



*Revue internationale de
langues, littératures et cultures*

**N°24
2026**

**Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis
B.P. 234, Saint-Louis, Sénégal
ISSN 0851-4119**

SAFARA N° 24-2026 – ISSN 0851-4119

**Revue internationale de langues, littératures et cultures
Laboratoire de Recherche en Art et Culture**

UFR Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Gaston Berger,
BP 234 Saint Louis, Sénégal

Tel +221 961 23 56 Fax +221 961 1884

E-mail : babacar.dieng@ugb.edu.sn / khadidiatou.diallo@ugb.edu.sn

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Dictatorship and Political Instability in Contemporary Africa: Thematic
Convergence of Chaos in *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* by Mohammed ben-
Abdallah and *Dasebre* by Asiedu Yirenkyi

Aho Fiacre

University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin

Aguessy Constant Yelian

University of Parakou, Benin

Gbaguidi Célestin

University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin

Résumé

La présente étude vise à considérer la dictature et les coups d'état comme étant les principaux obstacles au développement de l'Afrique malgré qu'elle est abondamment riche en ressources naturelles qui constituent normalement une source du bonheur économique et financier. Les autorités politiques africaines violent la loi fondamentale de leur peuple. Pour atteindre l'objectif de cette recherche, nous avons utilisé la méthode de recherche qualitative qui a consisté à exploiter et commenter le corpus avec d'autres livres de référence, articles, thèses et l'internet de façon critique. L'étude fait une analyse critique de la dictature et des coups d'état en Afrique et expose leurs impacts sur le développement du continent. Elle révèle que le chaos politique est le résultat des maux susmentionnés qui minent la stabilité en Afrique. Pour réaliser cette étude avec succès, nous avons convoqué les approches historique, postcolonialiste, structuraliste, la performance et la réponse du lecteur comme base théorique.

Mots-clés : dictature, coup d'État, obstacles, bonheur, loi fondamentale, chaos politique.

Abstract

This study aims to charge dictatorship and coup d'état with the frontline hurdles preventing Africa from developing in spite of her being endowed with abundant natural resources as normally a source of financial and economic happiness. African political elites show disrespect to the fundamental law of their people. To achieve

the research objective, we have used qualitative research method that has consisted in exploiting and arguing on the corpus alongside reference books, articles, thesis, and internet sources by way of criticism. The study makes a critical analysis of dictatorship and coups d'état in Africa and exposes the impact they have on the development of the continent. The study reveals that political chaos is caused by the aforementioned evils which undermine stability in Africa. To successfully carry out the study, we have summoned new historicism, postcolonialism, structuralism, performance art and reader-response.

Keywords: dictatorship, coup d'état, hurdles, happiness, fundamental law, political chaos

Introduction

The political elites who have replaced the colonial master have unfortunately and shamefully taken after the white man in a better successful way of bad leadership. The evils of which the colonial bully has made use, to oppress Africa, thunder more in post-independence leaders' governance. They avoid to abide by the constitution of their countries, write it and express through their deeds the desire and project to rule for life. They then usher in the fundamental law dispositions that can secure their dictatorship and mismanagement. Their authoritarianism makes loom repetitive and heat-resistant coups d'état everywhere in the black continent. This situation installs underdevelopment and chronic poverty in the everyday life of the masses. Peace is horribly stomped in African countries. What matters for African rulers is power and wealth stacking. And for this, all wherewithal is warmly welcomed. By making lack behind the purpose for which they are elected, African political elites whet displeasure and violence within the populations. The manifestation of their dictatorship is what harasses Mohammed ben-Abdallah and Asiedu Yirenkyi till they factiously expose it in their respective plays *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* and *Dasebre*. The whole title of Yirenkyi's book is *Dasebre and The Red Ants* which are two different plays put in the same book. *The Red Ants* does not suit with the topic in study, considering its content. Then, the first play, *Dasebre*, is what catches the fancy for tackling dictatorship and coup d'état as governance mode in contemporary Africa. So,

the research leans on it only to avoid amalgam within the understanding of the audience – the readers.

The valuable advice promoted through the denouncement of the evils from dictatorship and coup d'état by the aforementioned authors and their colleagues playwright and novelist, appears elusive to the unappreciative political rulers in post-independence Africa. To conceal the emaciation, they cause to public financial box, they set up dictatorship. By doing that, they gradually instil fright in the populations' mind and then the freedom of speech is butchered. But the day the populations feel choked, in an unsupportable way, by the instilled fright, the spirit of liberation comes over them. It is how violence pops up through demonstrations, coup d'état and wars.

In the two plays mentioned above and which are under scrutiny in this article, the manifestations of dictatorship and coup d'état are brilliantly exhibited. The two Ghanaian playwrights explain in their plays under study in this research paper titled "Dictatorship and Political Instability in contemporary Africa: thematic convergence of chaos in *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* by Mohammed ben-Abdallah and *Dasebre* by Asiedu Yirenkyi", the evils of bad governance.

The plays are respectively first performed in 1982 and 1989. On the one hand, reading the creative art, *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, one can extrapolate and insinuate that the toponym 'Angah', the patronymic surname 'Kumarahn' and the first name 'Mwake' refer respectively to the anagrammatical coding Ghana, Nkrumah and Kwame. This rhetoric decoding proves that the play was set in Ghana in 1987 under the reign of Kwame Nkrumah from 1957 to 1966. As a consequence, this rhetoric figure is used by the speaker to avoid political persecution against the playwright who conveys a message of despair regarding the dictatorship of Kwame Nkrumah. On the other hand, *Dasebre* is set in 1990 in Ghana precisely at the University of Ghana Drama Season. Both ben-Abdallah and Yirenkyi criticise African political leadership in a generalised point of view by making the filthy political situation of Ghana reflect and stand wholly for Africa. The research chooses then these plays – which depict Ghana's political ambiance – by generalising the message that

~~~~ A. Fiacre, Aguessy Constant Yelian, Gbaguidi Célestin ~~~~

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the playwrights convey to Africa in whole because the cases are alike practically everywhere in the black continent.

By choosing to tackle dictatorship and coup d'état, the research intends to make the link that exist between the two concepts and show how the former can cause the manifestation and the urgency of the latter through new historicist, postcolonialist, structuralist, performance art and reader-response approaches. This can help to draw the similarities to which converge both ben-Abdallah and Yirenkyi through their plays. To reach the targeted goal in a successful way, the present research work is organized around three main sections. The first one is Ruling with Terror and Injustice. The second point developed in this work is Coup d'état as Springboard for Liberation of the Masses and the last one is Havoc Resulting from Putsch.

### **1-Ruling with Terror and Injustice**

Bad governance in Africa does not shape without terror and injustice. Terror is the weapon used by dictators to delete justice and veil their misdeeds. To succeed that manoeuvre the police and the army are made to submit to the dictator's every single and detailed will. When those two forces are told to do anything, they do it even though, as executioners, they are not happy within their heart to commit political injustice and crimes. That is how freedom of speech is deleted and the rights of citizens are trampled on. Political authorities having the command of Ghanaian affairs in particular and African countries' affairs in general use their position to oppress the people. They install a kind of despotism that serves their interest and their interest only. Their error is highly applauded by their disciples. Opponents who dare express the opposite view point are hunted down till their last ditches. They impose on people their will instead of making suggestions that must be amended by the people.

In his famous play *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* Mohammed ben-Abdallah shows how Kumrahn has oppressed the people of Angah and particularly Ilya just to make him side with him. It is when Ilya is kidnapped for the second time and put in trial by a Warrior's Revolt led by Malwal that he explains what he has

gone through under Kumrahn's reign. From his saying, Kumrahn rules with such an indescribable terror which doffs the liberty required by democratic principles. Even the kind of panegyric which the Court Crier chants to cover him with glory sounds more bizarre, frightening, awesome, and exaggerating than elevating. The crier announces:

He approaches! The elephant of the grasslands is coming! Tum away, evil eyes! Go set fire to the sea, envious ones! He is coming! The panther of the trees is coming! Gently, great one, gently... one glance from you will start an earthquake in the bowels of your enemy! Man of stone, lion of the land of angah, you walk in the shoes of iron. Step on your enemy and he is flattened to the ground (ben-abdallah 18).

From this passage one can notice the expression of terror from the metaphor 'Man of Stone' that the playwright has used in a performative way. This clearly stipulates that Kumrahn incarnates terror. But no genuine democracy can use terror to rule. Only dictatorship does it. He is the prototype of dictator that good governance cannot afford. This imaginary character created by ben-Abdallah is the exact and right portrait of the political leaders that post-independence Africa has produced so far. These contemporary political rulers are highly fond of deification. They like to be deified. Aguessy has outlined this in his doctoral dissertation by providing the definition of 'deification'. He explains that "Deification is the fact of making someone or a god or a state of being a god."

The opposite species of politicians is cunningly and grisly deleted because its existence often damages the interest of the filthy and heartless vultures handling the command of African affairs. Then African political rulers deify themselves by using terror as a mode of governance to easily sip the national liquor and rule till their last sigh. They are conscious of their misdeeds and then need to use terror so as to suppress any vague desire to demonstrate. They blow off opposition movements or parties in order to beef up their dictatorship. Mallam Muhammad Ilya is arrested by the men of Kumrahn the Black. Still in his cell, Kumrahn and his men have assembled to decide of his lot. And then, he is made guilty.

In fact, the literary theory reader-response offers the latitude to decipher that ben-Abdallah has shown how politicians of contemporary Africa forge truth where lies falsehood by revealing through fiction to his audience – especially non-Ghanaians who laud the struggle led by Kwame Nkrumah before and after the independence of Ghana to confederate all the African countries lest they be vulnerable to neo-colonialism – that the father of Ghana’s independence is not a flawless angel. Through the play, one can easily realise that ben-Abdallah outlines autocracy and dictatorship during Kwame Nkrumah’s reign in contemporary Ghana. No doubt that Kwame Nkrumah has fiercely and patriotically undermined the interests of the coloniser not only in his Ghana but also in Africa. The playwright recognises it by qualifying him “Terror of the White man” (ben-Abdallah 20) through his imaginary Court Crier. But ben-Abdallah informs that this does not make him deserve to be angelically treated. Kumrahn – Nkrumah – is a dictator. And this is what the Journal *The New York Times* reveals in 1964 in an article titled *Portrait of Nkrumah as Dictator* writes: “In Ghana today, the only safe expression of dissent is silence. The press has been muzzled. Judges may be fired and court verdicts reversed at Nkrumah’s pleasure. Parliament is a rubber stamp for Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party. No other party is legal.”

He ill-treats his opponents. A great and valuable mobile must be brandished to justify the imprisonment of an opponent. To succeed this, the evidence is created by all means. Ilya is sentenced to death though he has not been guilty of anything. But a simulacrum of trial is set up and El-Fasi – one of Kumrahn’s men – has pretended to be Ilya and goes to kneel down before Kumrahn. He pleads guilty and asks for forgiveness. Ilya is still in his cell while all this scene is unrolling. Kumrahn feigns to be compassionate and asks Imam Abass – Spiritual Leader of Islamic Angah and faithful servant of Kumrahn – to go and convince Ilya to confess that he is guilty of what he is being accused of – conspiracy to commit treason and treason. Karim tells untruths: “But just before Mallam Muhammad Ilya is due for execution, he makes a heart-rending confession that dispels all doubts pertaining to his complicity in the abortive attempt at the elimination of the Father of Angah...” (ben-Abdallah 25). The only concern for Kumrahn is to make Ilya

confess that he is guilty. So, he mandates Abbass who is the father-in-law of Ilya and who has brought Ilya up.

Imam Abbass is like a father to Ilya. He teaches Ilya everything related to religious affairs. But Ilya can never guess that his own godfather and father-in-law is corrupt to the bone. Kumrahn exercises pressure on Ilya through his mentor Abbass. Kumrahn says publicly and threateningly to Abbass: “If anyone can get that jackal to confess, you can. He must confess ... publicly! You understand?” (ben-Abdallah 24) He insists and suggests to Abbass: “Bait him if necessary. But get a voluntary public confession out of the vulture. Make him believe anything but get him to make a public confession of his crime” (ben-Abdallah 24). Kumrahn has to get Ilya inactive, speechless or with him so as to enforce his dictatorship.

This is the same way political terrain is led since independence in Africa. Terror is expressed through threats of death or imprisonment. It is only when you are with them that you live peacefully. If you express contrast, a way must be found to eliminate you or charge you with a crime you have never committed so that you pledge allegiance. Having Ilya with him is a great achievement. This is the reason why Kumrahn wants Ilya to confess that he has committed the so-called crime. He wants Abbass to do all he can and make Ilya fall in the trap. Failing to do so can result in punishment. He makes it clear to the immoral religious leader: “You will go and see Ilya in his cell immediately. You will have him agree to make a public confession of his heinous crime. You will go at once, Abbass, and you will not fail” (ben-Abdallah 26). The insistence that comes from Kumrahn to have Ilya confess an uncommitted crime, shows that he is afraid of the fact that he may one day be overthrown by the people under the guidance of Ilya, or may be overtaken by his authoritarianism and misdeeds during his reign.

The rotten political situation of Africa has worried some scholars to the point that they have joined their voices to write an article they have titled “Sit-Tight Syndrome And Tenure Elongation In African Politics: Implications For Regional Development And Security” in which they assert that “The post-independence politics of African countries has been dominated by the

phenomenon of sit tight African heads of state and government who had acceded to office by election or coup d'état" (Abiodun *et al.* 59).

Abiodun et al. continue and state in the article that:

The sit-tight syndrome and tenure elongation can be traced to the history of leadership in Africa right from the era of independence till date. African leaders have been known to be very autocratic even when they are elected through the ballot process. In some cases, the president interferes with the legislative and judiciary process; thereby reducing these institutions to mere government tools to suppress opposition and to enable the president remain in power for as long as he desires (59).

In the same vein of ruling with terror, *Dasebre* is a character that Asiedu Yirenkyi has created to show how insensitive dictators can appear before the unjust sufferings the populations are daily embracing due to their bad governance. The playwright has had no fear while exposing through drama the fearful governance prevailing in Africa since independence by resorting to postcolonialist theory to convey his message. Though he has not proceeded like ben-Abdallah by concentrating on local politicians in his Ghana with their names handily coded with effortless decoding that new historicist and reader-response approaches offer, he all the same depicts both Ghana and Africa's unpleasant criminal political situation. With *Dasebre*, Yirenkyi seems to recall the political situation which prevails in Ghana till Rawlings' reign. A tight analysis of the events occurring in the play leads to the conclusion that the playwright exposes the chaotic political instability that Ghana has experienced till Rawlings' coup to put an end to the disorder with the execution of many rascals of the political arena.

*Dasebre* seizes power violently and establishes a kind of dictatorship which violates the rules in force. He submits all the generals of the State to his autocracy. Ataara Fiam deserts and prepares a coup - as has done Jerry Rawlings - to liberate the nation, his colleague generals and the people. Ataara Fiam considers the murder of Sakyibea as an unacceptable crime. He overthrows *Dasebre* and says he has "come to bury the soul of the Nation and set things right" (Yirenkyi 101). A similar event has happened in Ghana's history with Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings who has overthrown Lieutenant

General Fred Akuffo on 4 June 1979. Ataara Fiam is undoubtedly, the Jerry Rawlings of modern Ghana who utters that the army must give to the people their freedom if they are crushed by their elites. Ataara Fiam has the same understanding by declaring he has come to set things right.

Unlike Kwafum who actually and rightly teaches his colleagues generals that “you do not have a state when your people have the worse in everything” (Yirenkyi 6-7), Dasebre, the dictator that has got power through bloodshed coup d’état, declares: “I am the law; I am the system. I appoint... I disappoint...” (Yirenkyi 29).

Dictators in Africa use laws to establish fearful dictatorship. Dasebre is a perfect illustration of this assertion. He declares: “... tell the elders and everybody present and absent that Dasebre will enforce the laws of this state without any mercy” (Yirenkyi 33). Despite the warning and explanation of the Queen-mother Sakyibea about the relic of the State that does not allow a circumcised man like Dasebre with his hands stained to govern, deaf ears are turned to her. The Queen-mother mourns: “Dasebre has taken up arms against his own royal ones... He has stained his hands with the blood of my innocent citizens... our women... have been stripped naked in public... He has shed the blood of his own people... and Blood is bitter...” (Yirenkyi 16).

Before the terror that Dasebre imposes on the people and even on the generals of the state through the unjust and inhumane atrocities that prevail, the latter have found themselves in the position of resigning so as to preserve peace. He explains to the Queen-mother: “Nobody wins a civil war. We must be fools sometimes, submit to somebody and live with peace” (Yirenkyi 17). He goes on with more details to convince the Queen-mother of how Dasebre has corrupted the warriors to side with him:

My kind Queen-mother, your generals are still men but the warriors have also filled their heads with rum and some of the chiefs lined their pockets with gold. Too much corruption. The civil anarchy has sapped all decency from our men. We must give in to Dasebre (Yirenkyi 17-18).

Before terror and injustice take place and root, corruption is the efficient tool used by the dictator. When the army is corrupt, the soldiers become yes-men

and do anything they are asked to do. Rule of terror gets injustice settle and manifest as a daily misfortune. To preserve peace, the generals have decided to give in to Dasebre. But Dasebre thinks he is more powerful and keeps on humiliating and terrorising them. Only the Queen-mother Sakyibea has expressed a firm opposition to his ordination as the ruler of the black stool. She boldly says to Dasebre: "I rejected you before, I reject you, I will reject you forever!" (Yirenkyi 27).

Before the terror, the generals of state have all openly and publicly declared their allegiance to Dasebre. General Akoto declares: "I am loyal to any Prince whose feet is [sic] stained by the blood of the sacred sheep slaughtered on behalf of the people" (Yirenkyi 28). He is backed up by General Kwafum who has lost every courage before a ravaging terror by the self-proclaimed chief Dasebre. While Dasebre tells Kwafum to explain to the Queen-mother who wants him to unmake him their supreme ruler, Kwafum - circled by Dasebre's executioners - wisely and fearfully disavows the Queen-mother by saying that "The chameleon changes its colour with the season" (Yirenkyi 28).

When the Queen-mother clarifies to the assistance and to Dasebre that "Nothing has changed! No sheep of state has been slaughtered! The people reject you! I am not afraid of you! I will not submit to any circumcised pretender. I defy your executioners!" (Yirenkyi 28), Dasebre answers fiercely: "I came prepared, I brought my own sheep. I order my own sheep to be slaughtered and the blood poured on my own feet. I make my own laws now. I am the only law now!" (Yirenkyi 29). Sakyibea, the Queen-mother, cannot believe her ears. It is like the sky collapsing on her head. She wants to know what is really amiss. She asks: "What is this... what is going on? I don't understand. Akoto do you? Kwafum you are the most respectable among the court elders... and you are on oath... what is happening? What is going on?" (Yirenkyi 29).

To the concern of the Queen-mother, Dasebre provokes once more again the wrath of Sakyibea by confirming that he is the law and invites the generals to speak. He says: "I am the law; I am the system. I appoint... I disappoint... Generals, Speak!" (Yirenkyi 29). That is exactly how African States are being

ruled after independence. Terror is the mode that our political leaders use to submit everybody to their misdeeds, injustice and dictatorship. Those who nurture this characteristic of bad governance do it first to avoid to be imprisoned or to be murdered. Second, they make allegiance so as to get appointed in high positions. And in this, the answer provided by the generals is so sad for the State. Kwafum says: “I surrender, I have not been defeated but I pledge my loyalty” (Yirenkyi 29). And then, Dasebre has got power by terror and rules by terror. But the question is to know whether those generals who are put to shame and are compelled to submit to that terror are really submitted. It is in that that every dictator must pay attention and know that there is none so deaf as those who do not want to hear. The second point of this research work exposes the sad and shameful end of dictators.

## **2-Coup d'état as Springboard for Liberation of the Masses**

Bad governance in post-independence African countries is the source of many phenomena among which is coup d'état. In his thesis dissertation, Kawalya-Tendo Costantine speaks of:

... Hybrid regimes as those that are found in nations with regular election fraud, which prevents them from being a fair and free democracy. These “nations commonly have governments that apply pressure on political opponents, non-independent judiciaries, widespread corruption, harassment and, pressure placed on the media (8).

She goes into more details by defining dictator as “one who has total power over a country, and they have typically obtained that power through forceful and, most times, unconventional means” (Kawalya-Tendo 4).

Africa is the continent which has experienced more coups d'état in the world. That is the remark made by Constantinos in the abstract of a paper he has presented at the 35th African Union Summit of 2022:

Overall, Africa has experienced more coups than any other continent and now making a comeback in West and Central Africa military takeovers in Mali, Chad, Burkina and Guinea, by US Army trained

officers as well as further east in Sudan. An attempt was just foiled in Guinea-Bissau (2022).

Constantinos goes further and makes observe that:

Military coups have been a regular occurrence in Africa in the decades since independence. Recent events in Burkina Faso, Sudan, Guinea, Mali and Chad resulting in the ousting of heads of state and government are the latest example of the army intervening in national politics. Mali has had two interventions by the army in less than a year, the most recent one in May. In Niger, a coup was thwarted in March just days before a presidential inauguration (1).

Mohammed ben-Abdallah and Asiedu Yirenkyi have fictionalised this in their respective plays *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* and *Dasebre*. Both writers have denounced through fiction the shameful and non-developing situation that political vultures have created by their unquenched bulimia in Africa.

In *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, coup d'état is observed more than twice. Kumrahn has been overthrown because his tyrannical governance has opened the gate to the military coup. He has become a big stone blocking the way leading to welfare, economic growth, and peace. In such a case the coup d'état is resorted to in most African countries. ben-Abdallah has clearly shown this in *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*:

That same day, at the break of dawn, the information was whispered from cell to cell throughout the dungeon. A rebellion of warriors led by the young warrior, Patapa, had swept through the land like a forest fire and seized 'power' in the absence of the Black one (46).

If leaders lead well, coups d'état cannot be experienced in Africa. The military coup often intervenes when bad governance is at its height. When injustice is a mode of governance with the imprisonment of innocent people, military coup is resorted to in Africa. Ilya and many other prisoners of Kumrahn have been set free through a coup that dethrones the Great One: "Before we knew what was happening, the gates of the prisons were thrown open and we were being thrown into streets like tenants who had not paid their rent for years" (ben-Abdallah 46).

Military coups are part of the most African constitutions. When leaders are serving their own belly rather than serving the populations' interests, they may create popular riots, and in this case, the army is to take their responsibility; that is how African countries experience military coups. Most of the military coups that Africa has undergone are applauded by the population, except the coups that ravage and destroy good African leaders like Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba and many others who trample on the interests of western countries like France.

In his play *Dasebre*, Asiedu Yirenkyi has revealed how arrogance by autocratic leaders favours and nurtures military coups in Africa. A man called Dasebre takes power through ravaging military coup. He submits everybody to his dictates in a humiliating and insulting way. He boastfully screams to anyone who listens to his insolence: "I am the law; I am the system. I appoint... I disappoint..." (29). To this arrogance, all the generals of State get on to give in it to Dasebre in a tactical way. General Akoto suggests: "Tactical surrender... we must give in..." (Yirenkyi 22). They realise Dasebre's superiority of the moment and decide to surrender so as to prepare his overthrow secretly in a successful way. The Queen-mother of the State reminds the generals of their oath to defend the state. But Akoto clarifies it to her: "We swore but the antelope will always be a game for the lion" (Yirenkyi 22). Kwafum declares "I surrender, I have not been defeated but I pledge my loyalty" (Yirenkyi 29). The loyalty he is speaking of is a tactical one to make stop the massacre of the people and take back power from Dasebre.

In fact, Yirenkyi is showing in his play that no power can be eternal. Dasebre knows that the Queen-mother's allegiance to his regime can make him rule in peace. But Sakyibea – the Queen-mother – is firm on her position to never recognise Dasebre as a king. Dictators' downfall comes from their incapacity of knowing from where the danger comes. When the hour of their downfall comes, warnings don't often help them. The situation may be close to their nose but their pride and arrogant attitudes prevent them from seeing it. They refuse to know that those surrounding them are not quite happy of their autocracy.

Atta, the drunkard, performs a dance in which he uses gestures and words that seem to insult Dasebre and convey the message of his downfall. The elders understand what Atta is saying through his dance but none of them explains it to Dasebre because they are part and parcel of the plot that is going to put an end to Dasebre autocracy. Yaw Brakwa, who apparently shows faithfulness to Dasebre decodes the message and explains to Dasebre. He says: “Nana your elders, your drummers, your dancers are deliberately ... deliberately casting innuendoes and insulting your personal self...” (Yirenkyi 80). But the dictator seems not to understand anything. Yaw Brakwa insists: “There is a whole conspiracy ... Whole big conspiracy involving everybody here...” (Yirenkyi 80). Even the women of Adenkum have also given a powerful signal of paradigm change if Dasebre really wants to rule peacefully. By the agency of their leader, they declare: “We only want to express our disgust. We demand to be heard or we will all show you what women are made of...” (Yirenkyi 80).

The linguist explains it more to Dasebre - though he does quite hear what the women have said – and advises him to satisfy their demand. He says: “Nana... this is the demand, the women demand... they powerfully demand to be heard. We better give them the attention or... or... you will all soon see what eyes should not see” (Yirenkyi 80). Those women have partaken the coming in power of Dasebre. They explain to him how he has betrayed them: “You inspired confidence, you instilled some hope in all of us once, Dasebre. But now look...” (Yirenkyi 82).

When Dasebre asks General Kwafum to explain what Atta’s dance sign language is meaning, he says: “My vision is impaired...” (Yirenkyi 83). Nobody explains it to him because they are almost all part of a plot from outside that is shortly going to overthrow his arrogant autocracy. Then Yaw Brakwa informs him:

Nana... we are surrounded, besieged! No! our<sup>[sic]</sup> backs are on the wall! Loyalty! No loyalty! No loyalty from anybody! All our elders are in one big conspiracy against you. They all are not loyal to you. They are only using you to protect themselves and their selfish and corrupt selves (yirenkyi 84).

This time the elder Kwafum tells Yaw Brakwa: “I know what the drummer was saying, I know what the movement of dances mean but it is not the work of a stool elder to be an informant of any chief. If a chief himself does not know what is going on around him, then that chief is worse than a slave” (Yirenkyi 85).

All this makes him get confused. Then, instead of thinking of how to listen to his people and pacify the country, he finds it urgent and securing to get Sakyibea - the Queen-mother – killed. He then plots her murder and eliminates her. General Atupem is the only general who is faithful to him and has helped him assassinate the Queen-mother. Though he feigns to have nothing with the murder and exposes the executioners that he hires by the agency of Atupem, the other generals and elders do know that he is the silent partner. They then have to quicken his downfall to avoid the murder of somebody else. General Akoto declares that “If this is not the end, then it is certainly the beginning of the end...” (Yirenkyi 95).

During the burial ceremony of the Queen-mother, Adenkum’s women are singing when sound of gun shots are, at a moment, mixed with the music. Dasebre does not realise what is happening, nor do his faithful ones. The Leader of Adenkum declares at the hearing of gun shots: “Women, the men are back!” (Yirenkyi 2003: 99). It is after the words of the woman that Dasebre realises that he is in danger. He asks: “Men?” (Yirenkyi 99). At that moment, almost all the generals and those assuring his security have deserted. Only Yaw Brakwa and Atupem are still there. He can see clearly now. He screams “Dissidents! Atupem! Yaw Brakwa! Get ready! It is war! Fire! Infierno! Conflagration!” (Yirenkyi 99). Yaw Brakwa stabs Atupem and tells Dasebre: “You war monger! You failure! You are not worth dying for!” (Yirenkyi 100). He rushes on Dasebre to stab him too, but he fails and is stabbed by Dasebre. Dasebre says: “You traitor! You want to stab me in the back!” (Yirenkyi 101). That is how dictators end up. They are abandoned when they are going through tricky situation because their entourage has in fact never been with them.

Dasebre is then overthrown by Ataara Fiam. On the brink of fleeing he declares: “I walked onto the stool through fire. I will walk out through fire.

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But I will come back... one day. And through FIRE” (Yirenkyi 101). It is exactly the political situation in Africa. The continent is in continuous military coups. This cannot guarantee any development. Most of the military coups are justified as to correct the evils and disorders promoted by the ousted regime. Ataara Fiam - the performer of the putsch that dethrones Dasebre – declares: “I have come to bury the soul of the Nation and to set things right” (Yirenkyi 101).

In *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, Kumrahn’s downfall is due to all the cases of injustice he causes and fosters. He imposes on the people his will and his law and those who don’t agree with that are tracked. Pressure is exercised upon those who dare voice to defend the voiceless. African leaders send their acolytes to play that role of obliging opponents to rally to their team or to quit political sphere lest to be imprisoned or to be deleted physically. Ilya is asked by Abbass – the corrupt Imam – to abandon defending and promoting truth against the bad governance of Kumrahn. Abbass plays his assigned role by telling Ilya “You are a fledging, my son; but you fly too high, young man, and you come bursting in ‘where angels fear to tread” (ben-Abdallah 29). And he explains it more to Ilya: “I was shaping you up to be the next grand Imam of Angah, not the mouthpiece of the oppressed” (ben-Abdallah 29). That is a sort of accumulation of frustrations that end up in coup d’état. When there is no other option to make stop the dictator, military coups are welcome.

In the play, many coups d’état are performed and Kouyate recalls them:

ever since the warrior Patapa led the rebellion of warriors that toppled Kumrahn out of his seat of power and plunged us deeper into chaos, we have seen several more revolts ... successful and abortive ... prominent among them Akoto’s rebellion. Katakyyi’s rebellion. And Amankwa’s rebellion... (ben-Abdallah 53).

That is the political screen of Africa. Bad governance is creating unceasing military coups.

3-Havoc Resulting from Putsch

Military coups create many damages to the black continent. They slow down development in Africa. During wars occasioned by coup d'état, people are killed, women are raped, goods are stolen, houses are burnt, public infrastructure is destroyed. In *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, ben-Abdallah has clearly shown how dangerous military coups can be. In fact, Malwal and his men are still firing questions at Ilya, when an offensive has broken out and many deaths are counted. The playwright makes speak his character Kouyate:

While you stood here like a common peddler in idle chatter with this museum piece, the counterinsurgents launched a secret offensive under cover of darkness. By the time my spies found out and informed me, it was too late. Most of your best men are dead or captured! (ben-abdallah 75).

Asiedu Yirenkyi has exposed the havoc resulting from coups d'état in his *Dasebre*, a play that starts with atrocities and inhumane violence which provoke such a tearful emotion in every reader that has human sense. In the prologue of the play, the author whose name is mentioned at the very beginning of this paragraph has tried to explain that “in the ruins of the war-ravaged town, a young maiden rushes for protection” (4). The expression ‘war ravaged town’ must catch every reader’s attention. While reading it, one totally forgets it is a fiction, an imaginary event that is not occurring in real life. One could notice tears dropping out of the eyes especially when Yaa – one of the victims of the war – rushes and kneel down before Kwafum and cries: “SAVE us... Help me! I am orphaned... My father is gone; my mother burnt to death; my brothers all butchered and small sister violated. The roof of our house is on fire... Save me... Protect the orphans!” (Yirenkyi 4).

A happiness that is built for years suddenly collapses in the blink of an eye. The bit of peace that daily characterises the life of the population is not only threatened but also submitted to deathblows. Such a situation makes set afloat the development of Africa. It is pitiful. Leaders of Africa chant good governance perfunctorily but their deeds daily impose sufferings on the population. Personal interests by unappreciative political leaders are dousing economic development and happiness in Africa. The rotten political situation

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keeps the population in an endless downhearted plight. Upon expiry of the time limit to their mandate, African post-independent political leaders cling to power for a life rule.

When military coups intervene, the little developmental actions achieved or undertaken relating to vital infrastructure back off. If our political leaders make avoid military coups by governing well, development will not straggle, but it will rather straddle. By creating wars in every part of the black continent, our political leaders don't set a high value upon democracy and development. A researcher states that:

The introduction of presidential term limits was meant to eradicate one party rule that had become a common political denominator in many states in Africa. This introduction of term limits was to reverse the trend whereby few African political elites, particularly "strongmen", engineered an assault on the constitution to perpetrate their stay in power and crush all opposition (Etyang 46-47).

Most of the post-independence leaders in Africa overrun presidential chair by performing coup d'état. This situation even favours the looting of Africa's natural resources. Constantinos has clearly said it in a research paper titled *An 'alpenglow' of Electoral Pluralism is eviscerating Africa from Polymorphic Autocrats*:

From Algeria and Egypt to Benin and Burkina Faso to Lesotho and Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zanzibar have experienced multiple coups and counter coups for various economic, political and social reasons. The looting of mineral, flora and fauna resources is also a source of concern for africa (1).

The political leaders who inflict suffering upon the people receive most of the time their retribution through a tragic and sudden downfall that military coups often provoke. Dasebre never knows that his arrogant and masterful reign can be so short. He thinks the contrary after assassinating Sakyibea, the Queen-mother of the state. He is overthrown by Ataara Fiam at the burial ceremony of the late Queen-mother. But the movie of that coup has not been without havoc. Houses are reduced to ashes and death of human beings are

noticed. The maidens scream: “Save us... protect us... our houses are on fire... my father is killed... my mother is burnt to death... my brothers have all been butchered... my small sister violated... help us...” (Yirenkyi 99).

When things shape differently, the autocrat’s supporters abandon him and even look for a way to get out of trouble. That is exactly what Dasebre has experienced with Yaw Brakwa. In fact, Yaw is a firm supporter of Dasebre. But at hearing the sad news related to the death of Sakyibea who firmly, strongly, and purposefully refuses to bless Dasebre as the new king, Yaw has realised that Dasebre is the mastermind of the murder. He then opposes a categorical ‘no’ to the appeal of General Atupem, a firm supporter of Dasebre and co-mastermind of the crime. They seem to have an argument and Yaw stabs Atupem at a deadly point and the general passes away. Yaw tries the same thing with Dasebre so as to kill him, but Dasebre realises it and returns it to Yaw who collapses and dies. After killing Atupem, Yaw makes it clear to Dasebre that sacrificing one’s life for a dictator like him is worthless. He tells Dasebre: “You war monger! You failure! You are not worth dying for!” (Yirenkyi 100). He continues and informs that he knows that he is the one who kills the Queen-mother of the State: “It is you who must leave the scene, Dasebre! Dasebre! You murdered the queen-mother! I know your game! You murdered our soul!” (Yirenkyi 101).

Military coups seriously threaten peace and development. Wherever there is war or violence, no serious investor comes and invests money. Neither local nor foreign entrepreneurs easily invest for job creation and promote social welfare. The failure by overthrown rulers today in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso is related to the fruitless terrorism fighting. The main motive that often hides behind military coup is the failure by the leaders to ensure people’s security and welfare. This, to my opinion, is valid though military coups seem to soil Africa’s image.

### **Conclusion**

This research work is the fruit of the wrath against bad governance which opens the gate to military coups and wars that become the everyday concerns

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of post-independence African countries as it is exposed in *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* by Mohammed ben-Abdallah and in *Dasebre* by Asiedu Yirenkyi.

The research work has tackled in the first point the Ruling with Terror and Injustice that characterises political leaders in Africa. In fact, governance in post-independence Africa is often embodied by two evils - terror and injustice - that humiliate the citizens and reduce them to mere subjects that must obey and undergo tyranny. In the course of this humiliation, the population start claiming for justice and then a part of the army initiates a coup and seizes power.

The second point deals with Coup d'état as Springboard for Liberation of the Masses. In fact, injustice, terror, and arrogance are not part of the will of the population while voting for our leaders. When these evils start undermining the welfare of the population, their wish starts finding asylum in the dethronement of the autocracy that plug the holes of freedom. And then, the more people are imprisoned or killed for claiming freedom and good governance, the more they find courage to face the autocrat. When the government fails to satisfy their wants and keeps on brutalising them by the agency of the police, the putsch intervenes to overthrow the incapable leaders. The intervention of a coup is not good for the image of Africa, but at a time it is a welcome prowess regarding the suffering of the population.

In the last point, the paper has highlighted the Havocs Resulting from Putsch. Wherever a coup d'état is observed, political instability is at rendezvous. Apart from that, peace and development are seriously threatened. Mohammed ben-Abdallah and Asiedu Yirenkyi have both construed in their plays the way coup d'états favour war and murder, destruction of public and private properties, raping of women and small girls and robbery. Hunger severs because people cannot get out their houses to fetch food. People then die of inanition for having nothing to eat during the period of war. A fortune or a happiness which is built for years suddenly collapses and gives in to total ruins and misery. The aforementioned two playwrights show that African political leaders have become more dangerous than the white man by creating a total chaos in the black continent whose.

The study shows that the lack of maturity of political leaders creates chaos and decadency in Ghana and in the whole black continent. In the search of solution, even the populations invite the army to take their responsibility and perform coup d'état so as to liberate the masses from tyranny.

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