

SECOND DRAFT:

October 2011

**EVALUATING THE WORK OF  
ALI A. MAZRUI:  
SELECT INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES  
AND COMMENTARIES**

Based on a document prepared in anticipation of a major public lecture in Malaysia, under the title “A MUSLIM CENTURY: MYTH OR REALITY?”, chaired by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Malaysia, on May 18, 2010.

1. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Chancellor, Professor Ali Mazrui, has been nominated among top 100 public intellectuals in the world. An American journal, *Foreign Policy* published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in New York in September 2005, nominated the scholars . . . The London-based magazine, *The Prospect* backed the nomination. . . . A public intellectual is a person who has shown distinction in their own field and the ability to communicate ideas and influence debate outside it. . . . Last year Mazrui was voted by another London-based magazine among the ten greatest Africans.

[*Foreign Policy* (USA) September 2005 and *The Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya) October 5, 2005.]

2. Mazrui is Africa's leading and most independent political thinker. *CHOICE*, [Chicago, Illinois, USA], 1967.

3. Mazrui proves himself learned, sophisticated and concerned. On ideology taken on its own he is excellent. *NEW SOCIETY*, [London, U.K.], 1967.

4. *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* is the story of . . . a world beyond the grave which combines the best of Christian, Muslim and traditional versions of heaven. . . . The story never gets bogged down in its arguments. It becomes its own best proof that important political questioning and art are not mutually exclusive. *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* is a fine and unusual piece of fiction.

*The New York Times Book Review*, (USA), 1972.

5. Mazrui shakes up our thinking and forces us to consider a world in which existing political, economic, and cultural forces have advanced to new stages of development and importance. He anticipates, for example, a growing influence of Islam, noting that “the prestige of a religion is often positively co-related with the political and economic power of those who profess it.” *FSJ Bookshelf*, (USA), 1978.

6. Ali Mazrui is not only the most distinguished writer to have emerged from independent Black Africa, and the most penetrating and discriminating expositor of the ideology of the Third World, he is also a most illuminating interpreter of world politics. *The Times Literary Supplement*, [London, UK], 1978.

7. From a methodological point of view, Mazrui demonstrates a rare intellectual brilliance. He frequently uses dichotomous schemes of classification which are genuinely original and sometimes surprisingly witty. . . . He often uses dichotomy for dialectical reasoning. *The American Political Science Review*, [USA], 1979.

8. Ali Mazrui has emerged as Africa’s leading political scientist over the last decade because of his insightful, elegant and voluminous output. . . . He adopts approaches and notions from several disciplines, psychology and sociology as well as theology and technology. But this eclecticism produces neither fragmentation nor disjointedness but rather a great work of synthesis and scholarship, in which diverse ideas and theories are juxtaposed and interpreted. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, [Toronto, Canada], 1979.

9. The greatest talent of Professor Mazrui is saying unexpected things. *Durrants*, [London, UK], 1978.

10. Reviewers of Mazrui's books almost invariably remark upon the originality of his ideas, his ability to make surprising connections and sweeping syntheses, his grasp of detail, his wit, and his ability to stimulate, enlighten and entertain. . . . Mazrui is by many accounts Africa's leading political philosopher and commentator. *Research News*, [University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA], 1982.

11. Mr. Mazrui commands one of the most powerful intellects in Africa, and his writings have long caused resonance among the African elite. *International Herald Tribune*, [Paris and London], 1983.

12. Mazrui is BU's (Binghamton University's) most prestigious faculty member—he has taught on five different continents, written more than 30 books and published a video series on African history that aired on both the BBC and PBS . . . The American magazine *Foreign Policy* and the British magazine, *Prospect*, in 2005, nominated Mazrui as one of the top 100 public intellectuals alive in the world.

Julie Alfonso, *Pipe Dream*, [campus students newspaper], October 7, 2011.

13. The Library of Congress [USA] in partnership with the Africa Society of the National Summit on Africa, is launching a new literary series, "Conversations with African Poets and Poets." The series will kick off with a discussion on contemporary African culture by Ali Mazrui

... one of the world's most prolific writers on Africa. [Press release from Library of Congress, Washington, DC, September 26, 2011].

## COMMENTS ON MAZRUI'S TELEVISION WORK

### *(The Africans: A Triple Heritage, 1986)*

- (i) Following in the television footsteps of Lord Clark, Alistair Cooke and Dr. Bronowski is Ali Mazrui. *The Times*, [London, UK], 1987.
- (ii) Ali Mazrui is in the tradition of the continent that produced him, an engrossing storyteller, and in his television series he has captured African wisdom, poetry, social drama and human resourcefulness in a way that provokes and delights. *Africa Recovery*, [UN Publication, New York], 1987.
- (iii) This television series is clearly destined to be the standard audiovisual introduction to the African continent in schools and colleges for years to come. *American Film magazine*, [USA], 1987.

## TRIBUTES TO ALI A. MAZRUI FROM STATESMEN & POLITICAL LEADERS

### *I. Tribute by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan*

Professor Mazrui's work is a wonderful illustration of how Africa—for all its struggles—thrives as a complex and fascinating place... This moment in history is ours... African scholars like Professor Mazrui are the vanguard of this renewal. Their work holds the key to what we all want and need: African answers to African problems.

[Tribute To Mazrui in The House Of Lords, London, Year 2000]

## ***II. Tribute by President Yoweri Museveni, Head of State, Republic of Uganda***

Uganda is proud and honoured to be the “cradle” of Professor Ali Mazrui’s global scholarship and fame. We give him special recognition as one of Makerere University’s renowned former Professors and Deans.

[Ceremony to Honour Mazrui, Kampala, Uganda, August 2009]

## ***III. Tribute by Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, Former US Presidential Candidate***

Mr. President, public television station WGBH in Boston . . . has been airing the nine-part television series, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage: A Commentary*, by Ali A. Mazrui. It is a series that has sparked a great deal of discussion and controversy. While I cannot endorse all of the conclusions made by the participants in the film, its showing has provided the American people with an all-too-rare look at Africa from an African’s perspective.

[Congress Record No. 144, Part III, October 17, 1986]

## ***IV. Tribute from Mayor of Chicago, Illinois***

I, Harold Washington, Mayor of the City of Chicago, do hereby proclaim October 6, 1986, to be *The Africans* Day in Chicago, and issue this proclamation of esteem and recognition to Dr. Mazrui on behalf of the citizens of our great city.

[Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago, Illinois, October 6, 1986]

***V. Tribute by Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, Salim Ahmed Salim***

We know Professor Ali Mazrui as (a) an academician, intellectual, thinker of towering proportions; (b) an author, a social and political critic; (c) a great Pan Africanist; (d) a fighter for what he believes in.

But with all that—the fame, the greatness—Professor Mazrui retains that simple quality which ultimately is the mark of true greatness: his simplicity and ability to remain truly *human*.

[Delivered at a celebration in Mazrui's honour, hosted by the International Peace Academy, Addis Ababa Hilton Hotel, Ethiopia, May 20, 1993]

***VI. Tribute by Mayor of City of Detroit, Coleman A. Young.***

I, Coleman A. Young, Mayor of the City of Detroit, issue this Proclamation, in appreciation for Dr. Ali A. Mazrui's remarkable production, *The Africans*. I hope this effort will bring about further research into the proud and unique history of the African continent and its many peoples.

[Coleman A. Young, Mayor of the City of Detroit, Michigan, 1986.]

***VII. Tribute by the House of Representatives, State of Michigan***

Resolved by the House of Representatives (The Senate concurring), that the highest tribute be accorded to Dr. Ali A. Mazrui, host of *The Africans*; and be it further RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Dr. Mazrui as a reflection of our esteem.

[Adopted by the Michigan House of Representatives and Senate, September 18, 1986.]

### ***VIII. Special Tribute from 83rd Legislature of the State of Michigan***

*Let it be known*, that we are richly blessed with men and women of extraordinary abilities. One of the finest is Dr. Ali A. Mazrui, writer and presenter of *The Africans* which is the most comprehensive television study of Africa ever compiled. . . . IN SPECIAL TRIBUTE, therefore, this document is signed and dedicated in commendation and recognition of Dr. Ali A. Mazrui, author, professor, historian, and television presenter extraordinaire.

[Senator Jackie Vaughn III, Associate President Pro Tempore, Eighty Third Legislature of the State of Michigan, Lansing, USA, September 26, 1986]

### ***IX. Tribute from President Olusagun Obasango of Nigeria***





**PRESIDENT,  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

PRES/132

November 22, 2002

Prof. A. L. Mazrui,  
c/o Office of the Schweitzer Chair,  
Institute of Global Cultural Studies,  
Binghamton University,  
P. O. Box 6000, Binghamton,  
New York 13902 – 6000,  
U.S.A.

*Dear Prof,*

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

It is with a feeling of great pleasure and sincere gratitude to God that I convey my warmest congratulations and the felicitations of all Nigerians to you on the occasion of your 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Birthday anniversaries are always an occasion for celebration and the seventieth anniversary has, by common consent and popular tradition, become a symbolic watershed in every human life. But in a life such as yours, marked by prodigious intellect, extra-ordinary creativity and a persistent effort to improve the human condition such a milestone is significant not only to your immediate family and friends but to countless millions whom you do not know but who know you through your work and whose lives you have enriched thereby.

I am sure I speak the minds of these countless millions in wishing you good health, joy and many more fruitful and productive years as a cultural ambassador of the black race and benefactor of the entire human race.

May your light never grow dim.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Olusegun Obasanjo*  
**OLUSEGUN OBASANJO**