

DRAFT:
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**TOWARDS A DISTINGUISHED CHAIR AND A CENTRE
OF EXCELLENCE AT MAKERERE: WHY NAME
THEM AFTER ALI A. MAZRUI?**

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Strategies for fundraising for the Ali A. Mazrui Chair have to be different from strategies for fundraising for the Mazrui Centre for Global Studies.

The case for the Mazrui Endowed Chair has to rest primarily upon achievements already accomplished by the person after whom the Chair is named. On the other hand, the case for the Mazrui Centre for Global Studies has to be based primarily on what the Centre is intended to achieve *in the future*.

The Chair is a salute to an existing record of accomplishments. The Centre, on the other hand, should be a vision of aspiration, a symbol of future ambition.

Of course, an endowed Chair is intended to attract future occupants of exceptional distinction. But here again we are dealing with considerable past achievements, in the hope that any new incumbent would repeat his or her illustrious record of the past.

However, the proposed Centre is basically a clean slate waiting to record *new* accomplishments. It is therefore particularly important that in making the case for such a new centre, we should emphasize what would be *different* about its purposes and goals.

Why should there be an endowed Chair at Makerere University named after Ali A. Mazrui? First, let us make the case of whether Ali Mazrui is exceptional, and then make the case of why it would be particularly appropriate that the first Ali A. Mazrui Endowed Chair be at Makerere University.

Is Ali Mazrui a Sub-Saharan Ibn Khaldun?

What is exceptional about Ali A. Mazrui? It has been argued that Ali Mazrui may be the most famous African social scientist since Ibn Khaldun. Abd-ar-Rahman Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis (in what is now Tunisia) on May 27, 1332—almost

exactly six hundred years before Ali Al'Amin Mazrui was born in Mombasa, Kenya, on February 24, 1933.

But precisely because Ibn Khaldun's work has continued to be celebrated several centuries after his death, he must be regarded as the greater and more original thinker. Ibn Khaldun's book, *Al Muqaddimah*, has been described by Arnold J. Toynbee as "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever been created by any mind in any time or place." Ali Mazrui has been described more modestly as "a latter-day Ibn Khaldun of sub-Saharan Africa."

It is too early to be sure for how long Ali Mazrui's work will be remembered. Currently, if one googled Mazrui, one gets well over 152,700 responses. Mazrui has been ranked among the top 100 public intellectuals alive in the world. In 1965, Makerere University College in Kampala, gave him a meteoric promotion from the status of Lecturer to that of full Professor, without ever passing through the intermediate ranks of Senior Lecturer or Associate Professor. Mazrui became the first African full Professor not only of political science, but of any social science or humanity in the whole of East Africa. In 1966, he became the first African Dean of Social Sciences in Eastern Africa.

Ali Mazrui is the only African professor who has occupied multiple named endowed chairs in three different continents at the same time. These simultaneous professorial chairs have included: Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities at State University of New York at Binghamton; Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York; Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large in Development Studies at the University of Jos, Nigeria; and the Walter Rodney Distinguished Professorship in History at the University of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana, in South America. That does not exhaust the list of Ali Mazrui's named Professorial Chairs.

Ibn Khaldun had held different official positions during his lifetime, but not simultaneously in three continents. During his professional life in the fourteenth century Ibn Khaldun was known by far fewer people than Ali Mazrui is in the twenty-first, but Ibn Khaldun has made up in numbers across the centuries.

Ali Mazrui has lectured in approximately fifty countries scattered in five continents. His six radio lectures entitled, *The African Condition*, (BBC, 1979), were heard by an estimated twenty-two million people. His nine-part television series, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (BBC and PBS, 1986), has been viewed by an estimated forty million people in two decades, translated into several languages, and used in college classrooms across the world.

In relation to Ibn Khaldun, the Mazrui experience has encompassed two ironies. Sub-Saharan Africa's leading commentator on the works of Ibn Khaldun is the Ethiopian scholar, Seifudein Adem. Coincidentally, Dr. Adem has also now become one of the leading experts on the works of Ali A. Mazrui. He began to discover areas of similarities in style and substance between Ibn Khaldun and Ali Mazrui, including biographical points of comparison. Dr. Adem cultivated the twin-interests in Ibn Khaldun and Ali Mazrui while he was a professor in Japan. When he saw a job advertised at Mazrui's Institute of Global Cultural Studies in Binghamton, New York, Seifudein Adem applied for it—and got the job. When he relocated to the United States in January, 2006, Dr. Adem was able to work more deeply about both Ibn Khaldun and Ali Mazrui.

An earlier irony was when Ali Mazrui was himself Ibn Khaldun Professor at the School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Leesburg, Virginia, in the 1990s. As Ibn Khaldun Professor, Mazrui taught courses on political Islam and on Cultural Forces in World Politics. Some of the theories of Ibn Khaldun featured in the courses from time to time. At the School of Islamic and

Social Sciences in Virginia, Ali Mazrui had therefore occupied this additional endowed Chair – named after Ibn Khaldun.

What Should be Unique About the Centre?

As for the planned Ali A. Mazrui Centre of Global Studies at Makerere, it is important to find a focus which would make the Centre meaningfully *special*. The Centre would need to be guided by a particular paradigm of the globalization of East Africa to which Ali Mazrui has made a substantial contribution.

According to Mazrui, the *Afro-Oriental phase* of the globalization of East Africa was when the sub-region's international orientation was primarily towards the Indian Ocean. This phase was before the penetration of East Africa by the Portuguese and the British, and especially before the building of the Suez Canal in the nineteenth century. East Africans had cast their eyes for centuries eastwards towards the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, the Indian sub-continent, the wider South Asia, and further into the Malayan Archipelago, China and Japan. The impacts of the Arabian Peninsula and South Asia were particularly strong, resulting in processes of Islamization, Arabization and some cultural Indianization.

The *Afro-Occidental phase* of the globalization of East Africa was primarily the product of European colonization—which inaugurated the Occidentalization of East Africa politically, economically and culturally. This phase also included the arrival of Western versions of Christianity in the wake of European and American missionary work. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was a product more of the Oriental phase of globalization than of the Occidental. The Christian Gospel had arrived in Abyssinia in the fourth century of the Christian era, long before European colonization of Eastern Africa.

Increasingly during the colonial period Eastern Africa cast its eyes northwards towards Europe and Westwards towards the Atlantic. The Indian Ocean declined in importance as East Africans learnt European languages, were converted to such religious denominations as Catholicism, the Anglican Church and other forms of Protestantism, and adopted Western systems of education and aspects of European lifestyles. Culturally, Eastern Africa became more of an extension of the Atlantic than of the Indian Ocean, except in relation to the impact of Islamization and Arabization.

The proposed Ali A. Mazrui Centre for Global Studies at Makerere is coinciding with the phase of partial *re-orientalization* of East Africa's horizons. The Indian Ocean is reasserting its relevance for East Africa partly because of the rise of petro-power in the Middle East, the reactivation of Islamic expansionism and of Arab influence, the rise of India, and China as potential super-powers in the making, and the impact of Japan on the world economy.

The liberation of South Africa from apartheid has also had Afro-Asian consequences as Asian investors from even such smaller countries as Malaysia have become important investors in Africa's mineral and other resources.

Unlike the historic Afro-Oriental phase of the internationalization of East Africa, this new re-Orientalization is not instead of Occidentalization. On the contrary, Eastern Africa remains heavily Westernized in spite of the new impact of China, India and the more prosperous Arab world. In reality this new phase of re-Orientalization is a stage towards genuine Afro-globalization. East Africans are still casting their eyes on the Western world, but are now also resuming their old historic interest in the Indian Ocean and the Oriental world.

The new Makerere Centre for Global Studies would be influenced by this paradigm, but with the following stages of globalization;

- I. The Afro-Oriental Phase
- II. The Afro-Occidental Phase
- III. Africa's Re-Orientalization
- IV. The Afro-Globalization Phase

But in addition to studying Africa in this *global* context, the Ali A. Mazrui Centre for Global Studies would also pay special attention to Africa's relations with its most immediate neighbours of the Middle East (West Asia), as well as the role of Pan-Africanism in inter-African relations. Ali Mazrui's paradigm of "*Africa and Its Neighbours*" should include the following subthemes:

- I. **Afrabia:** Mazrui has traced the long historic process of how Africa and the Arab world began as totally separate regions, and have increasingly converged into an interlocking single system of Afrabia.
- II. **Afro-Arabs and Euro-Jews:** On the other hand, Jews and Arabs started off as one Semitic people. Over the centuries Jews became increasingly identified with Europeans, while Arabs have substantially integrated with Africans.
- III. **Africa's Triple Heritage:** Ali Mazrui has traced in print and electronically the historic emergence of Africa's civilization as a synthesis of three cultures—indigenous, Islamic and Western. See Mazrui's television and DVD Series, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (BBC and PBS, 1986).
- IV. **Five Levels of Pan-Africanism:**
 - (a) *Sub-Saharan Pan-Africanism:* A subcontinental solidarity of black Africans south of the Sahara.

(b) *Trans-Saharan Pan-Africanism*: The unity of the whole of Africa, both Arab and sub-Saharan.

(c) *Trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism*: The solidarity between Africa and the African Diaspora of the Americas.

(d) *West Hemispheric (or Trans-American) Pan-Africanism*: The solidarity of people of African descent in North America, the Caribbean, South America and Central America (e.g., African-Americans, Afro-Trinidadians, Afro-Cubans, Afro-Brazilians, etc.)

(e) *Global Pan-Africanism*: Solidarity of people of African descent worldwide, including Afro-Omanis, Afro-Iraqis, Afro-Kuwaitis, Africans generally and the whole African Diaspora in Europe, the Americas and Asia.

Conclusion

These Mazruiana paradigms of Global Studies, African Studies, and Diaspora Studies are designed to give the proposed Ali Mazrui Center for Global Studies a specialized agenda, a stamp of originality, a guiding paradigm and a sense of direction. But this methodological uniqueness should not be permitted to become a shackle to hinder intellectual innovation. Paradigm-shifts should be allowed to occur if they enrich the ultimate goals and purposes of this proposed Centre for Global Studies.

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