



**THE ANATOMY OF COUP D'ETAT IN *ANTHILLS OF  
THE SAVANNAH* (1988) BY CHINUA ACHEBE**

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**Abstract**

Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* dissects the lifestyle of coups d'état and power paranoia in Kangan, a fictional place. The novel traces the arc from idealistic promises to tyrannical collapse explaining the systemic failure of leadership. The coup begins with Colonel Sam, the President, Major Ried and Chris Okriko which finally overthrew a corrupt civilian regime. They promise of peace, loyalty and reforms for democratic nation which turns to corruption and disillusion explain Nigeria's 1966 events. Sam, in the beginning gain charisma and stability amid chaos. Disloyalty festers Sam's abandonment of the reforms for personal dictatorship which centralizes power through paranoia-fueled purges. The present paper is an exploration of this leadership failure to respect his promises and the way these changes have produced the coup. The authoritarianism of Sam makes legitimacy the question of leadership in postcolonial state. In consequence, state violence remains one of the key themes in the novel. As a matter of fact, rights eroding under restrictions marks the censorship silences of journalists, poets and creates arbitrary arrests terrorizing citizens. The fracture between governors and leaders creates the space and time of uncertainty.

**Keywords:** *Coup d'Etat, Authoritarianism, Promise, Failure, Corrupt, Power Paranoia*

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## 1. Introduction

*Anthills of the Savannah* by Achebe, set in a fictional country of coups and authoritarian politics reflects the instability that symbolizing the aftermath of independence. Represented in Kangan, the novel interrogates the legitimacy of military intervention in governance. It is an exposition of coups d'état justified as the corrective regulation of tyranny and moral decay. Sam, the 'Excellency' has risen as a ruthless dictator after his seize in power. His character is relied on Chris, the Information Commissioner and Ikem, the Gazette, their figures symbolize the moving steps from collaborators of the ruler to resisters. Chris evolves from a detached observer to the defiant resistor against the oppressive system in place. Beatrice, the Senior Assistant Finance Minister connects the three characters as Sam's employee and Ikem's old fiend. Beatrice represents the figure of feminist resistance in dictatorship regime and Ikem, the radical journalist makes critiques to the regime through his editorials and relationships with Elewa, the market salesgirl who represents the mass population.

This configuration of *Anthills of the Savannah* makes the possibility of social relationships in the governance between friendship and opposition. How does this relation from friendship in governance to resisters and oppositions come to exist? In consequence, the author, Achebe interrogates in this perspective the legitimacy of coups d'état. Does the coup d'état make change? Are there any evolution and change between the military regime and civil regime? The diverse voices in the novel and their structures explain the crisis of ethical leadership and civic responsibilities. What are the difference and similarity between military leadership and civic leadership? Who oppresses the most? Who makes the system of dictatorship more persistent?

To answer these questions, the present paper makes an analytic explanation and exploration of *Anthills of the Savannah* in relations to the theories developed concerning the understanding of power, resistance, dictatorship and coups d'état.

Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is an indictment of postcolonial governance that centers military coups as a result of fractured old friendship in the relations of those who governed. Through the intervention of fates of boyhood friends like Sam 'His Excellency', Chris Oriko and Ikem Osodi, the Editor of the National Gazette, Achebe exposes the way power corrupts ideals, disrupts stability and silence dissent. Chris, the detached bureaucrat, Ikem the journalist and editor and Beatrice, the Finance official Minister drive the existence of corpses and bodies in different areas and hierarchies in regulating the establishment of military coups and its persistence through oppression, silencing, repression and exiles.

The representation of military coups in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* makes the possibility of interrogation and exploration of gender, resistance and the role of media in truth-telling and the defense of national/people's interests.

## 2. Methodologies

The study of coup d'état in *Anthills of the Savannah* requires a strategical exploration and explanation of themes, symbols and figures that represent power, politics, resistance and society. This paper will adopt a qualitative literary analysis that embodies close reading of the novel with an examination of narrative voice, symbolism, dialogue and motifs. *Anthills of the Savannah* is written through an anthill metaphor in representing a fragile stability to uncover the way political critique is made possible without didacticism. Postcolonial theory explains the theoretical lens that draws on concepts from Homi Bhabha's hybridity, Frantz Fanon's decolonization, Elleke Boehmer's explanation of women's conditions and African narratives. These theories and explorations of African personalities explain the use of violence to explore the coups d'état as neocolonial disruptions and power abuse that create betrayal of independence promises. The work will be explored through the examination of such theories and philosophies in application to *Anthills of the Savannah*. This application will be accompanied by gender theories informed by Boehmer who analyses resistance narrative and dynamics and Gérard Genette's focalization in evaluating the role of media in pluralizing political and social truth.

The exploration of this paper will proceed by textual deconstruction of the identity of coup representation in scenes like Sam's speech and Ikem's editorials and the trace relational tensions among the different characters. *Anthills of the Savannah's* thematic mapping will serve the correlative disruptions, abuse, gender and media across in using intertextual links between the novel and theories developed in relation to the main themes that explain the question of coup d'état. The last method concerns the interpretive synthesis that will make the validation of theses and historical contexts in application to Gikandi's analyses of Nigerian political situations.

This paper's strategies' approach will be based on the evidence-based insights into the redemptive storytelling. The representation of coup d'état in *Anthills of the Savannah* demands an explanation of Nigerian contextual situation in regard to politics and governance. The way power turned to negligence and disconnection of social needs and interests will be at the center of the present study.

### 3. Literary Review

Recent scholarship on *Anthills of the Savannah* analyse the questions of power, political narration and the failure of leadership. Dr. Bawa Kammampool (2025) dissects Sam's coup as emblematic of unchecked absolute power where reforms for democracy and peace were the promises. The regime passes from promises to the imposition of brutal force, media censorship and 'President-for-Life'. Kammampool explains the way *Anthills of the Savannah* links Nigeria's 1966 coups to Kangan's plot. But, how is represented this coup in novel? The article does not give an explicit establishment of the coup d'état and its real presence. As Sam's regime mirrors Mobutu-style dictatorship, Kammampool concludes that coup also fails as governance alternatives and perpetuates instability without accountability and explains the violence through the narration.

The first coup of Sam explains the presence of the bloodless overthrow of corrupt civilians to Nigeria's 1966 and the ethnic tensions that exploded into riots in post-rigged 1965 elections.

Dr. Dauda Saidu (2025) frames coups as neo-colonial insecurity production. The weapon of police (drunken sergeant falsification of Ikem's confession) that creates the exacerbation of Abazon's famine echoes hybrid colonial-military legacies. Resistance's speech (pain of the wounded leader) inspires students and Chris flees to Abazon. This links elite critique to oral traditions. The failure of the referendum is at the origin of the legitimization of crisis and sabotage creating the space of more control and surveillance (biopolitics) and the riots around the death of Ikem. Saidu's conclusion reveal the insecurity that stems from failed leadership and the renewal through female/oral agency.

Swetanjali Pradhman and Savitri Tripathy (2024) compare the *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. The last extend electoral corruption to military purges. Sam's coup starts idealistic when he begins to accuse and make other the failure of his leadership (Chris and Ikem). The alienation of the masses makes Abazon's long defiance to expose clearly class struggles and intellectual's writings fuels of the second coup. *Anthills of the Savannah* ignores 1980s African political and social contexts.

Omer Suitan Sayad and Dr. Bilal Ahmad Dar (2015) traces coup as tragic inevitable. From coup hero to tyrant via isolation, Sam's reference remains a farce. *Anthills of the Savannah* mourns military rule's futility and urges cultural revival. Israt Jahan Nimni's (2025) examines the novel's poetics and chaotic postcolonial politics more precisely Sam's Sandhurst coup devolving into tyranny via purges, media control and eternal presidency. In consequence, Kangan remains a proxy for power usurpation and misguided leadership or even blind leadership. Sam is not misguided, he is blind of power.

Recent scholars meticulously dissect coup failures and Sam's devolution from reformer to paranoid tyrant via referendum rigging. They explain cyclical instability from the first coup toppling civilians, the second ousts where Sam becomes the chief via Staff and Sam's failure and loss of power. The present paper's contribution is in the way Sam's regime consolidates power pre-paranoia through media control via Chris, rapid purges and fortification as loyalty tests. These tools enable short-term stability and makes the coup inevitable. The coup success prototypes alternatives governance and decentralizes storytelling forums.

The question of power, politics and authority in *Anthills of the Savannah* centres the debates on the question of power change from civil regime to military one. How does the change of the civil regime to military exist? What are the causes? What might be the alternatives for the people's rights defense and democracy? Has Sam succeeded in controlling his authority through dictatorship? Has the new military regime made change? To answer these questions, this paper explores the narratives of power and politics through an authoritarian point of the leaders.

#### **4. Discussions and Results**

##### **4.1. Discussions**

##### **4.1.1. Coups as Disruptions of Stability**

*Anthills of the Savannah* is an exploration of postcolonial politics that explains the coup d'état as the central narrative and ideology. Set in Kangan, *Anthills of the Savannah* dramatizes the emergence of a group of military force that dictate their need and politics. General Sam, the seizure of power is a symptom of deeper structural crises that is inherited from the colonial governance to the precolonial politics. The collapse of constitutional explained the establishment of the rule of "His Excellency" Sam. This concept defines the hierarchical structure of order-making and governing. As the novel opens with the character of Sam as a Sandhurt-trained officer in the childhood friendship with Oriko, his discussion with the Professor gives an understanding of the dictatorial system he wants to establish. On page 15, the Professor talks to the President in these words: "*I do, sir. Every loyal citizen of this country knows your Excellency's attitude ....*" and the President answers: "*Sheer signs of indiscipline. Allow any of it, from whatever quarter, and you are as good as sunk.*" The words of Professor Okong are codified. He wanted to explain to the President his attitude of dictatorship after having suppressed the executive power and established a personal governance's system. Tensions between the Professor (the intellectual who thinks and speaks freely) and the President 'His Excellence' is one of the

relations that peak with Ikem's assassination, Chris' flight and death during the coup against Sam.

Chris, one of the coup's leaders is presented as a 'relentless intellectual' who speaks freely. He wants to explain to the President his attitude of non-coherence to the question of leadership required but he finally accepts the suppression of his executive power and Sam's personal governance system. The title 'His Excellency', also ironic as it for 'Head of the State. For the President, the deliverance of the governance to the military is just a passing phase but he master his loss of power and fear soon.

*"Head of State" who was, in addition, quite frankly terrified of his new job. This is something I have never been quite able to figure out: why the military armed to the teeth as they are can find un- armed civilians such a threat. For His Excellency, it was only a passing phase, though. He soon mastered his fear, although from time to time memories of it would seem to return to torment him. I can see no other explanation for his quite irrational and excessive fear of demonstrations, for example. Even pathetically peaceful, obsequious demonstrations. In his first days of power." (Achebe, 1988:12)*

This quote illustrates the anatomy of the coup's internal collapse. The initial unity of leaders fractures under Sam's dictatorship and rule. Ikem and Chris challenge the propaganda and rights suppression and initiates Sam's fear-driven which overreaches his disloyalty to reform promises and fuel divisions. This explains the novel's warning on military governance breeding paranoia and downfall which requires a civilian renewal for true peace.

Michel Foucault theory (1982, 1987 & 1988) of power explains the failure of order and democracy. This theorization of literary text is applicable to *Anthills of the Savannah*. Foucault conceptualizes power as diffuse, relational, and embedded in discourse, surveillance and everyday practices. This governance system is presented in *Anthills of the Savannah* though 'His Excellency's' political orientation. Power, in accordance to 'His Excellency' is not exercised through laws and force, but through the production of untruth, truth, normalization and discipline. The presence of Professor Okong and the non-answer of 'His Excellency' remains a factual point of this situation. On a page of *Anthills of the Savannah*, we read: "That's what I mean when I say that I have no Executive Council. Can you see what I mean now, all of you? Take your seats, gentlemen, and stay there!" He rushes out again" (9). This explains the suppression of the other forms of power and powers in the governance of 'His Excellency'. This suppression establishes the centralization of power in the figure of the Presidency's old military friends and his ignorance of the Professor Okong, Ikem and the other figures.

The success of the centralization of power begins with the suppression of the military members that is explained on the page 12.

*“And it had happened at the very tricky moment when His Excellency had decided to retire all military members of his cabinet and to replace them with civilians and, to cap it all, add President to all his titles. There were unconfirmed rumors of unrest, secret trials and executions in the barracks. But His Excellency rode the storm quite comfortably thanks to two key appointments he had personally made—the Army Chief of Staff and the Director of the State Research Council, the secret police.”*

The expressions ‘retire all military’ and ‘add President to all his titles’ explain the beginning of autocratic system where power remains in the hand of one person, ‘His Excellency’. This centralization of power participates in the building of what can be said, done and organized. Even in their discussions, ‘His Excellency’ defends his superior. As democratic system allows opposition in thinking, discourse and interpreting, suppressing the other level of powers remains a step of dictatorship. This justifies the censorship and political intimidation.

This erosion of constitutionalism and the suppression of civil liberties in *Anthills of the Savannah* illustrate the governance by disciplinary control instead of guarantying people’s rights. Chris occupation of one of the privileged positions makes him participate in the normalization of the abnormal, discrimination and oppression. The silence of intellectuals like Professor Okong when the President asks their opinions remain part of the technologies of power that enables the authoritarian order to masquerade. The intimidation is conceptualized in these words:

*“Anyone walking out of that door will not go home but head straight into detention. Yes I remember that. So?”* (Achebe, 1988:109).

The personal power control establishment reflects the people management through fear, regulation, acceptance and exclusion. The President makes the decision on whose voices matter, whose voices are authorized and even the answers to his questions and resolutions/verdicts are imposed instead of being debated. Power distribution failure between different leaders articulates the collapse of democracy and makes resistance Balkanized. These mechanisms explain the critical status of *Anthills of the Savannah* when dealing with the question of politics, leadership and coup d’état. Are there other competing theories or views of power? To answer this question, power abuse in the novel explained in the beginning establishes the resistance that will overthrow ‘His Excellency’s regime.

#### 4.1.2. Abuse of Power

The presence of power abuse in *Anthills of the Savannah* through the political authority degenerates into dictatorial domination. Power, initially explained through the rhetoric of national unity and stability in the novel has become personalized and coercive under ‘His Excellency’ rule. In consequence, abuse of power does not arise suddenly. It has occurred through a strategic imposition of personal interests and the gradual erosion of democratic norms and institutional restraint. This establishment is normalized by ‘His Excellency’ through his relations, discussions and meetings with the other members of the governance.

Sam, the Head of the State, also known as General Sam embodies executive absolutism. This situation is explained in the process of the suppression of the constitutional limitation as a political orientation. The ignorance of the presence of Prof. Okong by the President explains the personal rule and concentration of norms. We read on page 14: “*Good day, Your Excellency, Mr. President,*” intoned Professor Okong executing at the same time a ninety-degree bow. No reply nor any kind of recognition of his presence. His Excellency continued writing on his drafting pad for a full minute more before looking up. Then he spoke abruptly as though to an intruder he wanted to be rid of quickly”. This citation explains the production of fear by the hierarchization of power and social relations. Added to this, the arbitrary arrest and the execution of Ikem Osodi exemplify the way personal power weaponized and silenced peoples.

Sam post-coup as the ‘man of the people’ evoking the conceptualization of ‘revolution’ and ‘progress’. Chris and Ikem, the two characters who initiated the revolution by writing, speaking and making the people understand the way ‘His Excellency’ governs. Even concepts like “*enemies of the state*” (Achebe, 1988:46&77) and “*The President-for-Life*” are just expressions of manipulation of words. ‘Enemies of the State’ is an allegory of the ‘Enemies of the President’ and ‘The President-for-Life’ is simply one of the consequences of His dictatorial imposed governance. On page 5, it is written: “*The people have spoken. Their desire is manifest. You are condemned to serve them for life.*” By the end, ‘Karma’ recurs “*What a man sows, that shall he also reap*”. Sam’s promise to Chris and Ikem turn to disgrace and un-loyalty. The President imposition of his Excellency and the suppression of alternative powers mark the beginning of his disrespect of the democratic rules that make him President. All begin when he started to forget his routine of elections and enforces his personal laws and order. The personalization of power remains the starting point of His Excellency’s failure to gain people’s desire. As he continues in dictatorship, he finds himself in a room of searching for those who do not respect his decisions. His questions to his lawyer to give him information on those who do

not respect his political is an illustration of power centralization. As evidence, the suppression of alternative political imaginaries creates revolutionary ideologies and orientations. As Chris states: “*“Nations,” he said, ‘were fostered as much by structures as by laws and revolutions. These structures where they exist now are the pride of their nations. »* (67) and words like ‘betrayal’ (Achebe, 1988:184&187).

The referendum on making Sam ‘President-for-Life’ fails because of the opposition from Abazon (Omer Sultan Sayad & Dr. Bilal Ahmad Dar, 2015). In fact, Abazon is a group of six leaders who suffer severe drought. They take Sam’s false claim of reluctance at facing political values in the defense of democracy and people’s rights. Their ‘no-vote’ against the referendum has made Sam’s proposal Life-Governance fail. This refuse to endorse lifelong tyranny is gained through Abazon’s collective grassroots awareness and consciousness. Ikem’s amplification of the information and sympathy to citizen problems make the voice of anti-tyranny success. In consequence, on a page of *Anthills of the Savannah*, it is noticed: “*Yes, in another development, according to this smug newscaster dispensing national anguish in carefully measured milligrammes, six leaders from Abazon who were involved in a recent illegal march on the Presidential Palace without police permit as required by decree had been arrested. And (in the same development) the office of the Director of SRC had informed the Crime Correspondent of KTV that the six men who had made useful statements were being held in BMSP.*” (Achebe, 1988:136)

Abazon’s group vote against the referendum because of their principle defiance against authoritarianism. They see referendum as a sham power grab that rejects His Excellency’s feigned reluctance and coercive tactics. As they prioritize truth instead of defending untruth, Abazon’s defense of communal honor over ‘loyalty’ has viewed the lifelong rule as a betrayal of democratic ideals. This division of peoples as a province dissenting the manipulation of information and truth embodies the failed postcolonial leadership with the rejection of absolute power.

Sam perceives the referendum’s failure as his collaborators’ betrayal that ignites paranoia that fractures trust between Kangan’s rulers and ruled. This culminates the governance collapse. Sam rejects personal fault instead of suspecting sabotage by inner allies like Chris and Osodi. He accuses them of colluding with Abazon ‘malcontents’ and demands Chris to fire Ikem from the National Gazette editorship. Chris hesitation prompts Sam’s threat to implicate him in the defeat. Sam views his collaborators as ‘lukewarm loyalty’ as jealously blocking his destiny. We read in this perspective, “*Well, appearing is very important to him. Not appearing is, of course, the worst kind of disgrace. And all this is tied up in his mind with his failed referendum for life president. The pain still rankles. I don’t think I told this to either of you at the time. But after the failure of the*

*referendum he had complained bitterly to Professor Okong that I had not played my part as Commissioner for Information to ensure the success of the exercise and that you had seen fit to abandon your editorial chair at that crucial moment and take your annual leave.” (Achebe, 1988:135-136). In consequence, Sam weaponized the state power by closing Abazon’s drought-relief boreholes and punishes his province defiance. This creates mass alienation and the reliance of governance for survival.*

The fragility of the regime crumbles under corrupt weight. Abazon’s elders’ petition symbolizes the communal appeals ignorance of tyranny and answer to democracy. Chris, the Commissioner for Information has all the secrets and with the fracture of power relations and Ikem supports for coup sour into hunter-prey dynamics. But, Ikem is assassinated finally and Chris fled in search for peace and rest. The paranoia cascade has produced Presidential downfall. Ikem’s death sparks public unrest and draws sympathy from Beatrice, a Chris’s partner and Abazon’s leaders joined the revolution.

The capture of the tipping point of the BBC broadcasts on Ikem’s death in police custody and Chris’s reported demise ignite public outrages. The regime of Sam devolves into brutal suppression and betrayal of peoples who do not accept the Leader’s ideology. In consequence, Sam’s government faces a dual voice, the voice of Ikem through silence and the high-profile ally of Chris. Sam’s regime fabricates narratives and Chris and Ikem deconstructs the same narrative. This amplifies truth and turns suppressed intellectuals from governance into martyrs. In fact,

*By the third morning the BBC which had already broadcast news of Ikem’s death carried an interview between their Bassa correspondent and Chris who was described as a key member of the Kangan government and friend of the highly admired and talented poet, Ikem Osodi, whose reported death while in police custody had plunged the Military Government of this troubled West African State into deep crisis. In a voice full of emotion but steady and without shrillness Chris had described the official account of Ikem’s death as “patently false.” How could he be sure of that? Because Ikem was taken from his flat in handcuffs and so could not have wrenched a gun from his captors. So you are saying in effect that he was murdered? I am saying that there is no shred of doubt that Ikem Osodi was brutally murdered in cold blood by the security officers of this government. (Achebe, 1988:158-159)*

This quote explains the moment catalyzing Sam’s end as an unarmed civilian rise against military overreach. As a matter of fact, power abuses beyond security and invites the destruction of those who maintain it.

Unfortunately, the President demands for those who are disloyal to him represents the persistence of the fracture of power and his fail of governance, a thing he does not

accept. On page 21, we read: “*“I am sorry, Your Excellency. Don’t blame me; blame Your Excellency’s inimitable sense of humour . . . To speak the truth, Your Excellency, I have no evidence of disloyalty on the part of my honourable colleague.” He paused for effect. But nothing showed on His Excellency’s face. “But lawyers are also human. I have a personal feeling which may not stand up in court, I agree, but I hold it very strongly and if Chris were here I would say it to his face. I don’t think Chris is one hundred percent behind you.”*”.

Chris plays a pivotal role in the referendum’s failure through his inaction and perceived disloyalty. Chris, the main character who can shape and manipulate information around the ‘President’ refuses to promote the President programs. The suspect of the President that Chris starts to help Abazon, his main opposition pushes him to try to suppress the editorials in the National Gazette. The loyalty conflict in governance makes the fracture of power a moving success of Abazon. Chris’s marginalization by the President accelerates the ruler-ruled chasm and the absence of propaganda and exposes the President’s regime hypocrisy, police corruption [e.g. the drunken sergeant fabricating Ikem’s confession]. This symbolizes ‘...what a man sows...’ and anthills, this transient power structures foreshadows backlash with Chris’s journey to Abazon. In consequence, communal renewal started to gain space and fear to disappear. Renewal against isolationism manifests in the retreat into the President Palace. Post-Abazon’s referendum rejection and the self-imposed bubble of Sam view the caution of people as subversion. As Sam’s demand alienates Chris who is forced to resign and leads to Ikem’s assassination.

#### **4.1.3. Intellectuals and Resistance in Political Narratives**

Chris Oriko and Ikem Osodi are the intellectuals who embody resistance against Sam’s tyranny. Chris, the Commissioner for Information and Ikem, the National Gazette editor are Sam’s childhood friends and fellow Sandhurst graduates. The childhood Sam’s friends orchestrate the military coup to oust a corrupt civilian regime. They view Sam as a pragmatic reformer. Their intellectual idealism and protests fuel this ‘revolution’ with the writings of Ikem and Chris’s propaganda that have long legitimized Sam’s rule. The role of intellectuals like Ikem and Chris has never been confined solely to the library and laboratory. The pursuit of knowledge has been inextricably linked to the pursuit of justice, democracy and equality. When injustice begins in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Chris and Ikem, through systematic inequality, erosion of truth and the marginalization of opposite voices, face the profound moral crossroads. They become vocal dissenters and possess a unique toolkit: they make the deconstruction of complex systems and articulate the consequences that may not be visible to the public. On a page of the novel, we read: “*Listen. The way I see it this matter is not likely to end with mere suspension for conspiring*

*with thugs to invade the Presidential Palace. That may be only the merest tip of the iceberg. There is some indication that Ikem might have colluded with these same people to sabotage the presidency referendum two years ago. I don't mind telling you that your own role in that fiasco was never cleared up satisfactorily either and may well come up for further investigation.*" (Achebe, 1988:133). Ikem and Chris choose to defend justice and tell the truth. This pedagogy of resistance recognizes the early signs of injustice before they become normalized. The tragic intersection of power, intellect, and social responsibility makes living a matter of death and life. Ikem, the poet and editor remains the provocateur and believes that intellectual's primary weapon is the 'story' and the 'word'.

For Ikem, witnessing The Father's ongoing injustices and failing to write about them constitutes a betrayal of the artist's soul. Ikem writes to prevent peoples, to defend social and political values and to stop the propaganda of the regime. In contrast, Chris, the Commissioner for Information is the intellectual within the system. His proximity to power for decades does not equal the ability to reform it (Nasrullah Mambrol, 2022).

*Anthills of the Savannah's* title serves as a metaphor for the intellectual duties. Just like 'anthills' survive a savannah fire to tell where the grass stood, the intellectual acts as the custodian of memory. The rejection of The President's position by Chris and Ikem explains the importance of the preservation of truth and the defense of collective well-being. Ikem denounces Sam's 'President-for-Life' ambitions and Abazon's mistreatment. This positions him as a defender of dissent voices and the radical public opinion. This process of informing has inspired unrest. Chris refuses to fire Ikem and exposes the President's regime flaws to international media.

After the suppression of the critiques of the 'President's position', Chris confesses his judgement as flawed after witnessing Ikem's death and the lies of the state. This is a duty fulfilled and positions Chris to 'tell the story' where the 'metaphor is incomplete'. This exposition of the incomplete narratives evolves from silence under the regime of Sam and the rejection of 'international media' fabricated innocence. On page 5, it is written:

*"But you, I beg pardon, I mean Your Excellency, cannot break a word you never even said. The nonsense about one hundred per cent was only the machination of a newspaper editor who in my judgement is a self-seeking saboteur."* (Achebe, 1988:5)

In consequence, judgement weaponized resistance and Chris's admission '...But you...' which injects truth into Sam's echo chamber.

In consequence, Sam's isolation leads Chief of Staff to seize power after Ikem's murder sparks riots. This first coup's logic has not renewals. This is a representation of

transient power and Beatrice's final naming storytelling armed overthrow. Ikem's and Chris's criticisms erode Sam's regime and spark cycles of coups and unrest (Elif Haris, 2022).

Chris's refusal to fire Ikem and subsequent resignation expose disunity and creates a link with local intellectuals to face resistance. As a consequence, the traffic accident that sparks riots and public outrage create chaos that the General Staff exploit for the coup against Sam.

#### 4.1.4. The coup and its Alternatives

*“This is a military government in a backward West African State called Kangan ...”* (Achebe, 1988:133)

The coup is a flawed shortcut in postcolonial Kangan. It is inevitable in regard to the power abuse. By the fact of anatomizing the coup d'état in *Anthills of Savannah*, Kangan's political crisis is profoundly human and ethical. With the transformation of values, narratives and forms of leaderships from an asker of power to an imposer [Sam], the state experiences the multitude appropriation of political control from civil act to military establishments.

The normalization of coup d'état as a model of political change makes the coup real in its material violence and illusory in its promises of reform. Coup exists and persists because it is rooted in the failures of authoritarian leadership, militarized governance and exclusionary politics instead of being individual incompetence. The existence of the coup is persisting through the arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, control of media narratives and the assassination of opponents like Chris. In consequence, power is seized and maintained through the 'gun' which replaces 'constitutional legitimacy' and the marginalization of politics, the coup as the civil regime is the default language of political succession. This illusion of the coup is presented as an act of national salvation. On pages 155 and 156, this conceptualization of coup d'état marks the metaphor of *Anthills of the Savannah*. On these two pages, we read:

*“In the early hours of this morning a team of security officers effected the arrest of Mr. Osodi in his official flat at 202 Kingsway Road in the Government Reservation Area and were taking him in a military vehicle for questioning at the SRC Headquarters when he seized a gun from one of his escorts. In the scuffle that ensued between Mr. Osodi and his guards in the moving vehicle Mr. Osodi was fatally wounded by gunshot. His Excellency has already appointed a high-level inquiry into the accident to be headed by the Chief of Staff, Major-General Ahmed Lango, with the directive to commence investigations immediately and to report within fourteen days.* (Achebe, 1988:155-156)

The State communique ‘...in the early hours of this mourning a team of security officers effected the arrest of Mr. Osodi...’ is a careful construction of narration that explains the way military regime manufactured truth to make the legitimacy of violence and the violation of human rights. ‘...for questioning...’ also create an illusion of legality and professionalism while it masks the brutality of the act. This administrative language hides the danger of the masked narrative of state. And ‘...seized a gun...’ causes the scuffle shifts blame onto Osodi. In consequence, this communique legitimizes the logic of the coup. This space of coup where gun replaces law, narrative replace truth and force replaces dialogue remains the symbolic elimination of alternatives to militarized politics. In such contexts, ethical and intellectual voices are treated as enemies and renewal impossible.

On pages 42 and 43, Chris reflects the military vocation which offers a subtle and incisive critique the psychology of military power and its role. Chris’s theory distinguishes between two types of men drawn to military life. The one genuinely strong and falsely strong for the other. This interrogates the moral foundation of military authority and explain the way military regimes degenerate into abuse of power and instability. The truly strong military represents the individuals whose strength is inward, disciplined and ethical. These men do not need to advertise their power and they have natural and restrained authority. They are able to become ‘magnificent soldiers’ and rare. They have the capacity of self-control rather than aggression, could be compatible with leadership and moral responsibility. They do not seek spectacle and domination. The second category which Chris describes as ‘the rest who would be strong’ forms the majority. They are attracted to the military not out of sense of duty because it offers the appearance of strength \_the ‘swank’. Uniforms, weapons, ranks and public deference provide a shortcut to power and respect. These last group of men lack these structures of power and respect.

*Chris has a very good theory, I think, on the military vocation. According to this theory military life attracts two different kinds of men: the truly strong who are very rare, and the rest who would be strong. The first group make magnificent soldiers and remain good people hardly ever showing let alone flaunting their strength. The rest are there for the swank. The truth of this came to me on two separate occasions afterwards, both of them interestingly enough at the Gelele Market. A tottering pugnacious drunkard was provoking a fight with a towering stranger carrying a small portmanteau and obviously on his way to the Motor Park. (Achebe, 1988:42-43)*

*Anthills of the Savannah* explains that military institutions in postcolonial states disproportionately recruits and empowers these forms of men. This also explain the reasons why some military power in postcolonial world manifest as arrogance, brutality and performative dominance instead of making discipline services. Achebe reinforces this

theory by symbolizes it to the character of Chris as a theorist through anecdote at the Gelegele Market. ‘...tottering pugnacious drunkard...’ explains the false strength which is loud, aggressive, unstable and desperate to assert domination. This market, an ordinary place for public demonstrates the truth that strength does not require institutional power and spectacle to assert itself.

Media distortion, gender prejudice and militarized politics intersect and produce the hostile political narrative around Beatrice. At page 77, this description of her as a ‘letter-day Madame Pompadour’ is not neutral metaphor. It is a loaded political accusation shaped by the anxieties of a newly installed military regime and the opportunism of journalists seeking favor with power. This representation of media explains the eager of pretentious journalists to intricate in the new rulers, manufactured scandal as a substitute truth. The invocation of Madame Pompadour remembers the royal mistress who makes influence through intimacy rather than intellect. The journalists present Beatrice as a sexual manipulation. This misrepresentation reflects the logic of the military power.

*Pretentious journalists hoping to catch the attention of the new military rulers created an image of me as “the latter-day Madame Pompadour” who manipulated generals and patronized writers. (Achebe, 1988:77)*

Kangan’s military regime is suspicious of informal influence, dialogue and intellectual mediation. Unable to categorize its ethical authority, the military regime and its media allies recode influence of danger, erosion and conspiratorialism. The collapse of journalistic ethics underlined at the page 77 is crucial as control over arms. The defamation of Beatrice conceptualizes the neutralization of alternative political voice and roots in care, dialogue and ethical responsibility. This attack on Beatrice’s reputation mirrors the physical elimination of Ikem as they are both acts of silencing, executed through different means.

The survival of the authoritarian power is illustrated through the discrediting ethical resistance especially when referring to Beatrice. In consequence, *Anthills of the Savannah* represents the struggle for representation is always an occurring problem. Added to this, narrative justice and the right to define political being beyond misogynistic and authoritarian myths remain problematic.

The moral bankruptcy and the cyclical absurdity of coup exposed on pages 202 and 203 theorize the dismantling of the myths of military redemption. These facts reveal the reproduction of violence and deception that new government claims to eradicate. The military regime faces this problem and does not find solution to it. Major-General Ahmed Lango is the savior of the nation but also the symbol of opportunistic power. On pages 202 and 203, we read: *“Twenty-four hours after the coup d’état, before the news of Chris got*

to her, she had watched with utter revulsion a lachrymose Major-General Ahmed Lango suddenly surface and make his “pledge to the nation to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime quickly to book.” Even the gullible people of Kangan, famous for dancing in the streets at every change of government, were asking where this loyal officer was hiding in the first twenty-four hours after his Commander was kidnapped from the Palace by “unknown persons,” tortured, shot in the head and buried under one foot of soil in the bush.” (Achebe, 1988:202-203)

The General ‘sudden’ surfaces twenty-four hours after the coup accompanied by tears and solemn rhetoric symbolize the performative nature of military morality. Described as ‘lachrymose’, the General’s speech is understood as symbols of sincerity and frames. The vocabulary ‘heinous crime’, ‘bringing perpetrators to book’ illustrates the authoritarian transitions where justice is promised in immediately after violence’s normalization. The absent of the General when his Commander was abducted, tortured and executed secretly buried exposes the selective visibility of military loyalty. This demonstrates that allegiance appears only after power shift.

#### 4.2. Results

Coup exists because of militarized masculinity rewards. It persists because of the narrative manipulation distinguishing violence as legality and occurs because each new regime inherits and reproduces the same authoritarian logic. Against this closed circuit of force, *Anthills of Savannah* proposes fragile and meaningful alternatives through ethical leadership, dialogic politics, intellectual freedom, gendered ethics of care and inclusive storytelling. These alternatives do not struggle to compete with the spectacle of the coup but they are paths capable to break the cycle.

This examination of *Anthills of the Savannah* has established the structural and recurrent phenomenon rooted in militarized governance, weak institutions and legitimacy deficits. Coups emerge from the normalization of force as a political language and persist because power is detached from ethical responsibility and popular consent.

Coups operate through physical violence and narrative control. The control of media and language is central and crucial to the coup survival. Through intellectual dissent, narrative plurality, gendered ethics of care and political imagination, Beatrice, Ikem and Chris figures propose non-violent modes of political transformation. These inevitable coup and moral emptiness makes the novel works like a cautionary political text.

## 5. Conclusion

This work has demonstrated that *Anthills of the Savannah* offers a multifaceted anatomy of the coup d'état in Kangan, the postcolonial West African state. Military intervention, authoritarian leadership and ideological manipulation expose the coup as corrective political mechanism and symptom of deeper structural narrative failures within governance.

The depiction of the coup operates at different levels from characters to discourse, discourse to belonging and belonging to symbolism. Military coup is sustained by constructed narratives and official statements of media which obscure truth and normalize repression. In consequence, the coup reproduces the conditions it claims to resolve. Then, the solution to human well-being in both civil and military power is not possible. But, the novel gestures toward intellectual resistance, narrative plurality and gendered ethics of care through Beatrice, Ikem and Chris reveal the possibility of power alternative through free minds.

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