The Beast and the Icon: No End to Ali Mazrui's *Pax Africana* Muddles*

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Prelude

'Vitriolic and abusive' as I might have been in my last exchange with Ali Mazrui; by pretending that he did otherwise he only succeeds in confirming one of my charges against him. Not only did he respond in kind but also went so far as to enlist the services of some Kenyan journalists to spread scurrilous propaganda against me. This was acknowledged by such scholars as Peter Anyang' Nyong' o and Andre Mangu who are not necessarily hostile to him, if not in agreement. So, instead of entertaining any hypocritical remarks in a world where virtue is the gift of a few, I propose simply to get on with the fables of *Pax Africana* as propounded by him. Even ' vitriolic' debates seem to have their uses for it transpires from Mazrui' s latest pronouncements that his sense of African nationalism has got enhanced ever since. It is also possible that they revived his faith in ' pan-Africanism' which he found difficult to ' credit' after his experience in the 7th Pan-African congress in Kampala in 1994, as was shown by his disparaging remarks about my attaching any significance to such events (see *CODESRIA Bulletin*, no. 3, 1995).

'Self-Colonisation' Revisited

In our last encounter Ali Mazrui accused me of ' changing like chameleon when it suits me' and of being ' a little confused' about his use of the terms, ' recolonisation' and ' self-colonisation' . Without justifying myself or attempting to address the question of whether or not he himself was chameleon-like and rather confusing (not confused), it is noticeable that there is a significant shift in his presentation between now and then. In spite of the fact that in previous polemics he made a special pleading concerning his use of the term ' recolonisation' to include ' self-colonisation' , this time the accent is on ' self-colonisation to the exclusion of participation by non-Africans whether they be invited trustees or the United Nations. Whether this is an unintended *volte face* on Ali Mazrui' s part or not, this time he assures us that only ' an Afrocentric accountability would save *Pax Africana* from being a mere extension' of external agents. Although in this context Mazrui had argued that ' self-colonisation' could become part of *Pax Africana*. It would appear then that here we are witnessing a chameleon-like change in shades of meaning from ' recolonisation' through ' self-colonisation' to ' *Pax Africana*'. What remains incomprehensible though to lesser minds like me, as Mazrui has insinuated, is the persistent association of *Pax Africana* with ' colonisation' of any sort. Why is the prospect of regional sub-imperialism any more justifiable morally and politically than imperialism from elsewhere? Is the former part of Ali Mazrui' s Pan-Africanist sensibilities? In conformity with the dubious distinction he seeks to make and with a certain amount of nationalistic fervour he declares:

> I personally would rather see a military regime like that of Nigeria defending democracy in Sierra Leone, than see a democracy like that of France or the United States propping up military dictatorships in Less Developed Countries (p. 15).

What a Choice! Or is it Ideological Schizophrenia?

After aborting democratic elections in its own country, trampling on the democratic and human rights of its own citizens, and murdering its opponents with impunity, what moral/political justification has the Nigerian military dictatorship to defend in Sierra Leone what it ruthlessly denies at home? Secondly, is it entitled to usurp the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) at will? It is a question of might is right, and then what would be the logical grounds for denying France or the USA the right to invoke the same immoral principle? It is apparent that Ali Mazrui' s perverse African nationalism could only lead to a moral and political abyss. The disturbing thing is that it is consistent with his macabre idea of five ' pivotal states' in Africa which he shares with the State Department, without going into its political ethics and the question of democratic rights of small states within ever-increasing processes of regional and global integration. There is a big difference between Mandela' s and Abacha' s intervention in African politics. The question of on what basis and how any intervention is implemented is of cardinal importance.

Pax Africana Misconceived

As is shown by his opening remarks in the article under review, Ali Mazrui suffers from grand illusions. Not only does he believe that ' *Pax Africana'* exists because he authored it but also imagines like Apollo in the Oracle of Delphi that history can turn at his beckoning. Secondly, most of the time he labours under very serious methodological misconceptions such as treating analogies and metaphors as a valid method of social scientific or historical analysis. For instance, the historical analogy he uses between the Bay of Pigs and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) campaign against the regime in Kigali is not sustainable structurally and substantively. It is merely a flamboyant way of talking and, as I have alleged before, gives Mazrui' s writings an air of superficiality. It would be absurd for Ali Mazrui to postulate that the RPF was a counter-revolutionary force in the service of an imperialist master by name of Yoweri Museveni. It would also make nonsense (which probably it is anyway, as will be shown) of his claim that the RPF campaign, aided by Uganda, was ' an impressive case of *Pax Africana'*.

Likewise, while very appealing, the ' paper monkey' metaphor does not explain anything. The fact of the matter is that the Zairian army had been for a very long time a national army only on paper. Not only was it demoralised because of very poor service conditions (including unpaid salaries for months) but also was experiencing high rates of disaffection from Mobutu' s regime like the rest of the oppressed masses in the country. Consequently, as an army, it had no cause to fight for but to back various favoured

political leaders. On the other hand, while the Banyamulenge1 who were being used as scapegoats by the tottering Mobutu' s regime had a genuine cause, their military campaign fitted too well in what was being orchestrated by Museveni and Kagame for them to be portrayed as ' little tigers' . The movement against Mobutu was not only national but was also regional and trans-ethnic, as Mazrui acknowledges. In the event Kabila' s so-called ' *rendez-vous* with history' could only have been with him as a hyena, a scavenger trailing an army of unknown identity. All this has unsavoury implications for Mazrui' s vaunted *Pax Africana*.

So far, neither Museveni' s domino game nor the RPF' s enlightened militarism has brought about peace in the affected areas. Regarding Rwanda, Ali Mazrui boldly states that: ' The aim of the Rwanda Patriotic Front from Uganda was not countergenocide but conquest and control' . Even so, it is fair to acknowledge that expediency dictated that they stop the large-scale massacres by the Interahamwe (government-sponsored militias). What casts doubt on their *Pax Rwandaise* is that hardly had they pacified the country before their own enlightened militarism degenerated into mass murders in the refugee camps and roaming death squads. By the time they had joined the war against Mobutu' s regime they had become indistinguishable from ordinary mercenaries and got embroiled in mercenary-like atrocities in eastern Zaire where mass graves were one of the results and later came to hang like an albatross around self-declared President Laurent Kabila' s neck and who as a consequence had to play hide and seek with the proposed UN Commission of Enquiry. Could it be that our hero came to power with his hands dripping with blood? Is it conceivable that Ali Mazrui' s *Pax Africana* heroes, Museveni and Kagame were actually angels of death who brought neither peace nor democracy in the region? This question cannot be answered by reference to the overthrow of Mobutu with their covert help because that was predetermined by long-standing and intensifying political and social struggles in former Zaire. Mobutu was on his last leg in every sense of the word. It is a matter of logic pace Ali Mazrui that there cannot be *Pax Africana*, without peace. ' Good' intentions, without good deeds are a dead loss.

Democracy: Key to Genuine *Pax Africana*

Ali Mazrui' s concept of *Pax Africana* is necessarily undemocratic and reactionary. It refers neither to democracy as a *sine qua non* for peace nor to equality as a necessary condition for political cooperation among nations. Instead of being people-centred, it is premised on state-power (the bigger, the better) and verges on militarism. It grants the criminal military regime in Nigeria the right to impose its dictatorial will on weaker Sierra Leone. It celebrates militaristic ' little tigers' such as the Rwanda Patriotic Front for dispatching to hell ' paper monkeys' such as the Zairian army while trampling on citizens' democratic and human rights both in the camps and in former Zaire. Museveni, the ' fox' , whose regime undemocratically expelled Ugandan citizens of Rwandese origin2 (notwithstanding the fact that some of them were his erstwhile comrades-in-arms) and thus callously obliging them to join the forced march to Rwanda, also emerges as a shining symbol of *Pax Africana*. Yet, as the saying goes, charity begins at home. It is indeed extremely unrealistic to suppose that there can be peace in Africa, without democracy. By ' democracy' is not meant merely formal individual rights but, above all, collective social responsibility.

It transpires, therefore, that *Pax Africana* cannot be a matter of individual governments or conspiring presidents deciding unilaterally what is good for their neighbours. It must be a collective responsibility including citizens and based on a well-defined code of conduct. Regional organisations such as ECOMOG and the planned Blue Eagle in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region should not be seen as a ' potential arm of Pax Africana' *à la* Mazrui but as prototypes for peace-keeping in Africa. It is worth noting that, besides lack of an established code of conduct and advance training in peace-keeping. ECOMOG faulted in Liberia partly because of authoritarianism of the Nigerian contingent. Militarisation of national politics in Africa predispose peace-keeping forces towards making war instead of peace in troubled countries. This is one of the reasons why demilitarisation in Africa should be looked upon as an essential part of the democratisation process. African armies are not known to fight external enemies but their own civilian populations, which is an absolute negation of democracy and ultimate violation of citizenship rights. For this destructive role, African armies are generally accorded budget allocations which exceed those of the ministries of education and health combined in their respective countries. Insofar as African armies have never been tested in battle fighting a real enemy in defence of their citizens (except Egypt and perhaps Tanzania), they are probably all ' paper monkeys' (to borrow Mazrui' s metaphor) but in reality are a great political, social and financial liability. Africa must be demilitarised for peace, stability, and collective social development.

Under normal circumstances the responsibility for the coordination of the requisite interventions would devolve upon the OAU for which Ali Mazrui has high but vain aspirations. In the meantime, the OAU has yet to find a way of making itself relevant to genuine *Pax Africana* and social development in Africa. This might be on its agenda but is definitely not on the cards. In the event what might prove interesting and exciting in the foreseeable future is Pan-Africanist initiatives and deliberate integration at the regional level. This might even create greater scope for participatory democracy than is possible through the ossified structures of the OAU.

Notes

1. It is ironical that Ali Mazrui, like the Mobutu' s regime, refers to Banyamulenge (inhabitants of the Mulenge hills) as ' Tutsi' after 200 years of settlement and intermarriage in a gold mining area (Kivu). Like Western journalists, he thinks of his African subjects in primordial tribal terms. In contrast to other contemporary African political scientists and Africanist historians who are grappling with the connotations and social implications of supposed tribal identities, he still employs them exactly the same way he did in the 1960s.This makes me wonder what tribe he thinks he belongs to at this stage.

2 Tanzania at the worse time is doing the same to people who settled and were settled in its territory nearly 40 years ago precisely because there is no collective responsibility and established code of conduct among African states. What makes Tanzanian citizens for two generations ' Tutsi' and not the Bahinda/ Bahima in Buhaya, Buha, and Buzinza?

* *CODESRIA Bulletin,* Number 2, 1998, (p. 9-11).