to Amin the Kakwa" ~~attempts to examine the Zulu and the Kakwa~~ (collected in *The Warrior Tradition in Modern Africa*, 1977), he attempts to examine the Zulu and the Kakwa sources of the behavior of two important figures in Africa's modern history.

The fact that Mazrui, deeply Westernized as he appears to be, should, in the majority of his works, pay careful and sustained attention to African culture would at first appear to be puzzling. But he is not distanced from that culture and never has been. His early tendency to use non-African sources rather heavily in his writing was partly a result of working at a time when there were few fellow African scholars to consult or quote. Second, Mazrui is not always citing Western scholars because he is in agreement with all they say. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that Mazrui's evaluation of European scholars is almost evenly mixed. Third, some of the aspects of his writing, which may at first sight appear to be a reflection of how deeply Westernized he is, are, in reality, part of his African and Islamic heritages rather than purely Western in derivation. This phenomenon is perhaps most clearly reflected in his use of creative literature in his social-science works.

There are few mainstream social scientists, not just in Africa but worldwide, who draw on material from creative literature—poems, plays, and novels—more often than Mazrui does. Quotations from the works of major literary figures, both Western and African, appear repeatedly in his books and articles, reflecting to some extent his Westernization. But he cites them only partly because he has absorbed them through his education and recollects them with enthusiasm. An often-overlooked factor is that as a product of the Swahili culture of coastal Kenya, Mazrui would have developed a predilection for poetry and verbal rhythm even if he had not gone to Western-type schools. The Swahili are great lovers of words and poetry, and written forms of Swahili literature were in existence several centuries prior to the European intrusion on Africa. The alphabet used in the early years was the Arabic script and only much later was the Roman alphabet adopted. Moreover, among the Swahili people, conversation is an art, and elegance in that art is highly regarded. Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that Mazrui's abundant writing is, in part, motivated by a desire to communicate, to converse with others. This attribute he may owe to the Swahili culture.

The unusual utopian novel written by Mazrui, *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* (1971) is only partly Western. Equally crucial to the formation of this kind of futuristic fiction, set in an African afterworld, is a Swahili literary tradition in which fantasy, theology, and ethical concerns are intermingled. The tale takes the form of a debate in heaven over major moral issues. Okigbo, the Nigerian poet who died in combat in Nigeria's civil war, serves as the focal point for arguments concerning the political commitment of the artist. The content, structure, and style of narration are as much African as they are Western. Mazrui's novel is a syncretic work fusing Christian, Islamic, and indigenous cultural elements. So what may at first sight appear to be an excessive use of Western literary figures and forms is in reality a manifestation of what Mazrui himself would probably call "The Triple Heritage" at work. No genuine attempt at understanding Mazrui's work can afford to neglect such interactions.

To be eclectic, selectively to borrow aspects of one school of thought while rejecting others, to synthesize a new and distinctive position of his own—these have been the hallmarks of Mazrui's contributions to political science and literature. His life, which he once summarized as "one long debate," has been an unrelenting quest for synthesis.

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