

'Recolonisation' or 'Self-colonisation' in Pursuit of 'Pax Africana': Another Response to a Reactionary Thesis*

I wish to thank Ali A. Mazrui, Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies and Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities, State University of New York at Binghamton, Albert Luthuli Professor-at-large, University of Jos, Nigeria, and Senior Scholar and Andrew D. White Professor-at-large *Emeritus*, Cornell University, Ithaca, for having refused to descend to certain depths of unprofessionalism even under provocation. If that had been my crime in the initial response, I wish to assure him that his magnanimity and professional propriety will not go unappreciated. Secondly, I would like him to note that, if I had treated him graciously before, it was not because I ever shared his views. It was because we are who we are and this will not cease. However, if we live in a divided house, it is in the best interests of the community that this be known. It is in this context that I am prepared to cross swords with Ali Mazrui. If in the process real blood is drawn, it might be overdue sacrifice to the African gods or an invitation to young African warriors.

Indeed, this is a very good time for clarifying intellectual and political standpoints among African scholars for it is not only a period of deconstruction of old models and structures but also of increasing popular pressures of reconstruction and independent styles of thinking. Therefore, 'leading' African scholars can ill-afford to fudge issues that arise from their own intellectual praxis. I believe that Ali Mazrui did not answer the questions which pertained to his article in the *Herald Tribune*. These may be summarised as follows:

a) Although in this rejoinder he repeatedly refers to 'self-colonisation', in the text in question he suggested a 'once unthinkable solution: recolonisation'. This was not a slip of the tongue or lapse of memory because in the same text he unambiguously recommended 'external recolonisation under the ban-

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ner of humanitarianism'. To be sure, he advocated an international trustees system whose members could be drawn 'from Africa or Asia, as well as from the rest of the United Nations membership'. He surmised that this way the 'white man's burden would, in a sense become humanity's shared burden'. This cannot be construed as 'self-colonisation', as he is at pains to prove in this rejoinder. In the event he has clear choice to withdraw the statement or to accept its connotations. If he chooses the latter, then he has an obligation to say on whose behalf he is speaking. This is particularly so that he was one of the participants at the Seventh Pan-Africanist Congress in Kampala in April, 1994, where the guiding slogan as is reflected in the final declaration was: 'Resist Recolonisation: Organise Don't Agonise'. Secondly, if Ali Mazrui's ideas about recolonisation are so well-known to African audiences, why did his article send such shock waves in many quarters in Africa?

b) The second issue which followed immediately after the first was whether a UN-like trusteeship system for Africa would be able to do what the OAU and regional organisations such as ECOWAS and SADC (contrary to Mazrui's false charge, I was not concerned with the UN proper) could not do. If the latter were the case, then it had to be explained before any presuppositions could be made about the necessity or efficacy of 'recolonisation' of Africa. At issue was the political and ideological implications of such

a suggestion at this juncture in African history. Personally, I could not credit such a reactionary stance from any African scholar whether 'at-large' or in-house. Closely related to this was the question of whether colonisation of any sort could be benign, given the element of imposition at a time when African peoples are rebelling precisely against this. One is mindful of the fact that in the text Ali Mazrui used 'recolonisation' and 'self-colonisation' interchangeably. In this I found a certain sloppiness and flippancy which I do not associate with serious scholarship. 'Self-colonisation' is a contradiction in terms and is contrary to 'self-liberation' which is what the current struggles for democracy on the continent would signify.

c) The third question was whether there was a political *raison d'être* for sub-imperialist powers in Africa to presume that they could take charge of the affairs of their weaker or 'chaotic' neighbours. In our view this would be a condonation of that which we seek to terminate, namely, domination and coercion by bigger powers. It would also militate against democratic regional integration. Leadership is not imposed but attained. Hence, the question posed to Ali Mazrui was how does he reconcile the notion of 'colonisation' with the principle of regional integration? If it were not the question of 'might is right', what would be the moral, ideo-political grounds for casting in a leadership role countries such as Nigeria, Zaire, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Egypt (Mazrui's pivotal states)? What is it that they offer as a solution in the current crisis in Africa, seeing that they themselves have not resolved the national question under their own sovereignty? Is it not the case that Ali Mazrui is in fact reproducing the ideology of the Great Powers? If this is the product of

Ali Mazrui's life-long work, call it 'recolonisation' or 'self-colonisation', then there might be no value in reading all his books. Secondly, if it is a measure of his African scholarship, then it remains my conviction that we could do better than this and that probably we have already done so, especially under the sponsorship of CODESRIA.

- d) The final point raised had to do with the idea of African nationalism in the 1960s and 1990s, as is seen by a scholar like Ali Mazrui. According to him, much of Africa is in a state of 'decay and decomposition'. This is so much so that 'even the degree of dependent modernisation achieved under colonial rule is being reversed'. (If Mazrui did not know, this is precisely what the term, 'crisis of accumulation', refers to in the circumstances it cannot help being 'weary'). He observes that: 'The successive collapse of the state in one African country after another during the 1990s suggests a once unthinkable solution: recolonisation'. The movement of the 1950s and 1960s in Africa was described as 'anti-colonial' or as 'African nationalism'. If all this seems to have evaporated in the 1990s, what are we left with? What was the significance of the 7th Pan-Africanist Congress in Kampala in 1994, which Ali Mazrui apparently attended. According to the conference papers sent to me the spirit and the mood in Kampala was decidedly at variance with Ali Mazrui's projections. Disillusionment with the post-independence states in Africa has not led to a feeling of helplessness but rather has generated a new spirit of Pan-Africanism and cultural nationalism reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s. The issue, therefore, is whether these political impulses are compatible with the notion of 'recolonisation'.

The Role of African Intellectuals

I have never been comfortable with this expression because it assumes too much. The reason is that it is not so much the role which is expected of African intellectuals than the role which African intellectuals choose for themselves that makes the difference. Here, the interaction between ideology and scientific endeavour; and between intellectual praxis and personal vicissitudes makes it very difficult to prescribe any single ethical system for intellectual behaviour. This has been hotly

debated in the CODESRIA and AAPS symposia, without any clear resolution. Nevertheless, the effect it has had is to set minimal ideological, psychological, and political standards for African intellectuals. This has created a climate in which intellectual representations by African scholars can be judged as authentic or unauthentic. This is the issue between me and Ali Mazrui and it was the same in Kampala in 1991.

In my response to Ali Mazrui's article in the *Herald Tribune* I charged that his intellectual representations, as an African, were neither leading nor authentic. They were, I contended, addressed to the 'other'. In his rejoinder Mazrui denied this absolutely. His rebuttal took various forms, which I will take in their order of importance. First, he argued that if I had read all his books (which I did not for good reasons), I would have known that for him 'recolonisation' is synonymous with 'self-colonisation' which is the essence of his life-long trajectory on Pax-Africana. This is an inadmissible conflation and is certainly not a mark of great scholarship and scientific rigour. Historically understood, the independence movement in Africa was an explicit rejection of colonialism. In the wake of disillusionment with post-independence governments in Africa, popular representations make no reference to colonisation but rather to deconstruction of hegemonic structures and realisation of 'democratic pluralism'.

In an attempt to refute my assertion that his intellectual representations are unauthentic, Mazrui refers me to many African fora in which he had the occasion to present his 'self-colonisation' alternative. According to him, the 'geographical sequence of [his] representations' took him from Kampala in April, 1994 to Cairo in May 1994, and to Addis Ababa (no date mentioned). What is interesting is that most of this is at the invitation of the same leaders who, according to his confession, are responsible for the African collapse. In South Africa, where he got the dateline for the article at issue, he had been invited to listen to Bishop Tutu, to extend his personal felicitations to President Mandela and ultimately to attend a conference on 'Islam and Civil Society in South Africa'. It is not clear who invited him but the accent is unmistakably on powers that be. This is in contrast to what happened at the Seventh Pan-Africanist Congress in Kampala where he refers

merely to the fact that his paper was distributed. Did they or did they not put him on a pedestal in Kampala? Did the Western media, as represented by *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate*, and the *International Herald Tribune*, take as much interest in the Pan-Africanist declarations in Kampala as they did in his 'geographical representations'? If not, why not?

The platforms on which one speaks are not unimportant. In Ali Mazrui's case this is best illustrated by the Western reaction to his Reith Lectures and the BBC series on *The Africans*. My comment regarding these was more on the platform rather than their content. It is not that Mazrui missed the point than that he was too anxious to prove that his representations are not in the service of imperialism. In the event he confirmed what he sought to disprove. Not unnaturally, his sponsors expected him to make affirmations on behalf of imperial history and interests. When he failed to come up to their expectations, they denounced his representations both in England and in the United States. Given that kind of invitation or platform, why should the imperial reaction be so surprising. Like Dr. Faustus, Mazrui had sold his soul to the devil for immediate glory. For that matter, it is mischievous and misleading for Ali Mazrui to compare his intellectual praxis to that of Edward Said. Edward Said's intellectual representations are consistently anti-colonial and anti-imperialism. This has over the years determined the platforms to which he is invited in the west and in Palestine. Secondly, while he is prepared to talk to Mazrui, he has made it known that he profoundly disagrees with his epistemology of colonialism.

There is a name for the attempt by anybody to have the best of both worlds. Ali Mazrui's theory of 'counter-penetration' gives him an excuse for betting on the strong at all times whether it be in the West or in Africa. It is hard to imagine how anyone could hobnob with the oppressors for the benefit of the oppressed. It is the same regimes or neo-colonial organisations that are objects of popular resistance in Africa which invite Ali Mazrui to indulge in his usual mystification to their great delight. He is happy to refer to the dictator Idi Amin but will not answer the specific question as to whether or not he lent support to Idi Amin before he decided to flee the country. It is also curi-

ous that he proffers the role played by Tanzanian forces in Uganda as a vindication of his advocacy of 'self-colonisation'. Little does he know that the Executive Committee of TANU had consistently opposed such a policy. It was only after Amin's forces had crossed the Tanzanian border and attacked some villages that an attack on Uganda could be justified. It is true that President Nyerere saw Amin as a dangerous usurper and wanted his ally, Milton Obote, reinstated. Whether this was a felicitous thing or not, it became a source of great controversy among East Africans. Nonetheless, from Mazrui's perspective Tanzania gets a plus.

Yet, when we gave intellectual and political support to Tanzania after the Arusha Declaration, Ali Mazrui saw us as suffering from a terrible disease he called 'Tanzaphilia'. Or is this again a contrast between oral history and scholarly amnesia? The fact of the matter is that he was ideologically opposed to the Arusha Declaration and the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The latter is clearly reflected in his denunciatory statement that: 'Julius K. Nyerere of Tanganyika signed an agreement with Zanzibari dictator Abeid Karume – the same way British empire-builders used to get African Chiefs to affirm the equivalent of the 1900 Uganda Agreement for so-called British protection'. The analogy is outrageous and the characterization of the agreement a good illustration of Mazrui's superficiality and journalistic predisposition. The union was an agreement between the revolutionary party in Zanzibar (including such prominent figures as Babu) and progressive nationalists in TANU for mutual benefit. Mazrui partially grants this for he states that: 'Zanzibar was in disarray following the revolution of January 1964. The union with Tanganyika provided Zanzibar with a form of pacification'. But then he makes a volte-face and declares that: 'Although the terms of the union were generous to Zanzibar, it was nevertheless a case of inter-African colonization'. This makes nonsense of the term 'colonisation' and contradicts Ali Mazrui's self-declared aspiration for the continent.

Concerning the actually existing crisis of accumulation in Africa, all I wanted to say,

'Mazrui's epigram' notwithstanding, is that the supposition that the capitalist mode of accumulation could be combined with a socialist mode of social redistribution might be difficult to sustain. Not only is it a contradiction in terms but also, as is shown by the experience of modern welfare states such as the Scandinavian countries and Holland, this presupposes that there would be a continued surplus to guarantee social distribution. Yet, under conditions of an actual or threatened crisis of accumulation capital seeks to guarantee the conditions for its own reproduction by putting a stop on 'waste of money' on social services and even on foreign aid. This is what underlies the policies of the Christian Democrats in Europe, the Conservatives in Britain, and the Republicans in the US. Therefore, Ali Mazrui's 'epigram' is of no avail. But the debate centring on it goes back to the days of the Second International and the emergence of socialist reformism in the hands of Bernstein and Kautsky within SPD in Germany.

However, this has nothing to do with what is happening in countries such as China, Vietnam, and Cuba. Apart from the intensified pressure on remaining socialist economies since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is not true that commodity relations did not exist within these economies and between them and capitalist economies. In the case of Cuba she did not choose not to engage in trade with her neighbours. Rather she was and still is a victim of trade embargo on her by the United States. The dichotomy between 'planned economies' and 'market economies', which Ali Mazrui seems to take at face value, was not a creation of the socialist countries. As far as they were concerned, the issue was how to reconcile between 'blind' market forces and the need to *rationaly* plan the economy so as to guarantee social equity.

This problem is not peculiar to socialist economies. The various interventions in the economy by African states, which the World Bank so strongly opposes, were meant to contend with the same basic problem. Whether or not the result was positive in all cases is not the issue. What is at issue is how to maximise economic

efficiency and equity at the same time. The same issue is implicit in Keynesian economics in the aftermath of the Great Depression in the West. These are major issues which cannot be comprehended by resorting to nonconcepts such as 'market Marxism' (whatever that may be), instead of 'crisis of accumulation' and the 'problem of equity' under the present international economic order. If indeed Ali Mazrui admires Samir Amin, then familiarity with his work on this particular subject might prove a useful antidote to his supra-structural illusions.

Finally, the reference to intellectual tourism might have nothing to do with exile but with the extent to which one's intellectual representations are rooted in African reality and not on impressions gained from ethereal visits. As somebody who is preoccupied with the question of the indigenisation of the social sciences in Africa, I can afford to make this remark. Also, I should like Ali Mazrui to know that my intellectual exile ceased since I went to Tanzania in 1969 and that within Africa there is no exile for me. This has been the case since 1976. At times it has been hard and painful. Yet, it has been the source of my intellectual emancipation. I judge the authenticity of my representations not by what any organisation or commentator abroad might think or say but by communion with similarly placed African scholars. I feel accountable and, therefore, I cannot with impunity speak on behalf of the 'other'. I might be consumed by envy but certainly I am not in competition with Ali Mazrui simply because we are not looking for the same thing. But then he should not make excuses for himself by referring to such things as job opportunities. He did not have to be Albert Luthuli Professor at-large at Jos University. He could have become Professor in-residence, if he so wished. Anybody can guess why that would not be so attractive for him. Is it not high time that Ali Mazrui stopped prevaricating and came to terms with himself? His intellectual representations betray his African claims, I still maintain and I am not the only one.