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Postcolonial Constructivism

Mazrui's Theory of Intercultural Relations

Seifudein Adem

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Global Political Thinkers

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was about six years ago that the idea of writing this book first occurred to me. Subsequently, I sent a book proposal to Palgrave, in August 2014, exactly two months before Ali Mazrui died. Several months later, I received the contract from the publisher. But I had to put the project on hold until now as I needed to devote myself to other more urgent matters.

In the contract package from Palgrave was also comments by an anonymous reviewer. With reference to Mazrui's critics, that reviewer wrote: 'Mazrui stands a good chance of being remembered when many of his critics have been forgotten'. I then said to myself I could not agree more. But that is not all why I am bringing up this story.

On the Internet, something not totally unrelated to the above captured my attention recently. The lecture Mazrui gave in 1979 in the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) Reith Lectures series, titled 'Clash of Cultures', was listed—as of February 10, 2020—as the second most popular, among the twenty best episodes, measured in terms of the number of people who had listened to them. The Reith Lectures, named after the founder of the BBC, Lord Reith, is a long-running annual event that began in 1948 in which prominent scholars, opinion-makers, and artists are asked to give a series of lectures on a timely topic. Including Mazrui, there have been seventy-one Reith lecturers to date (1948–2019).

That Mazrui was sitting at the number two position in this galaxy of brilliant minds that included Arnold Toynbee and George F. Kennan, John Searle and Edward Said, Wole Soyinka and Stephen Hawking must say something about Ali Mazrui. I wish to congratulate, therefore, that

anonymous Palgrave reviewer for sheer prescience. He has been vindicated. He clearly foresaw that Mazrui's fame will outlive him! In some ways, another person who seemingly foresaw this was Mazrui himself. He wittily put it in 2012 in this way: 'As long as the deceased is remembered by name, he is not completely dead; in fact, he combines death with life.'

The bulk of the materials I relied on for preparing this manuscript was typed and organized with impressive thoroughness over a period of many years by the secretarial and administrative staff of Institute of Global Cultural Studies (IGCS) at Binghamton University, New York. Even at the risk of inevitably, but inadvertently, leaving some names out, I therefore wish to mention these individuals in alphabetical order: Jamie Barvinchak, Nancy Hall, Gloria Hopkins, Nancy Levis, Ravenna Narizzano-Bronson, AnnaMarie Palombaro, Anne Pierce, Barbara Tierno, and Jennifer Winans. This book is indebted to them all as well as to the four associate directors of IGCS who served it while it lasted, to its two dozen or so visiting professors/fellows/associates, and to its many graduate and research project assistants. A special note of thanks is due to the late Abdul Samed Bemath, the South African Librarian and Bibliographer of the scholarship of Ali A. Mazrui; Bemath passed away in July 2020. He was a good man.

As it took me five years to conceive, develop, and finalize this book in its present form, the different phases of the project had to be completed in different places: Binghamton and Ithaca, New York; Herndon, Virginia; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Hong Kong, China; Frankfurt, Germany; and Kyoto, Japan. I am therefore very thankful for the tremendous help and encouragement I received in these locations from many people, including relatives, friends, and colleagues.

More specifically, I would like to thank the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, not only for granting me access to its 'Ali Mazrui Papers 1959–1989', which included his manuscripts and correspondence, but also for awarding me the 2019 Bordin-Gillette Fellowship in support of my work on this project.

Much appreciation is due to Doshisha University's Graduate School of Global Studies in Kyoto, Japan, for the quiet and collegial atmosphere I was afforded to reflect on, shape, reshape, and, in the strange shadow of COVID-19, finalize this project in August 2020. Similarly, I am grateful to the Ali Mazrui Center for Higher Education at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, for the encouragement I have received.

On a personal and professional level, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Professors Yoichi Mine, Hisae Nakanishi, John Edward Philips, Alamin Mazrui, Thomas Uthup, Jayantha Jayman, and Michael Cross for their all-rounded and critical support.

Palgrave Macmillan agreed to publish this manuscript and published it, which is also greatly appreciated.

Most of all, I am extremely indebted to one person—Professor Ali Mazrui, the person this book is about, its subject matter, for giving me unlimited access to his life and his life’s work.

I am solely responsible for any errors in this book.

Kyoto, Japan
December 2020

Seifudein Adem

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Seifudein Adem is the intellectual biographer of Professor Ali Mazrui (1933–2014). Adem worked closely with Mazrui when, from 2006 to 2016, he served as the Associate Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies (IGCS) at Binghamton University, New York, USA. Mazrui was the founding Director of IGCS since 1991. Adem traveled with Mazrui extensively, either as his driver or as his health escort, and sometimes they jointly presented papers at conferences. Dr. Adem's close association with Mazrui, particularly in the last ten years of his life, and his full consultation of virtually all that have been written by Mazrui and about him have enabled him to understand Mazrui's thoughts and perspectives. Seifudein Adem currently teaches at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan.

Dr. Adem (left) with Professor Mazrui in San Diego, California, at the ISA annual convention, April 2012

PART I

General Overview



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This book is ambitious and distinctive. It is intended to serve as a useful source of information about Ali Mazrui and his ideas in a manner that is both scholarly and decidedly of human interest. It seeks to tell the Mazrui story in an original way.

The *ambition* is to introduce Mazrui's vast and stimulating scholarship to a wider audience and do so as comprehensively as possible. The first thing to note about Mazrui is that he was a prolific writer. When asked why he wrote, Mazrui (1974: 100) said: '...this tremendous urge to communicate. This is why I write at all, why I write so much, why I write on such varied subjects.' He uttered these words thirty years before he passed away in 2014. All in all, Mazrui had published more than forty books and a large number of essays. In terms of his contribution to intellectual discourse and policy debates, Mazrui had simply no peers in Africa. He wrote with great verve and uncommon flair; he wrote with grace, clarity, and imagination. Apart from why and what he wrote, it was, in fact, how Mazrui wrote which, in no small measure, drew the attention of many of his admirers, giving rise in the process to the phenomenon known as Mazruiphilia.

WHAT IS MAZRUIPHILIA?

Mazruiphilia, as Dunstan Wai (1998: 52) defined the term, is 'the intellectual fascination and personal affection Ali Al'amin Mazrui has inspired in so many, through his personal magnetism, his scholarship, [or] his

intellectual versatility' (also see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 267–275). Many Mazruiphiles are also most knowledgeable about Mazrui's scholarship. I must therefore begin by quoting a few passages from them.

'No political scientist writing today exhibits an equal virtuosity in the handling of ideas and images, connexions and paradoxes, overtones and undertones and implications ... [Mazrui] breathes enthusiasm and excitement into everything he discusses,' wrote Colin Leys (1967: 51). Rupert Emerson (1967: 56–57) observed: 'Nothing pleases Ali Mazrui better than to seize upon an idea, a slogan, an event, and to worry it, toss it up in the air and watch it come spinning down, stand it on its head, turn it inside out, and adroitly dissect it piece by piece. Nor is there anyone who indulges in such sport with greater wit and skill ... [H]is analysis is always enriching as well as entertaining, and often cuts at the heart of the matter.'

Writing at about the same time as Leys and Emerson, Jitendra Mohan (1968: 389–390) also commented: 'Ali Mazrui's flair for the colorful phrase, the striking metaphor, the novel comparisons, the bold hypothesis, the dashing generalization, all give his writing an air of fluency and readability.' Some years later, M. Grieve (1980: 50) noted: 'Mazrui is a superbly lucid and entertaining writer; qualities from which even his demonstrated penchant for the neologism cannot detract. He is an original thinker ...' These observations made by Leys, Emerson, Mohan, and Grieve, among many others, are staggeringly precise. What is more, Mazrui never deviated for the rest of his life from the style of writing and brand of scholarship these scholars had identified in him decades earlier.

But there is additional reason why readers were drawn into Mazrui's works. As Es'kia Mphahlele (2006) put it: 'What lures the reader deeper into the subject [of Ali Mazrui's writings] is the effect of [his] method of exploration. For example, apart from the interest his subject holds, he anticipates the reader's questions, doubts and counter-observations, and so keeps way ahead while at the same time unfolding his own brilliant thinking for us to understand.' What Mphahlele spelled out above, James Mittelman (2014: 164) also seemed to suggest when he described Ali Mazrui as a 'great conceptualizer'. Did Omari Kokole (1998: 12), too, have the same thought in mind when he reminded us about Mazrui's power to 'x-ray' ideas? This, I think, is a defensible interpretation.

Let us hear also from other Mazruiphiles. First from the former US Secretary of State John Kerry (1986) and the current Special Envoy for Climate in the Biden Administration; he said when he was a US Senator in

defense of the showing of Mazrui's TV documentary) that Mazrui: 'provided the American people with an-all-too-rare look at Africa from an African perspective'. In a nationally televised tribute in 1988, Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of Zambia, 'thank[ed] God for giving Africa Ali Mazrui' (Mazrui 1989). Only years after he was freed from prison, Nelson Mandela hence saluted Mazrui as 'an outstanding educationist' (Mazrui 1996). And Kofi Annan described Mazrui as 'Africa's gift to the world' (Mazrui 2001).

Wole Soyinka (2015: 193), the first African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature and Mazrui's erstwhile intellectual adversary, also wrote warmly, after Mazrui's death, about 'the intellectual industry of scholars such as Ali Mazrui'. Soyinka added: 'I already feel his absence, and miss him.' Salim Ahmed Salim, the former Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and Prime Minister of Tanzania, thus remembered Mazrui: 'For many, the very name—Ali Al'amin Mazrui—triggers an intellectual enthusiasm for a deeper insight of the world and an understanding of how its many parts interconnect' (Adem et al. 2016: ix). And Mazrui's longstanding friend and colleague Richard Falk has this to say: '...no one I have known, better exemplifies the human potential to please mind, body, heart, and soul of others than Ali Mazrui' (Adem et al. 2016: 119).

Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa, also wrote shortly after Mazrui died: 'When a great mind like Professor Ali Mazrui passed on, we have to stop and ponder over what we shall do together to fill the immeasurable void that inevitably arises. The starting point is that we, especially our youth, must critically read and re-read everything Ali Mazrui wrote' (Adem et al. 2016: 363). IR scholars Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (2019: 176) have also said: '[Ali Mazrui] may be described as Africa's great conceptual synthesizer and hybridist thinker.'

Of course, Mazrui had many critics, too, as *The New York Times* (October 20, 2014) quickly reminded readers with its eye-catching headline of Mazrui's obituary: 'Ali Mazrui, Scholar of Africa *Who Divided US Audiences*, Dies at 81' (italics added). The three thick volumes, published on 'Ali Mazrui and His Critics', also attest to Mazrui's capacity to effectively engage and educate, as well as provoke (see Alamin Mazrui and Mutunga 2003; Alamin Mazrui and Mutunga 2004; Adem et al. 2013).

ABOUT THE BOOK

Let me now turn to the nature of this book and its structure. The book, which has five parts, ten chapters, and an appendix, is, primarily, an attempt in four parts to introduce Mazrui's multifaceted body of knowledge by letting him speak to the reader, mostly in his own words, but also through the words of those who knew him well. Part II, Chaps. 2, 3, and 4, briefly describes Mazrui's emergence as a scholar and his changing fortunes in IR. The goal is to identify and consider the major factors that shaped Mazrui's approach to the discipline.

Ali Mazrui was seen, and saw himself as playing, among others, the role of a historian of what he called global culture, and his approach to culture was normative. In addition, what an ethical world order should look like and how it could be constructed had been a major preoccupation of him for over half a century.

Mazrui had been compared by some of his colleagues (and by Mazrui himself) with a broad range of historical figures and intellectuals: Ibn Khaldun, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, George Orwell, James Baldwin, the father of Barack Obama, and Barack Obama, among others. Many of these individuals were Mazrui's contemporaries about whom he also wrote; in fact, he deeply admired some of them. That Mazrui was compared with such diverse set of luminaries should not at all be surprising given that he had also been seriously described as 'Multiple Mazrui: Scholar, Ideologue, Philosopher, Artist' (Sawere 1998: 269–289).

In order to gain insights into Mazrui's contribution to IR, it would be more instructive to briefly compare him with two disciplinary icons, E. H. Carr and Susan Strange. Both Carr and Mazrui were gifted-writers who could communicate with a wide range of audiences; they were both capable of transforming abstract theory into more intelligible idea without overly distorting much in the process. Their primary interest also lay in macro-history, the broad and deep changes internationally.

Mazrui was a macro-historian by *design*; he declared quite early on his commitment to 'the study of global trends and their moral implications' (Mazrui 1976: xix). A successful macro-historian, of course, requires not only a mind capable of dissecting his/her subject matter and comprehending complex theories but also the capacity to 'see' things from a long-term perspective. Both in the case of Mazrui and Carr, the macro-historian in them was abundantly clear (Carr 1990: 7–30; Mazrui 1990).

Mazrui and Carr also shared the desire to unmask aspects of the ‘received truth’, either for the sake of knowledge or for transforming or at least influencing the course of events in desirable ways. Carr’s *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* illustrates this proclivity in him quite well, especially as it relates to the ideas of morality and harmony of interest in international relations (Jayman 2018: 151–175). Carr (2001: 62) had also examined what he called ‘the political good’ *vis-à-vis* ‘the moral good’. One of Mazrui’s favorite quotes, which he had used more than any other, was a powerful normative statement from his mentor at Oxford, John Plamenatz: ‘the vices of the strong acquire some of the prestige of strength’ (1976: 7). It encapsulates Mazrui’s approach quite well.

Another intellectual with whom Mazrui shared the inclination to unmask and challenge received truth was Susan Strange. Strange is regarded as the founding mother of the field of international political economy in Britain and a truly outstanding scholar of international relations. Strange and Mazrui showed the courage to take on and challenge orthodoxies even when it was not fashionable or popular to do so (see, e.g., Strange 1982, 1994; Mazrui 1990). They were both iconoclastic analysts and original thinkers; they were also effective communicators.

On a more substantive level, there appears to be an overlap between Susan Strange’s theory of structural power and Mazrui’s concept of structural dependency. In *States and Markets*, Strange (1988: 119) introduced the four structures of power in global political economy: namely the security structure, the production structure, the financial structure, and the knowledge structure. In a manner that seemed to have anticipated Strange’s theory, Mazrui laid down (1985: 181–183) and elaborated (1976: 6–7) the five elements of his concept of structural dependency: production, consumption, currency or liquidity, technology, and (the English) language. The two conceptual formulations are neither alike nor even related. Mazrui’s frame of reference was clearly narrower than Strange’s since he was concerned more with North–South relations or, more specifically, the relationship between the US and the Third World. But it cannot also be denied that there is a degree of convergence between Mazrui and Strange at least in terms of the questions of what the relevant issues were and how they should be formulated. An obvious divergence between Mazrui and Strange is, not surprisingly, that international economic and financial issues were generally outside Mazrui’s area of

intellectual preoccupations. The blind spot of Susan Strange's approach was, also not surprisingly, the minimum role she assigns to cultural forces in world affairs.

In my view, Ali Mazrui was one of the most underexplored IR scholars, and there are many purported reasons for this. There were those who felt that Ali Mazrui was primarily concerned with issues relating to the Third World. But the fact is that Mazrui's writings were not exclusively, or even primarily, about Third World issues although he deliberately focused on points of intersection in the North–South relations. But he was indeed incapable of restricting himself to a narrow field of inquiry, in geographic and disciplinary terms. In its scope, Mazrui's scholarship was unmistakably global. But even if the primary focus of his teaching and research were the Third World, would that become good enough a reason for ignoring its relevance to IR?

Others thought that Mazrui focused too much on domestic or comparative politics rather than on international relations. This was also a less defensible claim, but let us assume for a moment it was true. Review of the history of international relations thought clearly shows that the discipline emerged partly as a result of the cumulative syntheses of the works of political philosophers, works that had almost nothing to do with international relations or inter-state relations in the modern sense of the term. In fact, in some cases, what these philosophers had written about the nature of the relationship among individuals in domestic politics (of a hypothetical society) was later extrapolated to relations among contemporary states.

Still others believed that Mazrui's scholarship encompassed not only international relations and comparative politics but also sociology, sociolinguistics, and literary studies, and that he also extensively wrote about what mainstream discipline considers trivial. To define Mazrui's scholarship in such broad terms is accurate, but to imply that therefore it did not have plenty to offer to IR made much less sense.

But the challenges Mazrui posed to established ways of thinking had undoubtedly contributed to the relative obscurity of his scholarship in IR. Mazrui, too, seemed to be aware of his place in the discipline, or lack thereof, without being bitter about it. As he quipped after he received the 1999 International Studies Association (ISA) Distinguished Scholar Award: 'At the session there were moving tributes from colleagues ... It was more than I deserved. However, the organizers had over-estimated the size of my fan-club in ISA!! So the hall was much larger than the crowd that turned up!!' (Mazrui 2000).

When all is said and done, this much is clear. Mazrui's worldview does not fit neatly into any particular theory. His theoretical contribution to the mainstream discipline is therefore minimum. This has also partly to do with his position on 'theory'. The very notion of an all-encompassing theory is anathema to him. He was generally unconcerned about the lack of consistency between his major propositions and mainstream theories. If so, it is fair to ask: what is it that undergirds his IR scholarship? I provide a tentative answer by reading into his work my own theoretical interpretation in Part III, Chaps. 5, 6, and 7, and making three inter-related claims: (a) Mazrui's scholarship synthesizes elements of postcolonialism and social constructivism, (b) the synthesis can be described as postcolonial constructivism, and (c) postcolonial constructivism is a potentially useful theory for understanding intercultural relations from the perspective of the Global South. The terms 'theory', 'approach', and 'perspective' are used in this book loosely—and interchangeably. And, in using them in this way, I am not also widely diverging from the IR tradition—these labels are sometimes similarly used in the discipline, owing to issues internal and external to IR 'theories' (Burchill and Linklater 2005: 11–12).

In a series of mini-chapters, Parts II and III thus attempt to distill what could be some of the elements of an outline of a theory of postcolonial constructivism out of Mazrui's historical scholarship.

The next two parts of the book, Parts IV and V, are the most important, as they largely present to the reader Mazrui in his own words; they are also less abstract. More specifically, Part IV, Chap. 8, lists Mazrui's paradoxical propositions, his testable observations, which he had often used for highlighting and critically analyzing contradictions in social reality. It is a sketch of generalizations based on deductive logic with a hint of reasoning behind them. But we could also see elsewhere, in Chap. 10 for instance, an inductive mind at work. This probably means that a deductive and inductive interpretation of Mazrui's intellectual outputs is possible, implying a unity that overcomes the rigid, conventional division between the two. (This point is expounded in Chap. 7.) The collection presented in Chap. 8, I think I can say, is therefore more than powerfully insightful comparative antitheses, as important as they are; they also suggest a methodology that informs a worldview.

Chapter 9 introduces Mazrui's analytical categories, his neologisms, and the context in which they were articulated or should be understood. Many of these are terms which Mazrui coined to, in the words of Dunstan Wai (1998: 39), 'break the molds of ossified thinking'. Occasionally,

Mazrui also combined common words in a cleverly uncommon way. Sometimes, the originality of the words thus lies in how they are defined or in the distinction being made rather than in the words themselves. But Mazrui did not merely bequeath to us a large number of such concepts. Many of them are parts of what he called perceptive typologies, used, as amply demonstrated in the chapter, for making complex phenomena more comprehensible. In other words, Mazrui's neologisms and oxymoronic combinations that are formed by derivation, by compounding, by invention (coinage), or by blending or amalgamation, play a significant role in simplifying and clarifying representations that are ordinarily expressed in other texts, when they are, only by phrases or clausal descriptions. Mazrui's conceptual categories are not just new words or common words combined in a new way, but they are the encapsulation of newly formulated ideas. They are ideas in words.

Ali Mazrui had been criticized for not pausing to reflect on many of his generalizations and for reaching stimulating conclusions based on inadequate evidence. As Chaly Sawere (1998: 272) put it: 'Scattered in [Ali Mazrui's] works are some of the most brilliant ideas to have come out of Africa in the twentieth century; but the author has neglected his own mental "children" because of his compulsion to procreate more and more.' This is certainly true. Mazrui did indeed feel comfortable, as circumstances dictate, with swiftly changing the direction of his intellectual gaze.

However, if it had not been for Mazrui's quickly shifting focus, he could not have left us a 'supermarket of ideas', literally, including the large set of his stimulating paradoxes and his conceptually rich, analytical categories, systematically assembled in the two mega-chapters of this book, Chaps. 8 and 9. Mazrui seemed to be challenging us to test and verify them. Indeed, they are worth testing and verifying from a variety of disciplinary angles, not least because many of them speak to some of the burning issues of our own time, and others may even become durable, as they deal with the interactions among different cultures and societies.

The materials in Part IV are culled from Mazrui's published and unpublished writings (including his books, articles, conference papers, and lecture notes), from his documentaries, from his media interviews, and from his class lectures of the entire semester at Binghamton University, which I personally recorded in the fall of 2011.

The first criterion I used for including the paradoxes and concepts in this book is linked to their potential utility as the building blocks of the

theory of postcolonial constructivism or as the foundation for a deeper understanding of intercultural relations from a perspective of the Global South. Secondly, they must arise out of Mazrui's paradigm. And, finally, the selection should, in my view, help the reader to get a glimpse of the richness of Mazrui's vast intellectual outputs.

Part V, Chap. 10, chronicles different aspects of Mazrui's life and scholarship on the basis of his own subjective judgment and the judgment of those who knew him. The chapter mainly records some of the individuals, including historical figures and dignitaries, Mazrui had met and interacted with, in some cases for an extended period of time, as well as what he had to say about (his interactions with) them.

Let me say now a few words about the sources used in preparing Chap. 10. Mazrui loved not only to write, and write about fairly everything, but he was also good at keeping the record of what, as he would put it, occurred to his mind, his being. The sources utilized for Chap. 10 are therefore mainly Mazrui's own newsletters and his other publications and a portion of the large collection of published and unpublished materials he gave to me in February 2012—with copies, too, to some of his sons and relatives. I only wish I could include excerpts from the nicest things Mazrui had to say about some of his long-time personal friends and professional acquaintances. I do hope that in the not too distant future, Mazrui's correspondence with African heads of state and government, some deceased and others still alive, will also see the light of day. In any case, after reading Chap. 10, the reader may rightly conclude that in terms of the number of historical figures he had encountered, Mazrui could easily be described as Africa's *Forrest Gump*.

On Ali Mazrui and his intellectualism, many analytical and celebratory books have been published, and deservedly so, both before and after he died. Those published after he died alone include Mazrui and Kaba (2016), Mazrui and Wiafe-Amoako (2016), Njogu and Adem (2017), Wachanga (2017), Adem, Adibe, Bangura and Bemath (2016), Adem and Njogu (2018a), Adem and Njogu (2018b), and Bemath (2019) which, incidentally, is the sequel to Bemath (1998) and Bemath (2005). Upon further reflection, however, one inadvertent omission in these publications struck me—the omission of Mazrui's record as a trailblazer. The Appendix takes a modest step to fill this gap, drawing partly on the details supplied by Mazrui himself in 2013, but verified, edited, expanded, and updated by me. The Appendix attempts to demonstrate that Mazrui was able to embark on a great and successful career globally, that he was a

leader in pursuit of excellence, and that he was, quite simply, a trailblazer. The Mazrui story becomes all the more inspirational when we realize that he had faced and overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges early on (see Chap. 2).

Now about the *distinctiveness* of this book: the book is distinct in the sense, firstly, that it reflects Mazrui's approach and the structure of his analytical exposition. Like Mazrui's own body of work, this book is caught up between the formal theory and the causal observation; the abstract philosophy and the concrete statements; the personal stories and the seemingly detached analysis. Some of Mazrui's deeply insightful observations are found as much in his personal newsletters as in his academic writings.

The book is distinct, secondly, because of what it does not include. Sources and references for further reading, especially in Part IV, are not included. There is little doubt that the book would have become further enriched, and more enriching, if I was able to provide additional information in this regard. The effort to do so was nevertheless constrained by how this manuscript came into being, as a product of notes taken at different places over a long period of time, more than twenty years depending on how it is counted. Different portions of the book were never intended initially for publication and for sharing with others. At first, it never occurred to me, for instance, that one day I would meet the inventor of the concepts I had been collecting and work with him for nearly a decade, exponentially growing my inventory as the result. What came out of my sustained effort is therefore a book that is distinct in this sense as well. It could even turn out to be innovative, and if so, it should be only fitting that the book is about someone who can easily be described as one of postcolonial Africa's most innovative scholars.

The lack of detailed footnotes in a portion of the book is, it can be said, also a blessing in disguise, for it has enabled me to cast my net wider, and flexibly, ensuring in the process that there will be something in the book for a wide range of readership. An added advantage has been the possibility this opened for showing, without much distraction to the reader, Mazrui's gift of elegant intelligibility—the accessibility of his language and style to the wider intellectual community, and not just to academics. The somewhat open-ended style of the book has also enabled the presentation of Mazrui's witticism amply, but in short digestible forms that are suitable both for browsing and for reference. In its totality, this is, in fact, where the *ambition* of the book—reaching a wider audience—can be fulfilled by its *distinctiveness*.

In the spirit of Mazruiphilia, finally, I wish to hope that the publication of this book would inspire a more systematic examination of MAZRUIANA—the large body of knowledge Ali Mazrui had passed on to us.

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PART II

Ali Mazrui and the Study of
International Relations (IR)



CHAPTER 2

The Birth of a Scholar

Ali Mazrui was born in 1933 in Mombasa, Kenya. He came to the world of scholarship with a whimper rather than a bang. He almost failed the Cambridge High School Certificate Examination in 1949, as he earned a third class, with straight C's in the subjects he took: English Language, History, Geography, and Swahili. He was disappointed to learn that his grade was not good enough for admission to the Makerere College in Uganda. But he never gave up. For more than five years, he relentlessly sought to find other opportunities (Mazrui 1989: 471–475; Sawere 1998: 270–271). And, finally, the British colonial officers in Kenya at the time, Governor Philip Mitchell specifically, discovered by accident that Mazrui had more potential than the result of the examination suggested and sent him in 1955 to Huddersfield, Britain, to complete high school (*The New York Times*, October 20, 2014). Thus began Mazrui's long and eventful intellectual journey—in which he was not only about to excel in his field against all odds but was even about to lead the way (see also Appendix).

MANCHESTER, COLUMBIA, AND OXFORD (1957–1963)

Ali Mazrui was admitted to the University of Manchester in 1957 and received a BA degree, with Distinction, in 1960. He was also awarded the Elizabeth Wegner Prize (1958) and the Fleure Prize (1960). The courses

Mazrui took at the University of Manchester were English, Ancient History-Arabia, Philosophy-Logic, Arabic, Political Institutions, Political Philosophy, Modern Political Thought, Government, Ethics, and Political theory and Political Practice in Britain. Mazrui seemed determined not to repeat his near-disastrous high school performance of 1948–1949. Apart from his early education in Kenya, Mazrui was therefore partly educated at the center of what used to be the largest colonial empire in human history—the British Empire.

For his second degree, Mazrui proceeded to what he did not realize at the time was also a country on its way toward becoming a superpower in historical scale, the US. When he was contemplating pursuing further studies in the US, he applied to two American institutions—Columbia University and the University of Chicago. Mazrui was offered admission to both universities in 1960, with full financial support. The Columbia offer was more generous because of the involvement of the Rockefeller Foundation in Mazrui's support. But what influenced Mazrui the most to turn down Chicago in favour of Columbia was the proximity of the UN Headquarters to Columbia at a time when more and more African countries were becoming UN members for the first time. Mazrui defended his MA thesis titled 'The Congo: Capacity for Self-Government and Some Problems of Legitimacy' and completed his studies for the MA degree at Columbia in June 1961—in just nine months! The courses Mazrui took at Columbia were International Social Forces, Comparative Politics, Political Institutions of the Near and Middle East, Contemporary Political and Administrative Developments in Africa, Basic Factors in World Politics, the Legitimation of Power and Privilege, Social Change in Underdeveloped Countries, and Political and Social Theory in the Context of European Institutions.

In 1961, Mazrui went to Oxford University for his doctoral degree. Among his academic advisors at Oxford University were John Plamenatz, one of the leading philosophers in England, and Dame Margery Perham, one of the leading Africanist historians and the biographer of Lord Lugard, the colonial Governor of Nigeria. There was no rank order for doctoral graduates from Oxford University, which is comparable, for instance, to similar graduates from American universities. It is thus difficult to compare Mazrui's performance at Oxford in more objective and evidential terms. Mazrui's overall performance among doctoral graduates in the year

of his graduation is therefore less obvious. But there is another way of evaluating Mazrui's years at Oxford which would make his achievement even more remarkable.

Ali Mazrui published during his years at Oxford in top professional journals of political science managed and run by professional social scientists, often of long experience and high distinction. During his Oxford years as a student (1961–1963), Mazrui published an article in the *American Political Science Review* (1963a: 88–97), the most prestigious and most competitive political science journal in the US; in *Political Studies* (1963b: 36–55), the most prestigious political science journal in Britain and in the British Commonwealth; and in *International Affairs* (1963c: 24–36), the highly regarded foreign policy journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London, UK. Also as a graduate student at Oxford, Mazrui published an article in a journal based at the time at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor—*Comparative Studies in Society and History*. It is clear that Mazrui had outperformed his student peers in his school in his particular area of endeavour.

Two additional areas of accomplishment by Mazrui occurred during his years as a student at Oxford. *The Times* of London was, in the 1960s, one of the most prestigious and influential newspapers in the entire English-speaking world. And getting a full-scale op-ed article published in *The Times* was the dream of many members of the British cultural, political, and intellectual elite. In 1963, Mazrui succeeded in getting an op-ed article published in *The Times*.

And the BBC in the 1960s had a celebrated elite radio channel called *The Third Programme*. It was the sort of channel which broadcast Shakespearean plays, discussions about Beethoven and Mozart, and intellectual debates about public policy or philosophical issues. *The Third Programme* invited Oxford student Ali Mazrui to deliver two radio lectures about whether the emerging independence of Africa constituted 'the end of Africa's innocence'. Those two lectures had long-term positive consequences for Mazrui's relationship with the BBC.

Mazrui's involvement with the BBC's international program (world service) also began during his Oxford years. As Mazrui (1980: vii–ix) related the story, 'My girl-friend lived in London. Unknowingly, the BBC

kept the “betrothal” warm by paying for my transportation to London once or twice every week. The Corporation invited me to give a virtually regular news commentary in both English and Swahili on the BBC African Service. The commuting between Oxford and London on BBC business constitutes part of the background to my subsequent marriage to Molly [Vickerman].’

THE MAKERERE YEARS (1963–1973)

The same Makerere College, later named Makerere University, in Uganda, that refused to admit Ali Mazrui as a student appointed him full professor in 1965. This took place within less than two years after he was appointed lecturer and before he had completed his doctorate at Oxford. Such a rate of promotion had never happened before at Makerere, but, as indicated above, by 1965 Mazrui had already published in some of the most competitive and most prestigious peer-review journals in the field of political science. By a committee headed by the Chief Executive of Makerere University (Y. K. Lule, who later became Uganda’s Head of State), Ali Mazrui was thus made full professor without ever having to pass through the intermediate stages of senior lecturer, reader, or associate professor.

After his professorial promotion in 1965, Mazrui was given a year and a half leave, partly to be spent at the University of Chicago’s Department of Political Science, teaching a joint course with Professor Aristide Zolberg. This was Mazrui’s first appointment as a professor at an American university. Among the political science stars who were at the University of Chicago at the time were Hans Morgenthau, author of the highly influential book *Politics Among Nations* (1962), and David Easton, a towering empirical political theorist at the time. Mazrui spent many hours with them as well as with Zolberg. It was also in 1965 that Mazrui moved for a year from a teaching visiting professorship at the University of Chicago to a research visiting appointment at Harvard University.

In 1966, Mazrui defended his doctoral thesis at Oxford, and as destiny would have it, the thesis was later published by University of Chicago Press (Mazrui 1967).

Of all Mazrui’s early publications, I think, it was ‘On the Concept of “We are All Africans”,’ the article that was published in the *American*