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## Military Rules' as Postcolonial Drawbacks in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of People* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*.

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### Abstract

The main trust of the present essay is to find out the reasons why military coups have frequently occurred in newly independent African countries and why the regimes have failed parceling the state and fallen in the same evils they pretend to decipher. This way, Africa continues to be subjected to regular military coups and civilian political maneuvering and economic gambling. Dealing filthiness in politics and violence to maintain power, Achebe and Ngugi's merit is to have predicted the phenomenon getting ready to outbreak. Achebe and Ngugi have played a full role of novelist as teacher raising alarm on the necessity to change the prevalent paradigm. Focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, a region prone to both internal and large-scale political upheavals at the time of the novels' publication, the essay confirms the link between military power and violence as well as the personalization of power by civilians and violence. Throughout both narratives, theories like that of Fanon and Mbembe have helped us disentangle the process which leads African elites and men in uniforms to jeopardize their countries' economic development, so that it lingers behind today.

**Key words:** power, governance, coups, violence, corruption, tribalism.

### Glossary

AMOTP = *A Man of the People*

AGOW = *A Grain of Wheat*

### Résumé

L'objectif principal du présent essai est de découvrir les raisons pour lesquelles les coups d'État militaires se sont fréquemment produits dans les pays africains nouvellement indépendants et pourquoi les régimes ont échoué à morceler l'État et sont tombés dans les mêmes maux qu'ils prétendent déchiffrer. De cette façon, l'Afrique continue d'être soumise à des coups d'État militaires réguliers, à des manœuvres politiques civiles et à des paris économiques hasardeux. Traitant de la vilenie en politique



et de la violence pour se  
maintenir au pouvoir, Achebe  
et Ngugi



ont le mérite d'avoir prédit que le phénomène s'apprêtait à éclater. Achebe et Ngugi ont joué un rôle à part entière de romancier en tant qu'enseignant, alertant sur la nécessité de changer le paradigme dominant. Centré sur l'Afrique subsaharienne, région sujette à la fois à des bouleversements politiques internes et à grande échelle au moment de la publication des romans, l'essai confirme le lien entre pouvoir militaire et violence ainsi que la personnalisation du pouvoir par les civils et la violence. Tout au long des deux récits, des théories comme celle de Fanon et Mbembe nous ont aidés à démêler le processus qui conduit les élites africaines et les hommes en uniforme à mettre en péril le développement économique de leurs pays, de sorte qu'il persiste aujourd'hui.

**Mots clés:** pouvoir, gouvernance, coups d'Etat, violence, corruption, tribalisme.



## Introduction

Many African countries after their sovereignty regained from the former colonizers out of great trials and tribulations have witnessed radical and overnight changes through the barrel of guns. Barka (2012, 15) argues that: "African States have experienced over 200 military takeovers between the 1960s and 2012". Since that time, military upheavals have been one of the main reasons of the African continent's hindrances to peace and economic development. Then, self-government in Africa has raised many sorts of incontrollable political and socio-economic issues. Several attempts from the former colonizers especially France and Britain have been made to discredit the first African leaders, quickly labelled tyrants, their conception of independence and self-government. Some African elites trained in European countries have been called upon to help sabotage the effort of their countries' leaders after independence as they have started being difficult to influence. Each side tries to protect its share of power or conspire to usurp it from the other. High political manipulations and abuse of power have increased the way it has happened in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1993). This state of permanent suspicion has forced front-runners such as Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, Mathieu Kerekou, Robert Mugabe and Julius Nyerere to adopt Marxism and socialism theories against capitalism viewed as neocolonialism in disguise. During the coups, civilian leaders and officers likely to present problems are killed, imprisoned or forced to exile for the well-being of the military power.

Besides, as many people have thought of immediate better future with a magic stick just after the independence, they have been amazed by the new nation's affairs stagnation, the growth of tribalism, bribery and favoritism spreading out. All this general disillusionment has been described in Achebe's *A Man of People*<sup>12</sup> (1966) and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) to condemn the phenomenon engendered by successive governments' mismanagement which has hindered the African countries' fair development. While for some years, we have noticed the reduction of the trend, it has come straight from its dungeon as the only way to express accumulated frustration due regular embezzlements, political falsehood and betrayal. Within the year 2021, Africa has witnessed three successful military coups, with one taking place in Mali, one in Guinea and one in Sudan. But the year before, 2020, the same coup plotters in Mali staged a successful one in August. As if it does not suffice, the fifth and the sixth have occurred in Burkina Faso in 2022. However, two have failed respectively in Guinea Bissau and Cape-Verde and in Chad, an arbitrary military transfer of power after the death of its president, Idriss Deby Itno to his son. From the first days of independence to present-days, we strongly believe that peaceful power

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<sup>12</sup> Subsequent quotes are from new editions, with page numbers parenthetically included in the essay and preceded by *AMOTP* or *AGOW*.



share in African countries is not always common place and whenever politicians conquer it, they reverse the major expectations of the peoples. This corroborates the concept of power subjectivity Mbembe states in *On the Postcolony* (2001) and *Necropolitics* (2019) particularly where he insurges against the way people are governed all over the world by fear and death zones as the result of their resistance to violent power.

The present essay x-rays the fundamental drivers, the roles, positions and decisions made by various political actors before and during the coup that worsen the state of the fictionalized nation to understand the jostling for political power by military forces. The thematic of military coup in sub-Saharan African countries comes at the time it is experiencing a resurgence of interest in many African countries. This is probably appropriate to discuss on the part politicians insidiously play to entice military interference into politics. The question to ask is whether their administrative and political running better than that of the civilians they overthrow? To analyze the phenomenon some theoretical literature from Fanon, Mbembe, Memmi, Decalo and some few articles have been used in the present essay. This paper is divided into two parts. The first part is entitled "African New Independent Nations and the State of Mismanagement" and the second is entitled "Military Rule and Human Rights Violation".

### **1. African New Independent Nations and the State of Mismanagement**

When the African new nations have reconquered their independence in the 1960s from the former colonial Empires, there has emerged naturally the issue of elites' training to power management and their knowledge of economy and development's indicators. Once on power, some leaders have put around themselves friends, nephews, cousins and siblings worsening the atmosphere of collaboration and power share. Tribalism has gained the political terrain and evolved into suspicion and mistrust. Abrahams's *A Wreath for Udomo* has depicted the extent to which the young and fictional nation, Panafrica, has been decimated on the ground that its newly elected PM, Udomo, has not allowed his former donators to appoint the people of their own tribe. The situation seems similar with that portrayed in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1993, 4), an allegorical novel on the Russian revolution where it has been evoked that "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others". The popular masses' conditions have not been improved the way the political leaders have promised during campaigns. Amidst them have grown rampant corruption, favoritism and embezzlements. For example, Nigeria has gained its independence from the British Empire in 1960 and unpredictably, *A Man of the People* has been published in 1966, the year of the first military coup after the failure of the new nation. The masses think that they have been betrayed, as the leaders conspire with the former colonizers to rob the country and deprive them of the little on which to survive. Some of them quickly substitute their capitalistic ideologies to Marxist or socialist to receive aids from Russia, China, Libya and South



Correa, yet the financial burden coupled with debts from new partners crush the economy. Facing all these issues, the political leaders avert their socialist inclinations following the World Bank's counselling and strain their ties with most western countries they have avowed to forsake.

International Aids sent in African countries never reach the needy target. This is why Moyo (2009, 23) recently criticizes the real aim of these aids. She thinks that aids reinforce poverty in Africa. She states that: "No surprise, then, that Africa is on the whole worse off today than it was 40 years ago. For example in the 1970's less than 10% of Africa's population lived in dire poverty -- today over 70% of sub-Saharan Africa lives on less than US\$1 a day". The latter's argument has also been subscribed by Ferraro and defines as dependency theory which states that "by the belief that the economic well-being and improvement or growth of industrialized countries in effect led to the detriment or impoverishment of developing countries, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor". Ferraro goes further to illustrate that "poor countries exported primary commodities to the rich countries who then manufactured products out of those commodities and sold them back to the poorer countries". This simply infers a constant relation between two types of countries classified as dominant/dependent, center/margin or metropolitan/periphery. Therefore, when a poor African country is granted some aids from a developed one or from IMF or the World Bank, it purchases manufactured and needy goods from one or two industrialized countries by sending the money it receives. The poor country is then maintained head under water the Bretton Woods institutions' assistance and in a constant position of dependency and the industrialized one in its posture of aids' giver by buying primary commodities like cotton, wood and ground resources with cheaper price. The gap is nurtured years after years with structural adjustments that even strong military regimes can uphold.

Just like cheatings and bribery, impunity emerges and expands in volume. Political acquaintances can do whatever they want even kill people without being arrested or even being questioned. In *A Man of the People*, Chief Nanga and the Minister of Foreign Trade are so courageous that they decide to inform the population about their common financial wish against their own country (AMOTP, 99):

As the whole world now knows, our Minister of foreign Trade, Alhadji chief Senator Suleiman Wagada, announced on New Year's Day a 20 per cent rise in import duties on certain types of textile goods. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> the Opposition Progressive Party published detailed evidence to show that someone had told the firm of British Amalgamated of the Minister's plans as long ago as October and that they had taken steps to bring in three shiploads of the textiles by mid-December.

The preceding excerpt is clear-cut. These politicians are entirely involved flesh and bones in falsified businesses with external firms to keep balanced their greed of wealth and luxury to the detriment of the country's account. Chief Nanga has received money from Antonio and Sons to grant him the project of



National Academy construction. The young nation becomes finally the property of very few people that decide the slice to cut and the one to keep. The leaders become vicious vampire-beasts sucking innocent blood from an already crippling body. This inspires the Nigerian Afrobeat singer, Fela Kuti's song 'Beast of No Nation' in 1989 describing the filthy condition in which Nigerian leaders conduct the country's destiny. However, before Fela Kuti could condemn it, Achebe points out the danger of impunity in its larger lens with misuses as core codes in Nigeria. Symbolizing men as beasts also comes in an insulting term used by the Philosopher John Lok cited by Mudimbe (1992, 71) who contends that:

Negroes, [as] a people of beastly living, without a God, law, religion"; "other people whose women are common.... whose inhabitants dwell in caves and dens: for these are their houses, and the flesh of serpents their meat"; "and people without heads, having their eyes and mouths in their breast.

Moreover, the character, Chief Nanga, Prime Minister and the greedy beast of the young and still crawling State, lives in an insolent wealth and luxury as he is involved in corruption and misappropriation. The narrator shares it (*AMOTP*, 75): "the man was a minister bloated by the flatulence of ill-gotten wealth, living in a big mansion built with public money, riding in Cadillac and watched over by one-eyed hired thug... a seven bedroom mansion". There is another building owned by the MP, Chief Nanga with (*AMOTP*, 99) "three blocks of seven-storey luxury flats at three hundred thousand pounds each in the name of his wife". He can easily bribe and threaten people who resist his financial influence. An amazing act takes place just after the opponent of Chief Nanga, a young and inexperienced man, Odili Samalu, candidates for election against his former secondary school teacher. Chief Nanga instructs his supporters to go stop the "pipes they deposited several months earlier for the projected Rural Water Scheme" for the village to be connected (*AMOTP*, 133). He makes the water supply cancel as the whole country is under his political and administrative control. He can then do whatever he wishes. Even the road construction prevails under his regular control. High-ranking politicians and civil servants benefit from this malpractice of the MP to have their share of the 'national cake'. This has also been used in *A Grain of Wheat* to mean Kenya's national wealth that is to be shared slices after slices the way a cake is cut during birthday's parties.

Thus, tribalism seems to be a virus which prevails especially in Africa. This can be explained by the fact that Africans before colonization used to live in community. So, the need to help one another does not depart from them after their being free from the colonizers. It is also inherent to African tribes to suspect one another. Karenja suspects the Gikuyus and they too suspect him. The narrator reveals that: "He also despised them and said so when talking with Mwaura or any other men of this tribe. 'These Jaluo! He would say, 'they always stick together: once you put one of them in charge of a place, he invites all his tribesmen whenever a vacancy occurs'" (*AGOW*, 136). Clannish thoughts engender ostracism and rejection of a member from another tribe no matter how



long he stays with the other clan. The case of the General R is illustrious with people of Thabai. Here the narrator discloses that "Although he had lived in Rung'ei for many years people in Thabai regarded him as a stranger in their midst. 'These from that side of Nyeri and Embu', they would say are people to be feared. People did not even know his real name" (AGOW, 135). The last sentence proves so well that people do not consider his presence among them as important, so much so that his real name is not even known despite his long sojourn. The seed of tribalism is so distinctive that when in Abrahams's *A Wreath for Udomo* (1979), Udomo refuses to accept it among the members of the party by telling Lanwood that they "need to build up national loyalties as against tribal loyalties" (Abrahams, 203), the latter conspires with Selina to assassinate him. Tribalism has also been denounced in T.M. Aluko's *Chief the Honorable Minister* (1970). People in the village get together to finance and vote Alade Moise, the protagonist, to get in higher position to help them in return. He disappoints them by serving his own pocket once he gets to the position.

While helping people of their tribe, they wish to enhance their own prestige in their community for a selfish interest. In AGOW, Karanja, Chief Murithiu, the unnamed MP, all home-guards and chiefs work for their own self-satisfaction. Gikonyo, a man who has spent seven years in prison, cannot understand why people like MP is elected as MP symbolizes selfishness himself. As a matter of fact, Gikonyo contends: "why should these men be elected only to enrich themselves" (AGOW, 153). In postcolonial era, most of the African elites who hold higher political positions have not created in return favorable conditions to help other people enjoy it like them. They disappoint those who trust them like Gikonyo and the five members of the cooperative. These men inform the MP to use his position to help them get some governmental loans to acquire some land from a white settler. But, unfortunately, it is the MP who buys it leaving them empty-handed. The frustration was so big when they find "at the main entrance to Green Hill Farm a new signpost. Gikonyo could not believe his eye when he read the name. They walked to the house without a whisper among themselves. The new landowner was their own MP" (AGOW, 147).

Likewise, Chief Nanga does not order the Giligili to Anata's road to be tarred because he wants these people to drive and walk on a well-constructed road, yet it is because he has acquired new buses which must be driven on that road. In public administration, civil servants obey, because they do not want to lose the privilege of having a good job and being protected by an MP whenever something sad befalls. For example, guns and machetes are forbidden during electoral campaigns, still Chief Nanga can have any case dropped in Bori and its surroundings if the convicted person is from his party or from his village. He is justice in person and shows it straightaway as the case "is withdrawn politically without trial. Politics controls justice in Bori, that is to say, the police is at the service of a class, the political authorities, and not to protect the



populations" (*AMOTP*, 141). He is an advocate of tribalism and a living lawyer of corruption. Taking clue from all this, we notice that the positions left by former colonizers in what has become public administration and semipublic companies are all occupied by kinsmen from the shortlist of ministers or close party members.

In the same vein, Achebe reveals the reason why people in his country are so corrupt. He writes that: "Nigerian are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient" (Achebe, 38). Nigerians, Ghanaians as well as the other people fail to be patriots, the way the colonizers have loved theirs and defended its interest. African elites seem to be perfect strangers in their own countries. For example, Chief Koko simulates that his stomach cannot tolerate local products as he falls sick just after his consumption of local products. Although the countries finance permanent campaigns for the consumption of these home-made products, the elites develop preference for imported products. African elites are more alienated than the people they are supposed to govern. Mbeki (2012, 3) identifies a number of reasons that limit Africa's progress for critical reflection and he notes that "Africa is marking time at best, and, at worst, marching backwards". That is why development within these countries is still problematic whether capitalistic or socialist. All this happens before the masses who live in an extreme poverty day-in and day-out like Edna's family.

It is quite difficult to thousands of families to have a one-day meal. Promises of change occur only into the pocket, suitcases and bank accounts off-shore of politicians and relatives. Quite wide is the gap between the destitute and the wealthy who have been celebrating their insulting prosperity and millions in banks since the sixties to date. For example, Chiefs Nanga and Koko usually dress in extremely classy costumes with golden chains on, while people die in hospitals just because of a dollar lacking for injection against malaria. A current saying suits to the government of that time: "It does not matter what you, but who you know" (*AMOTP*, 17). A personal merit does not count, if he knows someone to help him reach the top. This leads to tribalism and favoritism which lead to mismanagement in all domains. The young nations suffocate, soon start agonizing and calling for help.

In *A Man of the People* as well as in *A Grain of Wheat*, Chiefs Nanga and Murithiu and their acolytes represent the living plague that plunges the well-being of Nigerian and Kenyan societies the way it is presented in real. Both have existed in all African countries and continue to exist. All that they struggle for is their egotistic interest. They never practice the following concept: 'All for one, one for all'. They uphold people from their village or immediate surroundings and exclusively those who do not deserve promotion, so that they can still order particular requests. The narrator shows it here: "My secretary is from there; our people must press for their share of the national cake" (*AMOTP*, 12). This view



joins that of Mudimbe's in "Save the African continent" (2012, 7) who identifies the African intellectuals' problems as being victims of cultural ethnocentrism connected to their behavioral attitudes. This syndrome finds its reason when Chief Nanga uses "his influence to behind the scenes...Take your money and take your scholarship to go and learn more book; the country needs experts like you" (*AMOTP*, 119) to grant scholarship to Odili. The advent of tribalism has become general social misconduct which orders the structure of governments and politics in Africa. It is one of the major stumbling block that hinders development due to its abstract nature. No one knows the reason why it is still alive and why people wide and large practice it. The setup is clear as more than 3000 tribes exist in the 55 countries in Africa. In some administration, people do not want to know where someone is from and whether he deserves the service he asks for. If he bears on his face the tribal scars of the MP or the President or speaks the same language, that ethnic sign suffices to have the service or the post. Societies of that kind do not promote equality, equity and educational merits.

To stop all this messy spider like net, the only way out for the popular masses is a bloody upheaval against the greedy mouths of political leaders. On the one hand, this confusing state makes of General R. a foreseer as he says: "and I know even now this war is not ended. We get Uhuru today. Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools?" (*AGOW*, 192). It means that after the Kenyan independence, the situation becomes worse than what it has been and the people start getting angrier and angrier. Kenyans have lost their fertile and beloved lands during the colonizers' settlement, but when independence has occurred, the natives have awaited land redistribution that never comes. Instead, the formers loyalists become landowners and real landowners are still empty-handed. So, another bloodshed is possible. With all this happening, the former colonizers can even foretell what is about to happen.

On the other hand, rulers like PM Nanga can win as many elections as possible, if money to buy votes does not finish in banks. He can also send after anyone ready to challenge him his bullying thugs or fill up the ballot boxes. Chief Nanga also sends a former policeman to Hezekiah Samalu, Odili's father, to instruct his disconnection from his own son, otherwise his taxes will increase to a level he does not expect. Finally, Samalu is arrested and ill-treated by three local policemen. The next person to be trampled hollow is Odili with arms and cranium broken and several bruises. All this influence, open menaces and assassinations prepare the terrain to armed interventions, whether from the army or civilians. Military coups come to the rescue of the masses, though Achebe writes that "they had no public reason whatever for doing it" (*AMOTP*, 144). In fact, most of the time, they come to feed at the frenzied table full of good tasting food, fresh cow-milk, fairly-cooked goat meat, wine and butter. They usually justify the taking over by the fact that it has been down trodden by civilians. They also justify their coming to power on the ground that it is the



failure of the State to meet the populations' modest needs that drives the push to occur. Yet, the plotters of the coup have to think critically about why, when and how to topple the convicted regimes.

The reason why the coup has befallen, apart from the wretched socio-economic status of the mass, is that Max, one of the opponents of Chief Nanga, is assassinated and Eunice, his fiancée, arrested and jailed. People like Max have been assassinated in African countries for their boldness to challenge power from the 1960s to date. Political murders and imprisonments have been sometimes the mode of governance in some countries. It is suspected that for these dirty tasks, political leaders use foreign and professional killers, although national armies are sometimes involved in the bloodshed. Lately, in Mali, Guinea, Sudan and Burkina Faso, the junta alleged that it was the failure of former regimes to tackle the issue of national security, peace and daring administrative reforms that have forced them to overtake. Now they claim, barrels of guns beside them and their plotters assembled, that they want to bring the positive change the populations are craving for.

## **2. Military Rule and Human Rights Violation**

At first glance, during military rules, the ban of political parties is quickly decreed for national security motives. Quickly, this decision infers another one which is the limitation in public rallies. The third one is the end of the parliament and senate activities. Moreover, to make people fear their rule, the soldiers who, allegedly claim to take over to help the people tackle their real issues, open fire on marchers and kill many. In *A Man of the People*, Max, the controversial rival to Chief Koko, is slain during the rigged election protest and later declared by Odili "a hero and martyr" (AMOTP, 148). The rigged election here is the indirect coup perpetrated by Nanga against the opposition and the people. It has unfortunately created all the other turbulences in the fictional country. For example, many cases of amputation have been recorded during Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars where the rebels asked their victims whether they wanted 'short sleeves' or 'long sleeves' or 'short pants' or 'long pants'. It means that if the victims wanted their arms or legs cut off by the knees or elbows. This kind of violence and pain have been inflicted during Rwandan genocide in 1994 after the coup against Juvenal Habyarimana, a military on power after a coup since 1973 against Gregoire Kayibanda. The more the pain on the victim, the more the pleasure is felt by the perpetrator. After rape as a double-edged weapon against the populations, physical assaults have always been the way to subdue totally men and women in war-torn countries. It inspires Misra (2008, 51) to note that: "The danger behind this crude recreational violence is that it regulates the desire for violence among the perpetrators. Seeking out sadistic violence on 'the other' becomes insatiable for this individualistic or group".

The hunger riot in Sudan is still vivid in Sudanese memory. It was a riot during which the population was forced to protest against bread's price increasing. As



a result, many people were found dead. Either the guilty for firing disappear, or they are imprisoned, however they still have their salaries for having helped the coup to reinforce its authority. They usually declare the lower number of victims and force silence in hospitals on the seriously wounded one. The other victims in passing-by cars, in houses and other places are called collateral and unfortunate victims. Their bodies are confiscated for further forensic inquiries which never occur. The weapons for State's protection are now used to kill its own citizens. These martyrs-to-be can last in mortuaries for several months and years before being buried clandestinely or given back to their relatives and parents. Intimidation and financial rewards often decipher these issues in African countries. The recent case of dead bodies found in Guinea and Sudan after Alpha Condé and Omar Al-Bashir's toppling by the junta is an example that withstands our position. What it leaves behind is the pain resulting from the loss of beloved. Each power seizure may be characterized by violence, hostility and intrigue to maintain it. The more the people fear the deadliness of the power, the more the leaders comfort it, for repression remains the core feature of dictatorship. For example, Odili, feeling there will be fire next time, he gets ready by ordering: "the minimum of weapons strictly for defense. We had five machetes, a few empty bottles and stones in the boot. But this will yield negative consequences. Later we were compelled to add two double-barreled guns" (AMOTP, 112). It seems to be a self-defense grounding. It is also for this self-defense that Boniface nearly crushes two members of Nanga's party and Odili has his car's "windscreen smashed with stones" (AMOTP, 113).

In Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1967), the narrative focuses on representations of violence after many African countries failed to create strong and independent national institutions. Yet, people who inflict violence on others must also be victims of it in a way. Memmi, Fanon and Césaire write about the dehumanizing effects of violence on both the victim and the perpetrator. As a matter of fact, French soldiers who spent days inflicting horror on Algerian farmers also suffer from severe postwar traumas that led them to commit suicide or running mad according to Fanon's *A Wretched on the Earth* (1961). Likewise, African dictators may also suffer from similar traumas that they ask their soldiers to inflict on their populations while on duty. If questioned one day, they may have frequent nightmares over people jailed, dismembered and thrown to leopards and crocodiles.

At second glance, historians and scholars remind us on the rise and fall of kingdoms and great civilizations from Mesopotamia to Persia and the fall of Mali or Songhai Empire. If history, to paraphrase the renowned historian Manning Marable, symbolizes a site of contestation, therefore struggles over power culminate in violence, riots, rebellions and all the other contain elements of political violence. Dictators remain on power because of the feeling of being revered and celebrated having a life and death statement on their subjects. In this way, violence needs violence to be toppled. If not, how can historians teach



the history of Apartheid or colonization without engaging the role of violence on both sides? Even Martin Luther King recognizes in his famous “I have a Dream”<sup>13</sup> speech in 1963, that “A riot is the language of the unheard”<sup>14</sup> although he claims to be a nonviolent theory preacher. This joins and explains Malcolm X’s approach toward the non-violent concept. He abhors the passivity of Americans of African descent against racists and white supremacists. He strongly recommends in 1963 that: “You don’t have a peaceful revolution. You don’t have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution”. To be more accurate, it is not all social or political situation that needs a violent reaction, however an oppressive situation needs a violent response to bring along liberty and equality. This thesis subscribes that of Fanon’s in *A Wretched on the Earth* which defends the violent attitude of the colonized emanates from his permanent frustration of not being considered as full human being. So he veils that bloodthirsty to the moment the deadly strike is possible. The colonized represents the labor class and the colonizer the capitalist.

Taking from Fanon’s theory of violence, Mbembe’s *Critique of Black Reason* (2017) explains the intangibility of violence within every human subject that no form of domination can erase or wholly contain. That is the reason why successive military regimes which subjugate its citizens, fail to continue to subdue them. As a result, in many African countries, the youth have no perspective for a brighter future, so they involve in hazardous activities such as terrorism, cybercrime or migrate to Europe legally or illegally. As the youth are afraid to express their dissatisfaction, they prefer to seek immunity from oppression. Unfortunately, the range of the youth who migrate are considered the workforce because of their young age: 14-55. In majority, the African countries with higher rate of migrants are D. R. Congo, Nigeria, Mali, Cote-d’Ivoire, Mozambique, Ghana, Chad and Cameroun.

The carnage the youth flee from inspires Mbembe’s *Necropolitics* (2019, 12) to argue that:

Today, in many instances, the commandment (of disciplinary power) has been replaced by a new form of sovereign power: ‘necropower’. Why necropower? Well, because the ultimate site of deployment of this new form of sovereignty is no longer the body as such, but the dead body of the ‘civilian’. Necropower is wielded both by states and by what, following Deleuze and Guattari, we

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<sup>13</sup> On August 28, 1963, approximately a quarter million people converged on Washington, DC. They came from all over the United States to demand civil and economic rights for African Americans. Many traveled for days—and at great personal risk—to participate. But what transformed the speech into one of the most memorable in American history for the millions of Americans watching and listening in Washington, on radio and on television, was the recurring phrase “I have a dream,” repeated eight times with increasing urgency—a dream of what could happen in the nation as well as a more intimate dream of what his own children could achieve when freedom rang everywhere in the United States.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Willie L. Brown, “Riots Echo Decades-Old Anguish of Dispossessed,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 3, 1992, A13; Ronald Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.



should call 'war machines' ... They combine a plurality of functions and operate through capture, looting and predation".

The excerpt proves that armed regimes use violence to preserve the rule and spread fear in the people to keep them silent. In fact, *Necropolitics* entails the submission of life to the power of death. Weapons are frequently deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of people and the creation of death-zones like the conflict opposing Russia to Ukraine or the one opposing Congo to Rwanda. Recently, in Chad, NGOs complain that after the repression of the pacific demonstration in Ndjamena on October, 20<sup>th</sup> 2022, 600 were arrested and more than 60 dead bodies were found in the streets. This statement has very soon been ruled out by the junta. The government has alleged that those killed were manipulated by opponents and their aim was to overthrow the regime. In *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Motivations and Constraints* (1990, 3), Samuel Decalo reveals that "armies intervening in the political arena seems firstly from altruistic motives, but instead are coteries of clique composed of ambitious officers seeking for self-advancement". When they launch trials of public servants who enriched themselves by stealing public money, they concurrently invent motives to travel in first-class planes or private jets for peace negotiation sessions afar in Qatar, Indonesia, Russia or Belgium with a long list of useless attendants. Chief Nanga has been arrested when masked like a fisherman was about to leave the country "trying to escape by canoe" (*AMOTP*, 147). The canoe means a simple and popular means of transportation by which the previously great MP escaped. He is no more with his cars, his guards to protect him and no more with his wonderful costumes and first-rate chains: vanity at stake. There ends a bloody episode of corruption, influence and highly imagined frauds, yet the end of an episode turns to be the beginning of another. But if these armed forces could perform better than the others that would be good for the country.

In most of these regimes, these measures have always been taken without any reasonable element of control. These sorts of systems have mushroomed all over the African continent, yet remain violent to young conspirators who have helped them overtake from the civilians. D.R. Congo (1960), Burundi (1965), Togo (1963), Ghana (1966), Burkina-Faso (1966), Mali (1968), Benin (1963), Rwanda (1973), Liberia (1980), Sudan (1989), Congo (1997) to mention these few have all tasted the bitterness of coups and military rules that have toppled undetermined and too much corrupt civilian rules. The rise to power of militaries has changed nothing fundamentally in the destiny of postcolonial African countries. Instead, their arrival to power has plundered economic development of many countries as many of these soldiers were not so patient and well-trained to master political and economic rudiments for a moral leadership. This gives reason to Williams' statement that: "It is no more a crisis of governance, but a crisis failed states" (William, 349). As a result, Africa is poor because of its leaders' misdeeds and soldiers' repetitive coups. The rampant insecurity has caused an obvious decline in economic and social health of many



African countries since then. The instability messes up the progress and the prosperity of the African continent and causes massive brain-drain as people flee intimidation and probable murder. They prefer to migrate to other countries where security and political stability prevail. These people possess the required skills and competence to help develop their country, yet they move incognito to better pasture as they feel marginalized in their own country.

The other problem with these regimes, apart from being rude to their own populations, once in power, is that they turn to like it and rule as a president for life without efficient success. This refers to what Armah qualifies in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969) as “new people, new style, old dance” (Armah, 157). It means that the militaries who overthrow the civilians by accusing them of being selfish, clannish and corrupt to their marrow, embody the same diseases after some years in power. This subscribes Orwell’s claim that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. Accordingly, from Benin to Guinea to Sudan to Uganda to Zimbabwe, the result is the same. Militaries often come to power with forged ideology and insincere oaths to address the prevailing issues, but the conveniences that power procures corrupt their mind. This explains Mbembe’s *On the Postcolony* (2001) in which he argues that the power of the postcolony and its performance have been borrowed from colonial skills of subjection, but that are still targeting the postcolonial subject. Then, power of the postcolony is not power itself, but an imposed one, a tool for mass repression. The postcolony has inherited and refashioned its aggressive practices from colonial era. To sequester, to fine, to murder and to corrupt are methods copied from colonialism to postcolony.

For example, the former South African President, Jacob Zuma (2009-2018), was charged of having stolen public funds to build his own palace and having allowed his friends and relatives to inflate public contracts’ bills for their own interest. When Cyril Ramaphosa has overtaken, he has criticized Zuma for having not respected his oath. Yet, today he has also been on the edge of being impeached for the same reason by the South African parliament. The populations suffer until death comes to rescue them. This explains the unprecedented violence and psychosis by which they govern. It is disheartening to see how miserable the populations are, despite their living in their own countries. Peter Tosh (1977) once sang: “Don’t care where you come from, as long as you are a Black man, you’re an African”. The West associate this permanent misery and failure to any black men from Africa or African diaspora. This leaves a bitter taste to any African to notice the failure around. They add to the portfolio of violence populism to remain more sadistic. Populism implies not being pure and truthful. According to Urbinati (2019), the ready-made attitude of the leader in populism is to mention that he is with the people with all his heart and does not wait for their money before giving his own. Urbinati (2019, 9) argues that:



To be one of the people does not mean to be pure in the sense of subjective morality. Berlusconi, like many ordinary men of his country, practiced what in Trump's campaign was called "locker room talk." To be a man of the people was also the aim of Alberto Fujimori, whose campaign in 1990 was crafted with the non-elite slogan "A President like You".

In the range of populist leaders, we can enumerate some like Charles Taylor, Idriss Deby, Paul Kagame and Yahya Jammeh. So, after years on power, these militaries change their uniforms to civilian outfits to participate in crooked elections. Having tasted the sweetness of power, they recruit among opponents to help change their countries' fundamental laws. They also hire foreign high ranked political propagandists to falsify their image among the population. Chief Nanga and those who have toppled him fall in that trap. The morality of rulers like these is replete of cult of personality and corruption. This takes place for they have usurped that position as it is the continuation of politics with other means. As a matter of fact, drop after drop, they set up the same villainies of the regimes they have toppled. They become the wrong copy of what they promise to be as they do not prepare themselves for political leadership. Politics like any kind of position should be learnt and applied with persistence and dexterity.

In public contracts, they set up 'ten per cent' rule as referred to by PM Nanga and pocket the country's money. In almost all African countries, during military regimes, corruption and fraud have reached appalling altitudes. That is why Achebe mentions in his pamphlet *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1988, 37) that "anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in this country". Both diseases have reached excruciating scales which make the African population regret sometimes the colonizers' departure. Presidents from successive coups claim to be aware of the prevailing plagues, then are crooked in return. A stance of modified nationalism marks almost all African military and civilian regimes of the time. For example, in Nigeria, the Lieutenant Gowon who came to power in 1966 accusing the former civilian rule of having misused public money and settled tribalism, was also deposed in July 1975 for the same reasons. In Ghana, K. Busia's government was elected in 1970, yet he was immediately toppled after eighteen months in office by Colonel Acheampong on the same grounds as Afrifra and his colleagues had used in overthrowing Kwame Nkrumah. Between the years 1972 to 1979, there were four coups attempts with one unsuccessful. This means that mermaids and courtesans around power have turned the leaders into objects to manipulate to rephrase what Mbembe writes in *Critique of Black Reason* (2017, 62) stating that: "the logic of profit, the politics of power and the instinct of corruption which together precisely define the colonial practice". What entails African nations' failure after their independence is their intention to exercise power the way they have seen the former colonizers doing. Obviously, they have set up neocolonialism or Marxism, two plagues they have cried out to averse.



## Conclusion

The rise of African postcolonial nations is partly due to its literature. African writers have played a crucial role in the political advancement of the continent, particularly in influencing the course of fervent young nations. African writers have been weary about the capacity of unskilled political leaders of the time to conduct the destiny of the new nation-states. Politics like any kind of popular devotion, according to Achebe, Ngugi, Aluko and Armah, must be trained for and in, so as to perform it well. That is why the fictional writings initiated were politically engaged to point out the danger lurking around the throne of power if cautious measures are not taken earlier. Within a decade, their apprehension has been justified when all over Africa have mushroomed around political affairs opportunistic leaders such as Chief Nanga and his aides. Then, dealing with tribalism and filthiness in politics that lead to rigged elections, corruption and planned assassinations of opponents, Achebe and Ngugi have anticipated in what is getting close to strike hard African young nations after their improvised independence. Achebe and Ngugi have played their full role of novelist as teacher raising alert on the necessity to change the prevalent technique, if not the African economy would undergo several hardship. Facing these hardship in real, many military rules have aborted their policies to accept international creditors like IMF and the World Bank.

One by one, nearly all African nations have reverted to full military rule and single-rule party the way it is portrayed in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The political situation that is described in *Animal Farm* is called totalitarianism or autocracy defined by Decalo (1985, 212) as, "the autocrat rules in an absolute imperial manner often for the sole purpose of self-gratification or glorification and everything working to his sole advantage in the disadvantage of others". These young post-independent nations such as Benin (Danhomey), D.R. Congo (Zaire), Liberia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe (South Rhodesia), Sudan, Burkina-Faso (Upper Volta) to cite these few have cancelled their real development to choose a disastrous way of governance. Those who came to power hoping to liberate their country's economy from colonial hard grip and interference, eventually became its demolisher. Others prefer to extend their presidential terms after having rigged the elections or modified the constitution: 'constitutional coups'. This form of coup does not really need barrel of weapons, yet seasoned specialists of constitution to help the incumbent presidents convince the populations through massive communication, money and massive fraud to fuel their reelection anytime it is needed. Political leaders such as Mobutu (Zaire/Congo), Moussa Traore (Mali), Yahya Jammeh (Gambia), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Omar Al-Bashir (Sudan) have been ousted by popular mayhem aided by militaries to end their economically unfruitful rules.

These ejected leaders have a lot in common with Chief Nanga and the unnamed General as all embody features of corruption and despotism. The revolution the African continent has been waiting for must symbolize righteousness and public funds' respect from political leaders. It is the reason why Achebe and



Ngugi have opposed the characters' morality as irony. All that occurs in the novels has happened really in some African countries. This allows us to classify Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* as historical and prophetic novels. Historical because they portrayed events that have really taken place in almost all African countries, although fiction is different from history. Prophetic because the practices have been prevailing to date. All over Africa live selfish people like Chief Nanga, his accomplices and civil servants waiting to have their share of the national cake.

Finally, to tackle development, it is critical that African leaders must hold the credentials of honesty, ethics, expertise and aptitude to perform developmental reforms whether civilian and military regimes, however, it is better the latter stay in barracks to provide national security. Thus, the resurgence of military coups in Africa these days needs strongly to be tackled further through the lens of specialists in all fields. To be able to make it, Africans leaders need to decolonize their mind and be able to tackle African problems with African solutions. They need to perform a daring reforming of Africa's style of democracy the way it fits and stop importing flabby outside ready-made models. We know they make it.

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