

# ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



**ISRG PUBLISHERS**

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

**ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)**

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – III Issue –IV (July-August) 2025

Frequency: Bimonthly



## Decoding the language of Alienation: Reading Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*.

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| **Received:** 24.07.2025 | **Accepted:** 29.07.2025 | **Published:** 09.08.2025

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### Abstract

In *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) Chinua Achebe discusses a form of government in which one person possesses absolute power without any effective constitutional control, uses brutal military force to gain more power, and for that matter controls the flow of information in the country. Chinua Achebe has used this novel to reflect the socio-political realities of the African continent post independence. The novel delineates all the attributes of the authoritarian state structures : the activities of law enforcement agents, the secret intelligence services, the courts, prison and detention camps used to dissuade defiant citizens. In his endeavour, the novelist combines multiple narrative styles and techniques to construct his story and shows that the successive regimes of the fictional Kangan is made up of the same General Sam and his collaborators who are only driven by sheer greed and hunger for more power. The analysis of data gathered shows that coup d'états are not better alternatives for socio political development: the putschists may be even worse than before because they have no development scheme. *Anthills of the Savannah* is a critique of post-independence Africa whose leaders have deviated from the aesthetics of democracy to espouse the culture of dictatorship. This paper argues that a close reading of literary fiction can meaningfully contribute to human's full understanding of the disgusting and enduring problem of authoritarian state structures. Dictatorship, as discussed by the novelist, is theorised as a form of concentrated economic and political power that facilitates Africa's continued dependency. I use the Marxist critical approach to literature to shed light on the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

**Keywords:** Decode, language, Alienation, military power, constitution, control, socio political development, democracy.

## Introduction:

Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* focuses on alienation from socio-political and economic situations, in authoritarian nations like his fictional Nigeria and examines the political well-being of the former colonizer so as to measure the extent to which individuals feel powerless over government. Such attitudes may be connected to a situation of normlessness, or anomie, which occurs when individuals are no longer guided by the political rules. The motivation for the topic centers on the fact that socio-political and economic alienation thrives in contemporary society and advocates that the general public must rise up against all forms of alienation. This research seeks to provide an insight into as well as an analysis of the socio-political and economic trends that characterized the military days of Nigeria's recent past. In fact, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is a fictional account of three schoolmates, namely Christ, Sam and Beatrice, who feature as the new guides in a new conquered regime in the fictional country of Kangan. Sam is the new president; Chris, minister of information, while Ikem Ishodi is the editor of the 'national gazette', the country's newspaper or organ of propaganda. As the story unfolds, the president is presented to the reader as one who is craving for more power. First of all, he kills his collaborators; his friend Ikem for standing in his way and, secondly hunts for Chris, who is aware of the danger and runs for his life. Sam's dictatorial regime is cut short by a counter-coup leading to his early demise. Unfortunately, Chris who lives to see the end of Sam's dictatorship also dies in the process, but with a smile of victory. With this novel, Achebe addresses the evil associated with power corruption and shows how power corrupts for Sam is now pursuing absolute power. The novelist delineates how the fierce pursuit of self-interest is detrimental to the cause of the community. Achebe's text tries as much as possible to offer a succession of a corrupt history and posits that the issue of peace in Kangan is not guaranteed since the successive regime is made up of members of the coup that overthrew the last regime and might be driven by the same greed and hunger for more power.

The purpose of this essay is to critically examine how socio-political and economic alienation manifests itself in Chinua Achebe's novel. In this, I shall examine the characters and their experiences and analyze as well how the novelist presents a society that needs restoration. The concept of alienation is used in this paper to mean the state of feeling confused, lost, lonely, helpless, and desire for dependence. *Anthills of the Savannah* is going to be analyzed in this essay by focusing on two features of alienation; social and political with reference to economic alienation considering Gromso's fundamental thesis that it is the economic dominant class that controls the social and political apparatus.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000:27) defines alienation as "making somebody feel that he/she does not belong to a particular group". From this, it can be argued that alienation can be seen as ceasing to feel as one with the society and the world in order to re-affirm one's identity and to ask questions about the strange society in which one has one's being. Alienation is a feeling of not belonging. This feeling can be physical, mental, religious, spiritual, psychological, political, social, or economic. At one time or another, each one of us has experienced alienation in one form or another whether in a school, among family members, in religion, in politics, and in society. The most common form of alienation is the physical and cultural kind experiencing "foreignness" or "culture shock". This is also the kind of alienation

that is most easily understood; however, when one feels alienated in one's own home, society, religion, or culture, it is more difficult to rationalize or understand that feeling of not belonging. From the ongoing, we may say that sociopolitical alienation consists of attitudes whereby citizens develop or fail to develop meanings and evaluations about government and about their own power or powerlessness in politics. Specifically, political alienation is composed of the attitudes of distrust and inefficacy. Distrust or cynicism is a generalized negative attitude about governmental outputs: the policies, operations, and conditions produced by government. Compared to the simple dislike of a particular policy or official, distrust is broader in scope. Whereas distrust is an evaluation of governmental outputs, inefficacy is an expectation about inputs, that is, the processes of influence over government. People have a "sense of inefficacy when they judge themselves as powerless to influence government policies or deliberations" (Gamson 1971). Chinua Achebe like most African writers, directs their literary efforts towards raising the socio-political and economic contradiction inherent in their societies and thereby arouses awareness. Explicitly stated or tacitly assumed, the notion of alienation remained central to Marx's social and economic analysis. In an alienated society, the whole mind-set of men and their consciousness is to a large extent only the reflection of the conditions in which they find themselves and of the position in the process of production in which they are variously placed. This suggests Marx's sociology of knowledge, which will serve as a critical framework to this essay. Marxism, in its pursuit of socio-political change attempts to redefine human existence through social strata.

The theoretical framework in this study draws from the Marxist theory of Alienation. To be specific, socio-political and economic alienation have also been chosen for this research work. This approach considers and uses literature as a weapon that can be used for the liberation of the less privileged masses and the down-trodden who have been relegated in the society. The Marxist approach to literature is a modern approach where dialectic materialism is emphasized. When literature began to be recognized as a weapon for social change, Karl Marx, a nineteenth century political thinker brought about the Marxist approach as a struggle of the individual economic and political power. In its pursuit of socio-political change, Marxism attempts to redefine human existence through class. Alienation, one of the theories of Marxism has been chosen for this research using *Anthills of the Savannah*. Closely linked with history in its various ramifications, alienation is an essential contradiction in the social process. It is therefore an inevitable social phenomenon in the materialist interpretation of history and the psychological process that relates to all forms of production whether in terms of social service, amenities or imaginative creativity. The most predominant and fundamental facet of alienation is that which is economic. Basically, the artist is then forced to produce the literature of social classes by defining the relationship between work, art and ideology. Alienation in *Anthills of the Savannah* is therefore manifested in the relationship between the oppressed characters and the apparatus of what Paulo Frere regards as "director society". Contemporary African fiction has proved beyond reasonable doubt that African history and literature are replete with serious contradictions.

### I- ALIENATION: DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

Marx's theory of alienation has been thoroughly addressed by various scholars, in particular Ollman (1976) and Seeman (1959). During the last few decades many other contributions have been

made in the fields of sociology and psychology concerning alienation. However, since the focus of the proposed study is literary, no attempt will be made to contribute to these fields. The aim is to apply these recent theoretical contributions to the literature that stems from the alienated society and alienated individuals in order to come to a better understanding of how alienation manifests in *Anthills of the Savannah*. For Seeman (1959: 788), social isolation “is most common in descriptions of the intellectual role, where writers refer to the detachment of the intellectual from popular cultural standards”. The root meaning of alienation had to do with a relationship to property. For instance, one can decide to alienate one’s property by transferring it to another person, or perhaps an institution. However, during the seventeenth century, the focus of the term shifted from material to immaterial possessions such as rights and sovereignty over one’s self. In this sense, alienation is seen as an estrangement from one’s physical and psychological environment which breeds in the process frustration and aggression; a form of what I call exploitation, intimidation and oppression. In other words, it is the deprivation of an individual’s right economically, physically, politically, socially and psychologically. In conjunction with social or collective ethics, alienation is a substitution for ‘non-conformism’; either in form of ‘individualism’ or ‘collectivism’ and that individual or group is seen usually as being alone, lonely and deeply troubled in such a way that whatever the individual or the group does, the individual or group, finds no fulfillment at all. Ingelhart (2000, p.100) perceives alienation as a form of isolation when he says:

Alienation can also refer to the isolation of individuals from a community- a detachment from the activities, identification and ties that a community can provide. In addition, the concept of alienation has included the notion of cultural radicalism or estrangement from the established values of a society.

Alienation involves an individual estranging self from the social whole order to prevent self from being swallowed up in the whole. This estrangement or the breaking up of self from the surroundings results in restlessness, continuous state of anxiety and worry. From the materialists’ approach to the concept of alienation, Ollman (1971, p. 8) asserts:

Man being separated from his work (he plays no part in deciding what to do or how to do it) - a break between the individual and his life activity. Man is said to be separated from his own products (he has no control over what he makes or what becomes of it afterwards) – a break between the individual and the material world. He is also said to be separated from his fellow man (competition and class hostility have rendered most forms of cooperation impossible) – a break between man and man. In each instance, a relation that distinguishes the human species has disappeared and its constituent elements have been re-organized to appear as something else.

Historically, alienation is a negative, corrupt and exploitative phenomenon. It is a core area of materialist interpretation of history and psychological process as regards all forms of production. Ollman’s view can be regarded as a materialist’s approach to the concept of alienation. It views alienation in terms of social and ethics or moral code of conducts that are violated, polluted thereby dislocating the social apparatus. Alienation is the

inescapable moral burden of the individual that could either be willful or object; natural or dialectical in that it is a product of human activity and thus can be rectified through human activity. Ollman (1971, p. 9) citing Marx sees alienation as “distortion and a separation”. He then notes that “an alienated man is an abstraction” because that he has lost touch with all human specificity.

In relating alienation to the social situation of the society, one can see to what alienation results when the members of a social structure have the feelings of being estranged from their society. *Encyclopedia Britannica* refers to alienation in social sciences to the “state of feeling estranged or separated from one’s milieu, work, products of work or self”. Durkheim (1976) viewed alienation as “the consequence of a condition of ‘anomie’, or “the perceived lack of socially approved means and norms to guide one’s behaviour for the purpose of achieving culturally prescribed goals”. It was rather a new dimension to the explanation of alienation quite contrary to the previous ones. Durkheim (1976, p. 416) asserted that “if human needs are not proportionate to the available means, no individual can be happy”. But usually, human needs are unlimited because all these needs are not bio-generic which may not exceed the physical demands of a body. Most of the human needs are social and in a competitive society, these needs are ever increasing. Durkheim’s concept of ‘anomie’ was further refined by Merton (1976; p. 166). He described ‘anomie’ as “breakdown in the social structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them”. Seeman (1991) in his contribution also, defines alienation when he says:

Alienation is a phenomenon in which the individual perceives himself as: unable to control socio-political events occurring around him; unclear about his beliefs (either interpretations or norms) and the world around, unable to make decisions and thus unable to predict consequences of his own behaviour; facing disjunction between his personal goals and socially approved means to attain those goals; different from others and the normative system in the society, hence separated from others and the society at large; and as a consequence; estranged from himself.

In fact, despite its popularity of analysis of contemporary life, the idea of alienation remains an ambiguous concept with some elusive meanings. However, Seeman (1991) breaks ‘alienation’ into five variants to make it more understandable:

- *Powerlessness*: This phenomenon was first discussed by Marx in terms of ‘lack of control’. However, Seeman asserted that powerlessness is a socio-psychological phenomenon rather than an objective condition in society.
- *Normlessness*: This variant of alienation has its root in the concept of ‘anomie’ as conceived by Merton (1957) and Durkheim (1976). Merton (1957, p. 427) asserted that ‘anomie’ is “a failure of institutionally prescribed means or conduct to achieve culturally prescribed goals”.
- *Meaninglessness*: In the state of meaninglessness, individual’s ability to predict about social situations and the outcome of his own behaviour is diminished.



- *Self-Estrangement*: According to Seeman, “a person is self-estranged when engaged in an activity that is not rewarding in itself but is instrumental in satisfying extrinsic needs, such as the need for food and security”.
- *Social Isolation*: The individual feels himself separate from the society and its normative system. His dissociation from others and overall social system leads to a perception of social isolation. Alienation is the natural consequence of combination of neo-colonialism and capitalism. It is a social phenomenon that breeds poverty and reduces man to sub-human level. Alienation creates a huge gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ i.e. alienating one from the other.

Before tackling the topic in its different articulations, it worth pointing out that in Hegel’s and Marx’s analyses of civic and capitalist society, alienation meant a state or a process of human disconnectedness. According to Claude S. Fischer (1974, p.18), “alienation is the state in which the actor fails to perceive a positive interdependence between himself and social relationships or other objectifications”.

## II- SOCIAL ALIENATION IN ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH

Sociology is “the scientific study of society, including patterns of social relationships, and social interaction, and culture”. In other words, sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behaviour. The underlying theoretical premise of this concept is found in Mutiso (1974, p. 3). He states that,

All literature, to the extent that it deals with individuals in society, contains elements of social and political theory. Obviously, the creative writer does not write with the intension of propagating a particular idea, but he cannot create in a vacuum. When he depicts a character or an incident, his judgments come into play, thereby revealing some of the value choices he has made either consciously or unconsciously. All literature depicts the values of the people and the period. This is to say that however imaginative a writer may be, the framework of his writings must always be the society he knows best.

Social alienation means being culturally or socially disconnected from the social values of a society. Social alienation is a situation when an individual is in a position of estrangement in cultural settings that he/she views as unpredictable, unacceptable and foreign. Social alienation is a situation whereby the ruling class controls the resources available thereby rationalizing the social well-being of the members in the society. In this sense, social alienation implies social deprivation of basic social amenities like hospitals, water, electricity, good roads and education. Socially alienated people are oppressed, suppressed and alienated by the ruling class. Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is a reflection of the military days in Nigeria. Achebe uses characters as ordinary people living in poverty to mirror the entire poverty of all the ordinary citizens of contemporary Africa under a military dictatorship and its attendant aberrations. The novelist depicts his Excellency, General Sam, a Sandhurst trained soldier who is the Head of State of the a fictional Kangan Republic, as power drunk confusionist, who is insensitive to the social and political needs of his own people. This is made evident when His Excellency, Sam, deprives the people of Abazon from having drinking water.

*Anthills of the Savannah* starts out by describing a cabinet meeting. After the session is closed it turns out that outside the palace, there is crowd of people from the province of Abazon who try to meet the President. The Abazonians are presented to the reader as very dissatisfied and frustrated. But later, it turns out that General Sam has actually caused them to suffer by shutting down water-holes in the province which is suffering from drought. Intentionally, he refuses to meet the delegation. In his mind, the longtime loyalty of his two friends Ikem and Christ seems to be evolving into treason. Ikem, a native son of Abazon, the only province unsupportive of Sam’s campaign for the title President for Life policy, appears particularly suspect when a noisy delegation from the province appears outside the council chamber. Fearing the beginnings of an insurrection, Sam leaves the meeting and seeks private advice from the obsequious Professor Okong.

The novelist uses the ordinary citizens of Abazon living in poverty coupled with drought to mirror the entire poverty of all ordinary people in contemporary Nigeria. In this instance, Achebe wants his reader to understand that the commoners and the less privileged are alienated. Achebe in his narrative shows that social alienation implies social deprivation of basic amenities like water, good roads, hospitals, good drainage systems. The delegation of Abazon is deprived of their rights and aspirations. Their intention to meet the President and read to him their petition was supposed to be a peaceful one but half way to where the cabinet meeting is held they were stripped by the police men on the order by the Inspector general of police. Sam’s military administration brutalizes and subjugates “the poor and the dispossessed” (141) of Kangan republic. This clearly dramatizes the military authority’s intolerance and underscores the antithetical relationship between democracy and military rule as succinctly captured by Achebe in this instance. Though democracy enjoins participation, General Sam and his government demands submission and uses violence as a tool for restoring order and peace.

After this event, Ikem goes to meet the frustrated delegation. It turns out that he is in a way one of them, born and raised in Abazon. But when he leaves the Abazonian delegation that day, he is stopped by the traffic police because of some misdemeanour. It is later revealed in the novel that he was really followed by one of the powerful branches of Kangan’s State Research Council agents, who were in need of proof that Ikem had actually visited the delegation so as to accuse him of treason; for having sided with the rebellious Abazonians, who, two years earlier had refused to vote for him. Immediately after this, Ikem is fired from the *National Gazette* by orders from the President, who thinks Ikem’s writing in the *Gazette* is too critical of his authoritarian administration. Sacked, Ikem makes a radical speech on governance at the University of Bassa, the capital of Kangan. The speech is purposefully misquoted in the same newspaper, the next day, giving the impression that Ikem wants the President dead. He’s charged with treason and conspiracy by the military dictatorial regime and soldiers came to pick him up from his home and eventually shot him dead. Meanwhile the Students’ union leader has ordered his fellow students to seize all the copies of the *Gazette* with the “regicide” story and burn them. Thereafter, he writes a letter to the editor to tender apology. Christ met the student activist Emmanuel and gives him the copy of his statement issued on the BBC to be distributed to the students. Emmanuel is now a wanted man by the police. As a result, the university is closed down, the students are chased out and the female students raped. The aspiration of students dashed to the ground by the oppressive and

domineering government. Elements of social alienation can be seen in terms of education.

The power vested in the military government is used for oppressing the less privileged and in terms of education. The fact of the matter is that the educational sector, which is vital in any society have degenerated and have been neglected by the military government. Since they are the leaders of tomorrow, the novelist wants the reader to understand that much concern should be placed on the educational development, namely primary, secondary and the tertiary in situations that are fully equipped, well-furnished and situated in hygienic places. But on the contrary education has become in this context a victim of alienation. Thus, Ikem, a poet and an artist, is a frustrated journalist under the oppressive authoritarian and dictatorial leadership. He is deprived of freedom of speech. In dictatorial regimes, artists like Ikem are deprived of realizing their dreams and aspirations because of their ideas. Their creative imagination cannot be brought out since it is impossible for them to have them published. One of his deeds that attracted the ire of the status quo is his reports on the political demonstrations of his own people, the Abazonians. The masses are socially alienated and are also deprived of cordial relationship between them and the government, who should normally act as the representative of the people in power. Earlier on in the novel, it has been revealed that all the ministers in the General-president's cabinet are all afraid to tell the president the truth about the issue of the drought-stricken Abazon. This attitude is contrary to democratic values. For the military leader, every hint of dissent and every suspicious thinking must be wiped out. Thus, the leaders of the Abazon delegation falls victim and become political prisoners. They are arrested and jailed without trial. Various forms of assault and maltreatment are meted out to the prisoners. It is worth recalling that prisoners in the State of Kangan are forced to live in subhuman conditions and treated as animals. Chinua Achebe criticizes the viciousness of the policemen when they rape girls at the hostel on the campus. Instead of protecting the citizens, they devalue and defile them. Chinua Achebe's fictional works namely *A Man of the People* (1966) as well as *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) are expository write-ups; expose the filthy and disgusting manner of government and for that matter creates awareness in the reader. This awareness is such that the reader is exposed to visualize the happenings around him to react to violence to effect a change amongst the haves and the have not.

### III- POLITICAL ALIENATION IN *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

Political alienation is the distance perceived by individuals between their governments and themselves. Political alienation describes a certain group of people who happen to hold views about local and foreign governments. These views or beliefs are distinguished between feelings about the institutions and laws themselves. Political alienation embodies personal powerlessness, the feeling or realization that one's destiny is determined by external agents and most importantly, institutional arrangements within the society. Political alienation is a specified force of nature which affects operational and conceptual thoughts about political systems. In this sense, political alienation takes effect when the laws, policies, rules and regulations of which a state is governed is used by the ruling class to suit the purposes of the bourgeois, which is a form of exploitation at the expense of the less privileged.

Political alienation is seen when the democratic hopes of the citizenry have been destroyed by the state, which has tried to develop capitalism at the same time retaining popular support. Political alienation is seen when the government is less responsive to the social hopes, needs and aspirations of the citizen governed. The less privileged members of the society are often politically alienated which in turn have negative effects on them. The effects of political alienation on the less privileged can lead to protestations and violence which can be classified as a revolutionary struggle. Political alienation is adversely related to political efficacy. It also relates to people's distrust of government. In the words of Gamson (1971, p.100), "Political alienation is composed of the attitudes of distrust and inefficacy... people have a sense of inefficacy when they judge themselves as powerless to influence government policies or deliberations". Since it is the economically dominant class that controls the social and political apparatus, it is inevitable that the oppressed class is manipulated by the social and political forces of the state. This is the fundamental thesis of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in his discussion of the theory of hegemony. Today, social and political alienation assume various dimensions. Social alienation implies that the social well-being of the masses is rationalized by those who control the available material resources and the service rendered to the majority is reduced into nothingness. Hunger predicated the catastrophic signature of alienation on the body and the soul. Despite all this, they are still subjugated by the Machiavellian political apparatus of the state viz the law enforcement agents, the Secret Intelligence services, prison and detention camps. According to George Novack, contemporary monopoly capitalism has so intensified and universalized the conditions of alienation that its consequences have spread like an unfittable virus through the whole system.

*Anthills of the Savannah* reflects Chinua Achebe's thoughts on the political, social and economic crisis in contemporary Nigeria. Although the rulers were no longer European, and although they were a lot closer to the people than their European predecessors, they fairly soon distanced themselves from the people. The first instance of this alienation in the novel is the way General Sam deals with the problem of the Abazonian delegation. Instead of going out to meet them by himself, he assigns someone else to do it as their coming uninvited there was illegal. The fact that he's built himself a luxurious lakeside mansion is another representation of this. In Achebe's fiction, the rights of the citizens of Abazon province are subdued par the authoritarian leader, General Sam. The people of this province have no say in the law guiding the existence and the problems inherent their society. They have no choice but to adjust to the present situation of drought. The way in which Ikem is dealt with by the police for having spoken his mind, and the hunt for Chris is used as a metaphor by the novelist to universalize the bizarre political situation in Nigeria during the notorious regime led by the General who execute those who hold contrary opinions and transformed Kangan state into a big prison where all semblances of humanity are violently suppressed and oppressed. This is further illustrated when the students of Basa university led by Emmanuel decides to seize the *Gazette*.

The dictatorial government has no tolerance for any democratic breeding and offers to arrest any student involved in the act. This is highlighted in General Sam's rebuke - authoritative command - to Chris at the opening of the novel— "But me no buts, Mr Oriko!"— the matter is closed, I said" (AS 1). This statement immediately reveals much about his character. It reflects his military

background, and shows that he is impatient and is not ready to give room for contradictions; or moreover tolerate alternatives, or even accept conditions that might threaten or undermine his authority. Since he has no cogent operating ideology, he gets easily offended. Sam's rule over Kangan is fatally flawed precisely because it demands confirmation and forbids contradiction. His training as a military officer at Sandhurst has blinded him to compromise and taught him to perceive in the absolute terms of a tyrant. Ikem and Chris are presented to the reader as victims of political alienation as their friendship is shattered by the government. An instance of dictatorial government using the state apparatus like guns and the police force to exploit the masses is foregrounded in the episode of the arresting of Ikem. He was told Ikem was seized with handcuff in hands and wondered how he managed to seize a gun from the police and was killed in the process. Although Ikem Osodi, a poet, political thinker, and editor of the national newspaper, is politically alienated, frustrated and his life made miserable, he dies more as a hero for his ideals while his friend dies devoured by the injustice he decides not to fight against. Ikem is killed because he was a threat to or a thorn in the flesh of the General President. At the outset of *Anthills of the Savannah*, the government of a military strongman has already entered into a critical stage. Rumors of corruption run rampant, and Major Johnson Ossai, the chief of the secret police and the army chief of staff have become the chief of the state's most trusted advisers though his appointment met with the opposition from many senior officers.

A cobweb of police is cast to arrest Christ when he defects; but he manages to escape to Abazon where he dies under a soldier's bullet during the celebration of freedom after General Lango took power from General Sam. To me, with all these arrestations and killings of dissenters Achebe wants the reader to understand that the Republic of Kangan is in dire need of a revolution. Freedom of speech is under siege. This can be found in an exchange between Ikem and Christ. Ikem's philosophy brings him near to the deprived. With them, he learns and discovers the opinion of the common people on material acquisition and wealth. They were not all happy with Ikem because he drives his own old car by himself with no driver. For them, wealth should be pursued no matter the ways and means at their disposal. Ikem's morality and integrity are at stake: he likes wealth but wants his reputation to be pure white. This brings out Achebe's conviction that Ikem Oshodi struggles and defies death to advance a better society; in other words, he wants to die for the society to survive. To have his ideas materialize, he often attacks the obnoxious policies of the government for which he has sacrificed his life. Ikem Oshodi has decided to live according to and implement the philosophy he preaches. In an exchange with Chris on an issue believed to be seditious, he makes his intention clear:

"I was calling you about this morning's editorial....."

"What about it?"

"What about it! You know, I have given up trying to understand what you are up to. Really, I have".

"Good at last!

"How can you go about creating stupid problems for yourself and for everybody else."

"As for my editorials, as long as I remain editor of the *Gazette*, I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write." (AS 44).

This discussion goes on until, he Ikem, asked Christ to fire him from the post of the editor of the state newspaper. When his relationship with the government became sour not only because he attends to Abazon delegation but also because of his "crusading editorials" (AS 43), he decides to fight back. Chris tells him about the danger involved in this; but he refuses and eventually got fired from his post and was killed in the process.

Karl Marx's theory of alienation, particularly economic alienation is evident that the masses suffer the fate of economic crisis which alienates them from their needs. Poverty and hunger are also associated with the lives of the poor and the oppressed citizens. Because of the economic pressure of the citizens, their poverty level becomes too glaring in the slums where they live. To highlight this Achebe presents Elewa, Ikem's lover who is a salesgirl in an Indian shop, as one of the less privileged citizens; who is indirectly a victim of sociopolitical and economic alienation as she lives in the slums in an abject poverty. The novel has been analyzed by focusing on two features of alienation; social and political with reference to economic alienation. *Anthills of the Savannah* has been analyzed by focusing on two features of alienation; social and political with reference to economic alienation considering Gromso's fundamental thesis that it is the economic dominant class that controls the social and political apparatus. Materialists trace all forms of alienation to Marxist theory of economic determinism and define it in terms of social and moral code of conduct that are violated or polluted, dislocating the social apparatus (D.D. Egbert and Renato Poggioli). Alienation is a crisis engendered by the infrastructural base which provokes all forms of alienation.

Achebe features a big malaise marked by a widespread public belief that major institutions in his fictional work—businesses, labour unions, the government, political parties, and political leaders as well—are unresponsive, remote, and ineffective. Alienation has become a catchword for these sentiments, detected among discontented workers, angry youth, and militant minority groups. Christ, Ikem and Beatrice concerned about the increase in alienation found that only a revolution as to the level of alienation in society, and have debated the causes, significance, and consequences of alienation and particularly, political alienation. In my opinion, I think Achebe portrays an intriguing and realistic portrait of contemporary Africa in terms of governance. Although the book is set in Nigeria, it did not seem dated at all. While Achebe accurately portrays the venality and corruption of African political leaders, he also depicts the genuine humanity and indomitable will of both ordinary people and leaders who are trying to bring about significant change. *Anthills of the Savannah* features a leader who, with force and fraud, gained despotic political and social control using intimidation and terror to disregard civil liberties in postcolonial African states. This implies alienation.

## Conclusion

This study has enabled us to understand what has become of a people in the process of choosing a particular form of government at a crucial moment in the process of becoming a stable political nation. It has come out with a theoretical paradigm which holds that colonialism and imperialism often join hands to be a fact of history that Africans cannot dismiss. Achebe's political gangs are sycophants who are well-organized at the service of the authoritarian strongman who controls and investigates the inner operations of the mind of his close collaborators with the help of



modern technological gadgets. This enables him to make sedition or ordinance bill, to keep those who dare question his authority gagged, send them to exile, or round them up in a criminal frame and as well keep them behind the bars. They only offer to behave like consultants, having and maintaining their presence in all the parties and waiting for the one that will eventually succeed for them to clearly identify with. Many observers believe that the colonial machinery created a military elite that later became military dictators in the post-independence era and stands as a stumbling block to progress and development.

Achebe has been radical in his approach to struggles for a more independent, viable and a corruption free society. He has presented us with a post-colonial society where the military administration uses their political power to oppress and alienate the poor citizens who try to make any move of opposition during dictatorial administrations. The novelist has shown with dexterity how the oppressed masses have reacted to military authoritarianism, dictatorship and alienation through pacific means; but the police was empowered to crush, silence, imprison and execute any opposition to the harsh laws of the government. From this analysis, I have found that alienation has oppressed, suppressed and subjected the masses. The novelist has used specifically Ikem's lover Elewa, a down-trodden member of the society, who lives in the slums of Bassa, to represent the generality of Nigerians who were oppressed under the dictatorial military regimes in the 1990s.

This paper has also shown that though alienation has crippled the existence of the less privileged and mangled the aspirations of citizens; it has all the same served as an eye opener to the major characters like Ikem, Christ and Beatrice. Although the novelist has painted the gloomy image of the various forms of alienation in the novel, he is optimistic of future social transformation and reformations. Achebe's optimism is demonstrated in his hopes, beliefs, and aspirations for a better and prosperous society ahead.

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