

SECOND DRAFT:

OCTOBER 2011

IN PURSUIT OF PERSONAL EXCELLENCE: THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF ALI A. MAZRUI

A Biographical Summary:

The First Forty Years

Prepared for the Ali A. Mazrui Foundation
Kampala, Uganda, and
The International Institute of Islamic Thought
Herndon, Virginia

*"Cultures rise and fall. But did Ali Mazrui's career
fall and rise in his first forty years?"*

THE YOUTHFUL YEARS IN MOMBASA, 1948–1955

- I. Youngest Editor, *The Arab Guardian* — An opinion monthly publication of the Swahili community of the Kenya Coast (Mombasa, 1952–1955).
- II. First Regular Sub-Editor, a fortnightly page of local Arab and Swahili news, *Mombasa Times*, (Mombasa, 1953–1955).
- III. First regular Boarding Supervisor (Warden), Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (a school of technology for Muslim students from Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Uganda, British Somaliland and Kenya) funded by all Anglophone East African governments and Great Britain. Served as Boarding Supervisor, 1952–1955.
- IV. Unusual award of a Kenya Government scholarship to go to Great Britain to complete secondary education [1955–1957] before going to university for a degree in the United Kingdom. The scholarship involved upward re-evaluation of the student in spite of a mediocre performance in the Cambridge School Certificate (ordinary level).

THE HUDDERSFIELD YEARS, 1955–1957

- V. Completed and passed five subjects at Higher School Certificate (Advanced Level) and two subjects at School Certificate (Ordinary Level), University of London: Studied at Huddersfield Technical College, Huddersfield, UK (1955–1957). That college is now a full university.

Advanced Level Passes

- (a) History of Great Britain
- (b) History of Europe
- (c) Economic History of the World

- (d) Geography of the World
- (e) English Literature

Ordinary Level Passes

- (f) Mathematics
- (g) Classical Arabic

Prizes Won

- (h) Gladstone Memorial Prize, 1956
- (i) Essay Competition of Diplomatic History. (Prize), 1957

THE MANCHESTER YEARS, 1957–1960

Degree

VI. Studied and passed the Bachelor of Arts in Politics and Philosophy with Distinction, University of Manchester, England, 1960. Minors: English Literature and Arabic Studies.

Prizes

Essay competition: Won the Wagner Prize, awarded by the Lady Mayoress of Manchester, 1959

Fellowship for Postgraduate Studies

Won the Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to study for the Master's Degree at Columbia University, New York, 1960–1961

Fulbright Trans-Atlantic Travel Grant, 1960–61

THE NEW YORK AND MEXICO YEARS, 1960–1961

Pursued and obtained Master's Degree in Government and Politics,
Columbia University, New York, 1961

Summer School on History of Mexico and Latin American Studies,
University of Mexico, Mexico City, Summer 1961

Post-Master's Fellowships (1961)

Offered Fellowship for Post-Master's Studies by Princeton University,
Princeton, New Jersey.

Also offered Post-Master's Fellowship at Nuffield College, Oxford
University, Oxford England.

Accepted Nuffield College offer, and proceeded to Oxford in preparation
for the Doctor of Philosophy [D.Phil. (Oxon)] 1961.

THE EARLY OXFORD YEARS, 1961–1963

VIII. Started research towards the Doctor of Philosophy [D.Phil. (Oxon)],
under the supervision of Professor John Plamenatz and Dame
Margery Perham. Dissertation topic became "*The Idea of Self-
Government and the Idiom of Nationalism in Some Commonwealth
African Countries, 1957–1963*". Fully funded by Nuffield College,
Oxford, England.

Exceptional Publication Record

- (a) "On the Concept of 'We Are All Africans,'" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 57 No. 1, 1963.
- (b) "Consent, Colonialism and Sovereignty," *Political Studies* (U.K.), Vol. 11 No. 1, 1963.
- (c) "African Attitudes to the European Economic Community," *International Affairs* (U.K.) Vol. 38 No. 1, 1963.

- (d) "Edmund Burke and Reflections on the Revolution in the Congo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* [U.S.A.] Vol. 5 No. 2, 1963.
- (e) "The United Nations and Some African Political Attitudes," (Prize Award Essay) *International Organization* (Boston) Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (Summer) 1964. This article was also reprinted in full in *East African Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (October).

Media Presentations

- (f) "Why Does an African Feel African?" *The Times*, (London, U.K.), 1962.
- (g) "The African Innocence," *The Third Programme*, BBC (London) 1963.
- (h) "The Dress of African Thought," *The Third Programme*, BBC (London) 1963.
- (i) Weekly News Commentaries, *BBC African Service*, in English and Kiswahili, 1961–1963.

THE MAKERERE YEARS: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL, 1963–1973

Ali A. Mazrui joined Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda, as a lecturer in political science in 1963. The year turned out to be momentous for Ali Mazrui in six senses. In addition to being his first year as a resident of Uganda, it was also his last year as a resident graduate student at Oxford University in England, his first year as a parent (his first-born son arrived at Mulago Hospital, Kampala, in December 1963), his first year as a citizen of an independent African country (Kenya became sovereign in December 1963), the thirtieth year of his own biological life (Ali Mazrui was born in 1933), and the first year of his career as a

professional political scientist (he became formally a university lecturer in that discipline in 1963).

Less than two years later Mazrui had been promoted to full professor at Makerere without ever becoming a senior lecturer or an Associate Professor (Reader). That was the first meteoric anomaly.

The second meteoric anomaly is that Ali Mazrui became a full professor before he finished his doctorate. In fact Makerere appointed him a professor, and gave him leave to go abroad to complete researching and writing his thesis for the Oxford D.Phil. degree.

A third meteoric anomaly was that he went to the University of Chicago as a Visiting Professor without a doctorate five years since the same university had offered him a scholarship to *begin* his PhD studies on the same campus. As a graduate student Ali Mazrui had preferred Columbia University in New York and Oxford in Britain. Yet his first professorship in the Western world was as a Visiting Professor at Chicago, followed by a summer at the University of California, Los Angeles.

A fourth meteoric anomaly was that Ali Mazrui had a Faculty Research Fellowship at Harvard University before he defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of Oxford. Indeed, Mazrui used his year at Harvard partly to complete his Oxford thesis.

While at Harvard Ali Mazrui shared an office with the distinguished Harvard political scientist, Robert Rotberg [also of M.I.T.]. Together they co-edited and co-authored what turned out to be Mazrui's biggest published enterprise — *Protest and Power in Black Africa* which was published by Oxford University Press, NY, (1,274 pages) in 1970.

Ali Mazrui went to Oxford to defend his thesis in 1966 while he was still resident at Harvard as a Research Fellow. Life-long professional relationships which Mazrui initiated at Harvard included not only Robert Rotberg but also Samuel Huntington with whom Mazrui subsequently had recurrent intellectual debates.

Yet another meteoric anomaly which occurred in 1966 was that Ali Mazrui became Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Makerere in the same year in which he got his doctorate at Oxford.

With regard to Professorial inaugural lectures at Makerere, Mazrui helped to revive the tradition in the social sciences with his own Inaugural Lecture “Ancient Greece in African Political Thought.” The tradition had been suspended in the Social Sciences to avert the possible embarrassment of a frivolous Inaugural Lecture by a newly appointed British professor of economics who had threatened to speak on “Housing for Houseboys at Makerere”!

Mazrui’s topic on “Ancient Greece in African Political Thought” was regarded as worthy of restoring the academic dignity of Professorial Inaugural Lectures. The tradition was therefore re-activated as Mazrui assumed three roles at Makerere — Professor of Political Science, Head of the Department of Political Science, and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

When a decision was made to create a Law School at Makerere, Mazrui was also appointed Interim Dean of Law. He was launching the Faculty of Law pending the appointment of lawyers to take over. The Law School at Makerere still officially regards Ali Mazrui as its Founder Dean of Law, complete with a portrait in the law gallery.

Ali Mazrui also had one annual role that he played at graduation ceremonies at Makerere. He was officially appointed *University Orator* — entrusted with drafting citations for honorary degrees awarded by the university. A mini-crisis occurred when Makerere decided to award an honorary doctorate to the Head of State, President Milton Obote in 1969. Within the rules of the office of University Orator, the task of honouring the Head of State with an appropriate citation should still have been entrusted to Ali Mazrui. But Mazrui’s relationship with the President had sometimes deteriorated into public exchanges between them. The Academic Board at Makerere (the Senate) decided to appoint a special alternative University

Orator to write the citation for President Obote instead. [The post of *University Orator* at Oxford carried the title of *Public Orator* at the time].

In reality Mazrui's relations with the Head of State fluctuated from time to time. There were periods when he was invited by Obote to have tea at State House. There were other times when he was in serious disfavor with the Head of State.

When Idi Amin captured power from Obote in January 1971 Mazrui had a different fluctuation in relations with the new President. Because Mazrui had been a critic of Milton Obote, that role was regarded as a *plus* by Idi Amin. It was also a *plus* that Mazrui was (like Idi Amin) a fellow Muslim. Thirdly, Idi Amin regarded Mazrui as a major intellectual resource. Idi Amin even wanted Mazrui to lead a delegation of black thinkers to apartheid South Africa for the purpose of convincing white racists that Blacks could be highly intelligent and capable of being rational. Ali Mazrui was appalled by such a counter-apartheid concept. But Mazrui was relieved when the Prime Minister of South Africa later wrote to Idi Amin to turn down the proposed delegation of intellectuals.

Ali Mazrui's relations with Idi Amin deteriorated as Mazrui expressed increasing concern about Idi Amin's treatment of the Acholi, the Langi, the Asians and the murder of such Ugandan leaders as Chief Justice Benedicto Kiwanuka and Vice-Chancellor Frank Kalimuzo of Makerere.

During Mazrui's total ten years at Makerere his impact on Uganda politics was through a variety of channels. His lectures in the Main Hall on campus were always packed to overflow. He also travelled across Uganda to address schools and other small-town audiences. His debates with members of the central government included the highly publicized historic debate in the Kampala City Hall with Mr. Akena Adoko, the Head of Intelligence, and the second most powerful civilian in Uganda at the time after the Head of State. The debate was sponsored and chaired by the Mayor of the City of Kampala. The debate attracted thousands of people inside and outside the City Hall.

For part of his stay in Uganda Ali Mazrui was also Associate Editor and contributor to the intellectual magazine, *Transition*, founded by the brilliant Ugandan editor, Rajat Neogy. Mazrui's most famous articles in *Transition* were "On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship," "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar" and "Tanzaphilia: A Political Diagnosis." Such articles were read widely in Africa, including by Heads of State.

Above all Mazrui was a classroom instructor in the Department of Political Science at Makerere. He taught the largest class in political theory, from Plato to Nkrumah, for nearly a decade.

Ali Mazrui also gave interviews to local media in Kenya and Uganda, and wrote articles for newspapers in East Africa as a whole. He also gave radio talks on the BBC African Service from London, recorded from Kampala, Uganda. His impact on Uganda was so considerable that he continued to be remembered long after he left Uganda and moved to the United States. Indeed, many Ugandans who were not yet born when Mazrui was a professor at Makerere know about Mazrui today, and often claim him for Uganda.

During his ten years Ali Mazrui published several dozen scholarly articles in different parts of the world, assisted in his research by his dear wife at the time, Molly Vickerman Mazrui [Muna]. He also published the following books:

- (a) *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).
- (b) *On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship: Essays on Independent Africa* (London: Longman, 1967).
- (c) *The Anglo-African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1967).
- (d) *Violence and Thought: Essays on Social Tensions in Africa* (London and Harlow: Longman, 1969).

- (e) *Protest and Power in Black Africa* [Co-edited with Robert I. Rotberg] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- (f) *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971).
- (g) *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* [Novel] (London: Heinemann Educational Books and New York: The Third Press, 1971).
- (h) *Africa in World Affairs: The Next Thirty Years* [Co-edited with Hasu Patel] (New York and London: The Third Press, 1973).
- (i) *World Culture and the Black Experience* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1973).

During his ten years in Uganda (1963–1973) Makerere had three identities — *firstly*, as an overseas extension of the University of London [Makerere's degrees were in fact of the University of London]; *secondly*, Makerere as a constituent college of the University of East Africa [the two other constituent colleges were in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania]; and *thirdly*, Makerere as an independent university [when it was decided to dissolve the University of East Africa and form the three separate national institutions in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania].

But while the University of East Africa was breaking up, Ali Mazrui embarked on a personal crusade to try and Pan-Africanize citizenship in East Africa. He thought that East African scholars should encourage the concept of dual citizenship within the membership of the East African Community. He resisted attempts to persuade him to leave Makerere in Uganda and transfer to the University of Nairobi in the country of his birth. He believed that there should continue to be Kenyan students and professors in Uganda, and Ugandan students and professors in Kenya, with a comparable distribution of Tanzanians among the three campuses.

Because of his own attachment to both Kenya and Uganda Mazrui was hoping to set the precedent of becoming the first citizen of both countries. At that time none of the three East African countries accepted the concept of dual citizenship.

Ali Mazrui approached President Milton Obote with the proposal of permitting dual citizenship among the three countries of the East African Community. He proposed to President Obote that any East African who was born in one member-country, and then lived in another for five years, should become eligible for dual citizenship in both countries. He chose to try and sell this idea to Obote during a period when Mazrui was in good standing with the Head of State.

Obote responded that Ali Mazrui was widely regarded as belonging to both countries in every respect but dual nationality. Obote went on to say that even if he agreed to give Mazrui Ugandan citizenship, President Kenyatta was unlikely to accept the doubling of citizenship. It was concluded that East Africa in the twentieth century was not yet ready for dual nationality.