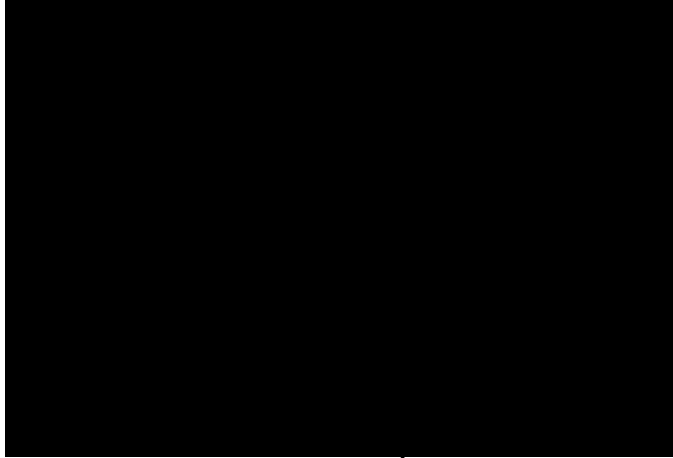




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"The problematic of International Cultural Order"
Luc SINDJOUN

Pretoria, October 13, 2023

The memorial pattern is essential in the construction of the sense of the self. It creates the memory that we should have, and how we shall cope with that, as an association in a revamping process. Part of what keeps us moving, is the way looking behind of us, making sense of the work of

Islam and Democracy, Washington, DC ; the Board of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, and as a Fellow of the Institute of Governance and Social Research, Jos, Nigeria. He served as President of Muslim Social Scientists of North America and was elected Senior Fellow of Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-

Prof Nadine MACHIKOU
Vice- President of the African Association of Political
Science
Chair of the 17th Biennial Conference

Dear AAPS President,

Distinguished AAPS Congress Chair,
Professor Nadine MACHIKOU,

Deputy Vice Chancellor of University of
Yaoundé II

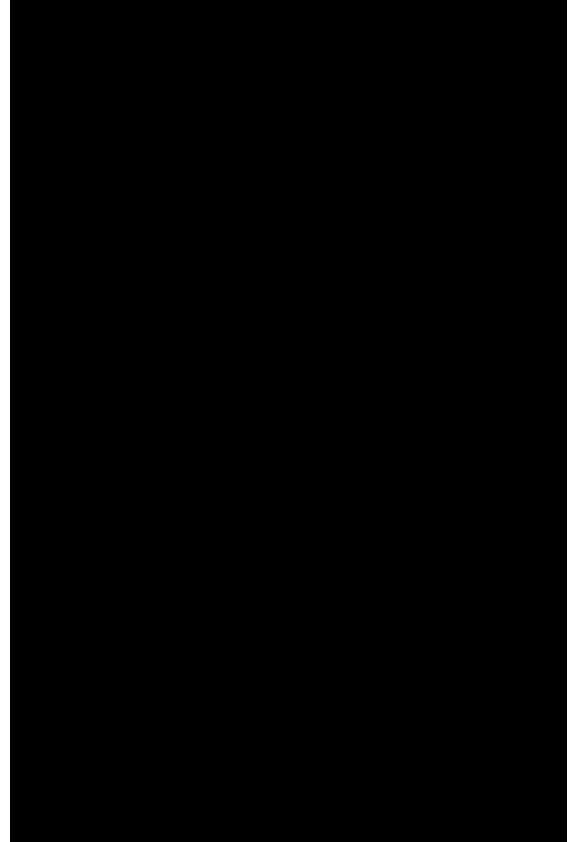
Members of AAPS Executive committee,

Fellow AAPS former presidents,

Dear participants to AAPS biennial
congress

Dear colleagues,

All protocols duly respected;





scholars and the creation of favorable conditions for reception of their works. It is worth repeating that political science in Africa should not be reduced, consciously or unconsciously, to an enterprise of cultural domination of others without an evaluation of their added value to understanding or the explanation. What precedes is not an assumption of cultural or scientific chauvinism. It is just the renewal of the appeal to render justice to African Political Science scholars in an international cultural system that is unequal. By assigning to me the task to deliver the first ever "Ali Mazrui Memorial Lecture", AAPS is in accordance with the decolonization agenda, exactly like other African scientific organizations such as CODESRIA. Here and now, let me underscore that decolonization, more precisely scientific decolonization, doesn't mean closure, nor rejection.

Secondly, as far as Ali Mazrui is concerned,

institutionalization of political science in Africa and its incarnation by some scholars (Mkandawire, 1995).

Twenty years ago, I was introducing in Pretoria a conference presented by Ali Mazrui. Today, I am delivering in Pretoria the "Ali Mazrui Memorial Lecture". What a coincidence! Pretoria is a city where I met with Ali Mazrui. The first time, I met him in person, body and spirit. Today, I am meeting him in spirit, in order to engage a discussion on his works. Therefore, I am particularly moved. However, as legitimate as it can be, emotion is not a category of thought. That is why reason is needed *hic et nunc* ("hēk-et-"nu#k. : here and now). It is the password to get access to the intellectual universe of Ali Mazrui's works. These works are so rich and diverse that, used as password, reason requires that I select a concept for the purpose of my analysis.

of them, had been a factor for the rediscovery of the pertinence of those of Ali Mazrui about the cultural cleavages, the subversion of the westernization of the world, etc.

In this memorial lecture, from my privileged position on the shoulders of the intellectual giant that is Ali Mazrui, I intend to operationalize the cultural paradigm in international relations through the category of cultural international order. I do not share Ali Mazrui's advocacy of the primacy of culture; he considers that culture is the cause and economy, the consequence. In fact, the "embeddedness" of culture, economy and politics is an obstacle to the absolute separation of one from the others. Having in mind the reality of interpenetration, the separation can only be artificial and relative. Any attempt to establish a rigid hierarchy among cultures, politics and economics is bound to fail. While culture influences economy, in return economy influences culture: the relation is bijective. Here, the debate on the roles of "chicken" and "egg" is useless. What matters, is the scientific proposition to account for a cultural international order.

The cultural international order is a partial dimension of the international order. Like the

“mature” or “immature”, is made by the states with societal values, beliefs, patterns of behavior, customs and laws (Kissinger, 2014; Wendt, 1992: 391-425).

In my line of reasoning, an international order implies *a minima (minimum)* of plurality of members and an interaction among its members in their respective positions: each member is influenced by its culture; the interaction among members is an opportunity for the flow of cultures, ideas, images, sounds that transcend boundaries, that can lead to acceptance, imitation, reinterpretation or rejection, clash or concord (depending on the way in which they are mobilized). Moreover, the interaction among the members is determined by a complex of rules, norms, habits, and institutions, commonly established, or universally imposed by some “established” actors to outsiders or newcomers. Culture is a factor of institutionalization of order, just like order produces culture.

The cultural international order that I am referring to, is not necessarily just or equitable. It is a regular, predictable and stable pattern of interaction among states and other actors, based on agreed, respected or dominant norms, rules, institutions. The cultural international order is fundamentally subjective because it has to do with values, beliefs, standard of judgement and “frame of experience”. It is a terrain of manifestation of, on one part, the will of some actors to impose their arbitrary cultural as a universal norm versus the claim of the cultural self-determination of other actors, on the other part, the permanent negotiation of common norms. The historic context that I will analyze starts from the 19

What precedes my main argument is that the cultural international order is a moving configuration with different figures and whose active principle is dynamism. This argument will be substantiated in two parts in the developments below.

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§ The cultural international order is in fact a manifestation of western cultural supremacy made possible by European imperialism, the colonization of the non-western world among which is Africa. The western supremacy is so strong that the colonization of non-western societies in Asia and Africa is presented as the expansion of international relations whose rules and principles were defined by western states according to their culture and history. As Ali Mazrui expresses it: *“There is a sense in which the West regards an interpretation of the march of history as having one destination and that is towards the evolution of institutions that are very western...all those three- westernization, modernization and globalization- are interrelated and they assume a single direction of the march of history...”*. What is at work is the production of a rigid hierarchy of cultures having at the top, as Ali Mazrui puts it beautifully, the west as the “role model”. The idea of a specific culture being a role model for other cultures carries the ideology of the “role model culture” as the procrustean bed into which the non-western cultures should be constrained to lay on.

§ The cultural international order was built without and against Africa. According to Ali Mazrui,

two terms to analyze the western claim of universalism: Homogenization and hegemonization. Both are part of the *pax americana*. Homogenization refers to the increasing production of similarity with the west as a referential point. Its perimeter includes the globalization of European languages, the progressive convergence of educational systems, the triumph of market economy, the interdependence of societies and so on. Meanwhile, the sister process called hegemonization is made of the orchestration and enforcement of "marketization, libion,ion d io 0.3 (f) 0.5 () -2407 (o) 0.3 3 3 3 (rc) 0.2((i

§ Horizontal cultural international order is promoted by international organizations. It is a consequence of multilateralism when states take advantage of their membership in various organizations to establish common norms, rules, organs and institutions that are supposed to govern their behavior in the international milieu in different domains. Through universal and regional organizations, horizontal cultural international order is institutionalized.

§ Horizontal cultural international order should not be idealized. Various international organizations were created when international society was restricted to Europe and major powers like USA, China and the then Soviet Union. The universalization of those organizations had not always coincided with power redistribution. Therefore, the inequality among states in international organizations affects the validity of horizontal cultural international order (Smouts, 1995: 259-271). It is the belief in the legitimacy and the necessity of a genuine inclusive international cultural order that justifies the claim for the reform of United Nations and the global financial architecture.

§ Horizontal cultural international order is the consequence of the principles of self-determination and equality among states. With the independence of third world countries during the twentieth century, a change of the prevailing environment was to be taken into consideration. It had led to the multiplication of the creation of new norms, for instance, permanent sovereignty over natural resources, the principles of international law and so on. Those norms are not always respected. But their lack of effectivity doesn't imply their invalidity.

It is under the auspices of the horizontal cultural international order that Ali Mazrui had called for reparations in favor of Africa and the black wo

past. The focus on the historical circumstances of the setting of cultural international order helps to understand its crisis.

§ The decolonization of Africa and Asia remains the source of the crisis of the cultural international order. In an order that was structured around European and western values, to deal with other cultures and conceptions of life is necessarily dysfunctional. For instance, in the United Nations, before the proliferation of African states, the General Assembly was the place *par excellence* where important resolutions were adopted. What is more normal: the balance of forces at the gener



For instance, in international relations, customary law in all domains is the product of the history and culture of Europe. Such persistence doesn't conceal the crisis of cultural international order. Indeed, the cultural diversity of the world is a factor of disintegration of that order. For this purpose, the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is meaningful: It affirms cultural diversity "as a defining characteristic of humanity"; it recognizes the necessity to promote and protect the diversity of cultural expressions; it emphasizes on the principle of equal dignity and respect for all cultures. Consequently, heterogeneity became a category of perception of cultural international order. Likewise, pluriversality is also to be taken into consideration (Parasram, 2023: 356-367). The insistence on heterogeneity and "pluriversality" is the result of the crystallization of the figure of the multiple. Having said that, homogeneity and universality, on the one hand can cohabit with heterogeneity and pluriversality, on another hand. Such cohabitation is part of the paradigmatic change that occurs in international relations.

On what concerns the crisis of the cultural international order, Ali Mazrui's works were adding fuel to the fire. Being a fierce critique of the western hegemony, he was also the architect on an alliance between Arabs and Africa in order to create a new world order. That imagined alliance was baptized "Afrabia" and presented as "part of the answer" to the risk of "a disproportionated number of more dead muslims" and "a disproportionated number of more poor blacks" created by the world order (Mazrui, 1992: 60). "Historical fusion of Arabism and Africanity...", according to Ali M

Ali Mazrui is criticizing strongly the world order dominated by western states. He is praying for an alternative cultural international order built around Africans and Arabs. Prophets are not

among states, Ali Mazrui had based the world federation on cultures. At this level, Ali Mazrui is more closed to Samuel Huntington: while Ali Mazrui in 1976 considered

The problem of cultural international order, as analyzed through the works of Ali Mazrui, reveals the dialectics of stability and change, homogeneity and heterogeneity, universality and "pluriversality". In fact, it invites to the use of a grammar of multiplicity. At this stage, the heuristic fertility of the figure of Babel (that is familiar to Ali Mazrui) leads to the proposal of a dynamic continuum formed by one soft international cultural order and multiple international cultural orders.

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