



**Decrypting the Spiral
of Instability in Francophone Africa
through the Literary Discourse**

Théophile Munyangoyo

European Center for Research Training and Development UK
124 City Road,
London,
EC1V 2NX
UK

Copyright ©2025 European Center for Research Training
and Development UK

All right reserved
ISBN: 978-1-0369-1752-4

Published by
European Center for Research Training and Development UK
124 City Road,
London,
EC1V 2NX
UK

Printed in the UK
By European Center for Research Training and Development UK
124 City Road,
London,
EC1V 2NX
UK

Dedication

To all victims of undemocratic practices, armed conflicts, and multiple forms of violence across the world. May your struggles be acknowledged and rewarded, may your voices be heard, and may your resilience sow the seeds for a future rooted in justice and peace.

Dominique M'Fouillou, *La salve des innocents* (1997)

Dominique M'Fouillou, *Ondongo* (2000)

Bernard N'Kaloulou, *Le pousse-pousse de Makélékélé: Une jeunesse au Congo* (2021)

Chad

Jean-Marie Mbailao, *Le prostitué politique* (2021)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Achille Ngoye, *Kin-la joie, kin-la folie* (1993)

François Mbiyangandu Tshibila, *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha* (2020)

Guinea Conakry

Alimou Sinta, *Le sang pour l'alternance* (2021)

Senegal

Dianguina Diarisso, *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* (2014)

Dianguina Diarisso, *A l'épreuve des urnes* (2021)

Preface

This book analyses the complex interplay of historical narratives, cultural constructs, and socio-political paradigms that perpetuate instability in Francophone Africa. Drawing on a corpus of fifteen novels, it investigates the literature's role in shaping public discourse and influencing policy debates related to the continent's socio-political challenges. By using interdisciplinary methodologies, including literary analysis, critical theory, historical contextualisation, postcolonial theory, Michel Foucault's theory of power, and socio-political theory, the study traces the evolution of instability in African literary discourse over the past three decades. The book scrutinises representations of power dynamics, governance structures, identity politics, and socio-economic disparities within these texts. It explores how literary narratives both reflect and challenge prevailing perceptions of the continent.

The book reveals how authors engage with historical events, colonial legacies, and national and global power dynamics, highlighting Africa's multifaceted struggle for stability and progress. Furthermore, the study contributes to the deepening of the understanding of complex societal issues and to broader discussions on literature's potential to catalyse social and political change. By situating literary analysis within historical, social, and political contexts, the study seeks to enrich debates on achieving lasting stability, social justice, and effective governance across the continent.

Ultimately, it offers new insights into the epistemological foundations of social and political instability across the diverse francophone African nations aspiring to a promising renaissance.

Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgment	iv
Preface	vi
1. Introduction	1
2. Understanding Francophone Africa and its conflicts	9
2.1 Intra and interethnic conflicts	13
2.2. Resistance to political changeover through constitutional changes	19
2.3. The political transition phenomenon	23
2.4. Francophone African crossroads of the confluences of geopolitical strategies and interests	28
3. Reading the representation of perennial instability in Francophone Africa	47
3.1. From resistance writing to a literature of disenchantment ...	51
3.2. Representation of military coups proliferation in Africa	54
3.3. Democratic aspirations of the 1990s and sterility of political transitions	56
3.4. From fateful powerlessness to a retrospective and analytical dimension of resilience	58
3.5. The corpus and its spatial, social, historical, and political context	61
3.6. Understanding the binary nature of reality and fiction in francophone African narratives, and related theoretical frameworks	91

Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgment	iv
Preface	vi
1. Introduction	1
2. Understanding Francophone Africa and its conflicts	9
2.1 Intra and interethnic conflicts	13
2.2. Resistance to political changeover through constitutional changes	19
2.3. The political transition phenomenon	23
2.4. Francophone African crossroads of the confluences of geopolitical strategies and interests	28
3. Reading the representation of perennial instability in Francophone Africa	47
3.1. From resistance writing to a literature of disenchantment ...	51
3.2. Representation of military coups proliferation in Africa	54
3.3. Democratic aspirations of the 1990s and sterility of political transitions	56
3.4. From fateful powerlessness to a retrospective and analytical dimension of resilience	58
3.5. The corpus and its spatial, social, historical, and political context	61
3.6. Understanding the binary nature of reality and fiction in francophone African narratives, and related theoretical frameworks	91

4. Analysing the literary representation of instability spiral in Francophone Africa	97
4.1 (De)Construction of the State: nation-building in the midst of colonial legacies	99
4.2. Ethnic affiliations and political weaponisation of identity-based rhetoric	108
4.3. Corruption and nepotism: unequal distribution of resources and opportunities	120
4.4. Disintegration of economic and socio-political infrastructures	142
4.5. Dysfunctional education and generational disillusionment	166
4.6. Constitutional changes and institutional instability	198
4.7. Power and agency as beacons of hope in the face of darkness	217
4.8. Human rights and State-sponsored violence	244
5. Conclusions, contribution, and further research avenues	275
Bibliography	283

Chapter



Introduction

Post-independence Africa has become synonymous with a succession of thwarted endeavours, particularly those aimed at democratic transitions for fostering economic advancement. This narrative has sparked extensive discourse among scholars, with divergent views on the root causes of these failures. Some argue that internal social and governance structures bear the brunt of responsibility, citing how their inadequacies have always fuelled political unrest and hindered economic progress. Conversely, another school of thought attributes Africa's struggles to the enduring legacy of colonialism, positing that former colonial powers continue to wield significant influence through economic and military ties, particularly in francophone Africa.

The prevailing discourse on Africa's post-independence challenges encompasses a spectrum of perspectives, reflecting a complex interplay of historical legacies, contemporary power dynamics, and evolving social narratives. At one end, scholars scrutinise the internal dynamics of African states, delving into issues of governance, corruption, and social cohesion. They argue that endemic corruption, weak institutions, and ethnic tensions have undermined efforts to establish stable democracies and foster sustainable economic development. This perspective emphasises the need for homegrown solutions tailored to the specific contexts and challenges faced by African nations.

However, amidst these challenges, there is a growing recognition of Africa's agency and resilience in shaping its own future. Scholars and analysts are increasingly exploring alternative narratives that focus on Africa's potential for self-determination

and transformation. This emerging discourse emphasises the agency of African states and peoples in forging new alliances, diversifying economic partnerships, and reclaiming their place on the global stage. Rather than viewing Africa solely through the lens of victimhood or dependency, this perspective highlights the agency of African leaders and citizens in navigating complex geopolitical terrain and charting a course towards genuine empowerment and development.

The concept of African renaissance has gained traction in recent years, signaling a renewed sense of optimism and agency among African intellectuals, artists, and activists. At its core, African renaissance represents a collective endeavour to reclaim agency, dignity, and self-determination in the face of historical injustices and contemporary challenges. This movement is characterised by a rejection of external domination and a reclamation of African identity, culture, and heritage.

In this context, the perennial instabilities that have plagued francophone Africa are reframed not as signs of inherent weakness, but as catalysts for reflection and renewal. Young generations of Africans are increasingly questioning the legitimacy of colonial-era structures and ideologies, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable vision of African development. Their narratives emphasise the importance of reclaiming African agency and autonomy, forging new partnerships based on mutual respect and solidarity, and confronting the legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism head-on.

One key aspect of this shift in perspective is the emphasis on diversifying Africa's economic partnerships and reducing dependency on former colonial powers. New and mainly young African leaders are increasingly seeking out new alliances with emerging powers such as China, Russia, India, Turkey, and Brazil, as well as expanding South-South cooperation and integration initiatives. These partnerships offer opportunities for mutual benefit and shared development, while also challenging the dominance of traditional Western powers in shaping Africa's economic agenda through win-win perspectives.

At the same time, efforts to promote regional integration and intra-African trade are gaining momentum, with initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) promising to unlock the continent's economic potential and foster greater self-reliance. By breaking down barriers to trade and investment, African countries aim to capitalise on their collective strengths and resources, while also reducing dependency on external markets and aid.

An essential component of the shifting narrative surrounding Africa's trajectory lies in the pivotal role of literature and cultural expression. Within the cultural sphere, artists, writers, and intellectuals have emerged as vanguards in challenging prevailing narratives and reshaping visions of the continent's future. Through a diverse array of mediums including literature, film, music, and other forms of artistic expression, Africans are reclaiming their narratives and asserting their agency in shaping the destiny of their continent.

Literature serves as a powerful tool for illuminating the complexities of Africa's past, present, and future. Through both fiction and non-fiction works, authors delve deep into the social and political dynamics at play, offering insights into the lived experiences of ordinary Africans and the broader historical forces that have shaped their realities. Whether exploring themes of identity, resistance, or resilience, literary representations provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of African societies and their struggles for liberation and self-determination.

The literature of francophone Africa has played a crucial role in critiquing colonial legacies and challenging dominant narratives of African inferiority and dependency. Writers from this tradition have employed a variety of literary devices and techniques to deconstruct and interrogate the enduring impact of colonialism on African societies. Through richly textured narratives, they confront the legacy of exploitation, oppression, and cultural erasure, shedding light on the often-overlooked contributions and resilience of African peoples.

Deciphering the layers of narratological meaning embedded within literary texts requires an appreciation for the complexities of language and symbolism. Literary decryption involves closely analysing the text, identifying patterns, symbols, metaphors, and other literary devices employed by the author to convey deeper layers of meaning. It demands critical interpretation, and contextual understanding to unveil the underlying messages, themes, and complexities hidden within the text.

Critics and readers engage in literary decryption as a means of unlocking the richness and depth of a literary work. By peeling the layers of narrative and symbolism, they uncover hidden realities, explore underlying themes, and gain deeper insights into the cultural, social, and political contexts in which the text is situated. Literary decryption thus serves as a gateway to understanding not only the motivations of characters and the development of plot, but also the broader societal implications and cultural contexts that may not be immediately apparent on the surface.

Through the process of literary decryption, readers can engage more fully with the text, discerning its nuances and appreciating its broader significance. This deeper level of engagement fosters critical thinking and encourages readers to question prevailing narratives and interrogate established power structures. It allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of African societies and their ongoing struggles for liberation, justice, and equality.

Literary decryption serves as a critical component of discourse studies, offering readers a pathway to explore texts at a deeper level and gain a richer understanding of their complexity and significance. In the context of decrypting the enduring instability within francophone Africa through the lens of literary discourse, this study employs a multifaceted approach that encompasses various analytical methods. By focusing on African novels as primary texts, this analysis utilises close reading, literary analysis, historical and cultural contextualisation of fictional narratives, and the exploration of intertextual connections with

other works of political dimensions to elucidate the intricate dynamics at play.

It can be argued that through close reading, readers can discern subtle nuances and recurring motifs within the narrative, uncovering deeper layers of meaning. In addition to close reading, literary analysis offers a framework for interpreting the socio-political dimensions of fictional narratives. By situating the text within its historical and cultural context, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the social forces that shape the narrative. Literary analysis enables readers to explore the ways in which the novel reflects and comments on real-world events, ideologies, and power dynamics within francophone African societies. Moreover, historical, and cultural contextualisation plays a crucial role in decrypting the meaning of fictional narratives within the specific contexts of francophone Africa. By examining the historical events, cultural traditions, and socio-economic conditions that inform the narrative, readers can better understand the motivations of the characters and the broader themes addressed in the text. Historical and cultural contextualisation allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the narrative, highlighting its relevance to the unique challenges and experiences of francophone African societies.

In relation to the methodology, it is important to underscore that since literary decryption serves as a cornerstone within discourse studies, it offers readers a pathway to explore texts at a deeper level and gain a richer understanding of their complexity and significance. This process becomes especially vital when analysing the persistent instability within francophone Africa through the lens of literary discourse, particularly focusing on African novels. To effectively decrypt these narratives, a diverse array of methodological approaches is employed, including close reading, literary analysis, historical and cultural contextualisation of fictional narratives, and the exploration of intertextual connections with other works of political dimensions.

Close reading stands as a fundamental method within literary decryption, requiring readers to engage with the text at a

granular level, examining its language, imagery, and structure. By immersing themselves in the richness of the narrative, readers can discern subtle nuances and recurring motifs that offer insights into the underlying themes and messages embedded within the text. Close reading allows for the identification of hidden meanings and symbolic representations, facilitating a deeper understanding of the author's intentions and the broader socio-political context in which the narrative unfolds.

Moreover, literary analysis provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting the socio-political dimensions of fictional narratives. By situating the text within its historical and cultural context, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the social forces that shape the narrative. Literary analysis enables readers to explore the ways in which the novel reflects and comments on real-world events, ideologies, and power dynamics within francophone African societies. Through this method, readers can uncover the underlying motivations of characters, dissect the narrative structure, and examine the author's use of literary devices to convey complex themes and ideas.

Furthermore, historical and cultural contextualisation plays a crucial role in decrypting the meaning of fictional narratives within the specific contexts of francophone Africa. By examining the historical events, cultural traditions, and socio-economic conditions that inform the narrative, readers can better understand the motivations of the characters and the broader themes addressed in the text. Historical and cultural contextualization allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the narrative, highlighting its relevance to the unique challenges and experiences of francophone African societies. By placing the text within its historical and cultural milieu, readers can gain insights into the ways in which colonial legacies, political upheavals, and cultural shifts shape the narrative landscape of francophone Africa.

Finally, the exploration of intertextual connections with other works of political dimensions enriches the process of literary decryption, providing valuable insights into the broader literary landscape and the ways in which fictional narratives intersect with

larger political discourses. By tracing connections between different texts and authors, readers can uncover shared themes, motifs, and concerns, shedding light on the ways in which fictional narratives contribute to ongoing conversations about power, identity, and resistance in francophone Africa. Intertextuality allows readers to explore the ways in which authors engage with and respond to existing literary traditions, political ideologies, and social movements, revealing the interconnectedness of literary texts and their broader cultural and political trends and contexts.

Chapter



2

Understanding Francophone Africa and its conflicts

Since the period of independence, Francophone Africa has been a theatre of numerous conflicts, reflecting a complex set of historical, social, and political dynamics (Gluhbegovic, 2016, Tarif and Vircoulon, 2016). Security concerns have been a persistent issue across the region, drawing attention from analysts and policymakers alike (Chipman, 1984). Africa, in the broader context, has often been portrayed as a continent plagued by conflicts, with Francophone countries bearing a significant share of these challenges.

While efforts to address security issues have been ongoing, the multifaceted nature of these conflicts necessitates a nuanced understanding. Researchers such as Gluhbegovic (2016) argue that even though conflicts in Francophone Africa can be traced back to the era of liberation wars during independence movements, modern conflicts often exhibit ethnic dimensions and are fuelled by struggles over resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Thus, in contemporary times, conflicts in Francophone Africa have evolved to encompass a variety of forms. Interethnic violence, political manoeuvring, tensions arising from constitutional changes, and the erosion of state institutions are among the prominent features of modern conflicts. Corruption and inequalities further exacerbate the socio-political landscape, contributing to the complexity of security challenges (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004).

It is essential to recognise that armed conflicts in Africa are not monolithic; rather, they emerge from a confluence of factors. Cultural, social, political, military, and geopolitical elements intersect, each influencing the dynamics of conflict in its own way (Gluhbegovic, 2016). Understanding these complexities requires a

multidisciplinary approach, drawing insights from disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics.

Sociological and anthropological perspectives shed light on the underlying causes of interethnic conflicts and civil wars. These conflicts often stem from historical grievances, identity politics, and competition for resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004).

Additionally, geostrategic considerations play a significant role, with rival powers vying for influence and control in the region (Chipman, 1984).

Economic interests also drive conflicts, as various actors seek to exploit resources for financial gain. The modes of financing conflicts vary, ranging from illicit trade to external support from foreign entities (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Moreover, political struggles over power and representation contribute to the perpetuation of conflicts, as different groups vie for dominance within the state (Gluhbegovic, 2016).

Territorial disputes and military factors further complicate the security landscape. Failures within security forces, coupled with the proliferation of arms trafficking, exacerbate tensions and contribute to the escalation of violence (Chipman, 1984).

Moreover, conflicts in Francophone Africa often spill beyond national borders, assuming a regional dimension. Intra-national disputes intersect with transnational dynamics, as neighbouring states become embroiled in the conflict. Militias and armed groups traverse porous borders, exacerbating instability and perpetuating violence across multiple countries (Chipman, 1984).

A notable example of regional conflict dynamics is evident in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The DRC's internal conflicts have drawn in neighbouring countries, leading to a complex web of regional alliances and rivalries (Kabunda and Luque, 2009). Ethnic groups with cross-border affiliations further complicate the situation, underscoring the interconnected nature of conflicts in the region.

The post-1990 era marked a pivotal juncture in the political trajectory of Francophone Africa, characterised by the transition to multiparty democracy and the promise of a new era of governance.

This period of political transformation, however, was not without its challenges. As multiparty systems took root, political factors emerged as potent drivers of conflict, exacerbating social tensions and deepening divisions within society (Gluhbegovic, 2016). The advent of multiparty democracy promised greater political participation and representation, yet it also laid bare entrenched inequalities in access to power and resources. In many instances, the fault lines of political conflict in Francophone Africa are intricately tied to ethnic identities. Ethnic groups, historically marginalised or excluded from positions of power, have sought to assert their interests within the political arena. The competition for political dominance often ignites simmering ethnic tensions, leading to cycles of violence and instability. Moreover, the manipulation of ethnic identities by political elites further exacerbates divisions and undermines social cohesion.

It is within this context of political turmoil and social upheaval that Francophone novelists have emerged as potent critics of society. Through their literary works, these authors offer incisive commentary on the complexities of political power struggles, social inequalities, and the human cost of conflict. By weaving together fictional narratives that reflect the lived experiences of ordinary citizens, Francophone novelists provide readers with a nuanced understanding of the social and political realities shaping Francophone Africa.

One of the reasons why African narratives resonate so deeply is their ability to capture the multifaceted nature of the human experience. Through the lens of storytelling, authors explore themes of identity, belonging, and resilience in the face of adversity. By immersing readers in the lives of diverse characters, African narratives offer a window into the rich cultures, histories, and struggles that define the continent.

Moreover, African narratives serve as a vehicle for truth-telling and reconciliation in societies grappling with the legacies of colonialism, dictatorship, and conflict. Through their exploration of themes such as memory, trauma, and healing, authors confront uncomfortable truths and challenge prevailing narratives about

Africa and its people. In doing so, they create space for dialogue, reflection, and collective reckoning with the past.

Furthermore, African narratives are deeply rooted in the oral tradition, which has long served as a means of preserving cultural heritage and transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next. By drawing on oral storytelling techniques, African authors infuse their works with a sense of authenticity and immediacy that resonates with readers across the globe.

2.1 Intra and interethnic conflicts

Africa is home to a diverse array of ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and traditions, making it inherently complex and heterogeneous. Ethnic identity holds significant sway in the social, political, and cultural fabric of many African societies. It is deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness and social dynamics of communities, encompasses shared historical ties that bind individuals together and shape their perceptions of self and others. It serves as a source of pride, solidarity, and social cohesion, providing a sense of belonging and cultural continuity in rapidly changing societies. It serves as a primary marker of belonging, loyalty, and identity for individuals and communities across the continent.

While ethnic diversity is a source of richness and strength, it can also be a potential source of conflict and division, particularly in contexts of political instability, economic hardship, and social inequality (Chafer, 2005; Rubayiza, 2000; Nsegiyumva, 2019, 2021). Managing ethnic diversity and promoting social cohesion require inclusive governance, respect for human rights, and mechanisms for dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution.

To comprehend the intricacies of intra and interethnic conflicts in Africa, it is imperative to examine their historical roots within the context of the continent's colonial past and the subsequent processes of state formation. European colonial powers, driven by imperial ambitions and economic interests, carved up the African continent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, imposing arbitrary borders that disregarded pre-existing

ethnic, tribal, and linguistic divisions. This legacy of colonialism not only laid the groundwork for ethnic tensions and rivalries but also contributed to the uneven distribution of power and resources within newly independent states.

European colonial powers, including Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, and Italy, partitioned Africa through a series of treaties, conquests, and agreements that often paid little heed to the ethnic, tribal, and linguistic complexities of the continent. Borders were drawn primarily to serve the economic and strategic interests of the colonisers, resulting in the creation of artificial nation-states that failed to reflect the cultural, social, and historical realities of African societies.

African societies were organised along complex lines of ethnic, tribal, and linguistic identities, with distinct cultural practices, traditions, and systems of governance. However, colonial powers imposed their administrative structures, legal systems, and languages upon African societies, often suppressing or ignoring pre-existing ethnic divisions in favour of centralised control and exploitation. This imposition disrupted traditional social hierarchies, undermined traditional authority structures, and sowed the seeds of ethnic discord and discontent.

The arbitrary nature of colonial borders and the imposition of foreign rule fostered resentment and competition among ethnic groups that found themselves arbitrarily grouped together or divided across different colonial territories. Ethnic tensions and rivalries emerged as communities vied for political influence, access to resources, and control over territory within the confines of artificial nation-states. Moreover, colonial powers often favoured certain ethnic groups over others, exacerbating inequalities and fuelling grievances that persist to this day.

Colonial rule entrenched existing patterns of inequality and exploitation, concentrating power and wealth in the hands of a small elite while marginalising and impoverishing the majority of the population. Indigenous African communities were often relegated to subordinate positions within the colonial hierarchy, denied political representation, economic opportunities, and access

to education and healthcare. This unequal distribution of power and resources exacerbated ethnic tensions and reinforced social divisions along ethnic lines. The legacy of colonialism continues to shape the dynamics of state formation and governance in post-colonial Africa. Newly independent states inherited arbitrary borders that failed to correspond with the distribution of ethnic groups and cultural communities. This mismatch between state boundaries and ethnic identities contributed to conflicts over citizenship, nationality, and political representation, as well as tensions between majority and minority ethnic groups within multi-ethnic states.

In many African countries, political elites have exploited ethnic divisions for personal gain, using ethnicity as a tool to mobilise support, consolidate power, and maintain control over state institutions and resources. By appealing to ethnic loyalties and identity politics, political leaders have sought to rally popular support, secure electoral victories, and undermine opposition movements. However, this instrumentalisation of ethnicity has often deepened divisions. The instrumentalisation of ethnic identity deepens societal divisions, polarises communities, and erodes social cohesion, creating fertile ground for the escalation of interethnic tensions and conflicts. Political rhetoric, hate speech, and identity politics exacerbate ethnic cleavages, fuelling mistrust, hostility, and intolerance between ethnic groups. This fracturing of social solidarity undermines efforts to build inclusive, pluralistic societies based on principles of equality, justice, and mutual respect.

Dividing societies along ethnic lines is indeed a classic strategy employed by political elites to weaken opposition forces, undermine dissent, and maintain their monopoly on power. By exploiting historical grievances, ethnic rivalries, and cultural differences, elites foster suspicion, mistrust, and animosity between ethnic communities, rendering them susceptible to manipulation and control. They accentuate divisions, amplify grievances, and manipulate perceptions to divert attention from governance failures, corruption scandals, and socio-economic inequalities.

Across Africa, ethnic identity often intersects with political representation and access to resources. In countries where power is concentrated in the hands of a dominant ethnic group or ruling elite, marginalised ethnic communities may find themselves excluded from decision-making processes and denied equitable access to public services, economic opportunities, and social welfare programmes.

Ethnicity remains a potent force in shaping political dynamics across Africa. In many countries, ethnic groups that feel marginalised or excluded from political power perceive violence as a means of asserting their rights and interests. Moreover, political elites frequently exploit ethnic divisions for personal gain, exacerbating tensions and perpetuating cycles of conflict.

Ethnic groups that perceive themselves as politically marginalised often harbour deep-seated grievances against the state and ruling elite. They may feel marginalised due to historical injustices, discriminatory policies, or systematic exclusion from political and economic spheres. This perception of injustice fuels a sense of collective identity and solidarity among marginalised ethnic communities, providing fertile ground for mobilisation and resistance against perceived oppressors.

When peaceful avenues for political participation and redress are blocked or ineffective, marginalised ethnic groups may resort to violence as a means of asserting their rights and interests. Armed rebellion, insurgency, and acts of sabotage are often seen as legitimate forms of resistance against perceived oppression and injustice. Violence becomes a tool for marginalised groups to challenge the status quo, demand recognition, and secure concessions from the state and ruling elite. Political elites across the globe, and particularly in regions marked by ethnic diversity such as Africa, frequently leverage ethnicity as a tool for mobilisation, consolidation of power, and control over resources. Intra and interethnic conflicts can have spill-over effects, destabilising neighbouring countries and regions. Cross-border ethnic alliances, refugee flows, arms trafficking, and regional power struggles often exacerbate conflicts and contribute to regional instability.

Understanding how political elites exploit ethnic divisions for personal gain and political advantage is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of intra and interethnic conflicts.

Political elites recognise the emotive power of ethnicity and its ability to mobilise large segments of the population around shared cultural, linguistic, and historical affiliations. By tapping into ethnic loyalties and primordial sentiments, elites can galvanise support, and build formidable political coalitions capable of challenging incumbent regimes and rival factions.

Political elites strategically instrumentalise ethnic identity to advance their own political agendas and consolidate their grip on power. They exploit ethnic symbols, rituals, and narratives to cultivate a sense of belonging and loyalty among ethnic constituencies, positioning themselves as champions of ethnic interests and guardians of cultural heritage. By presenting themselves as defenders of the ethnic group's collective rights and aspirations, elites seek to garner electoral support, patronage networks, and grassroots mobilisation. Ethnic mobilisation enables political elites to consolidate power by forging alliances with influential ethnic leaders, co-opting ethnic-based political parties, and manipulating electoral processes to secure victory at the ballot box. They employ patronage, clientelism, and nepotism to reward loyal supporters and marginalise dissenting voices, thereby reinforcing their control over state institutions, resources, and decision-making processes. Ethnic politics becomes a means of entrenching political dominance and perpetuating elite rule.

The exploitation of ethnic divisions by political elites creates a volatile environment ripe for conflict and instability. It creates conditions that are conducive to conflicts. By fanning the flames of ethnic animosity, elites can trigger cycles of retaliation and counterretaliation. Social polarisation, exclusionary policies, and institutionalised discrimination exacerbate feelings of injustice, driving disenfranchised ethnic groups to resort to protest, rebellion, or armed resistance.

The instrumentalisation of ethnic identity poses significant challenges to democratic governance and political stability in

Africa. Ethnic-based patronage networks, clientelism, and vote-buying undermine the integrity of electoral processes and erode public trust in democratic institutions. Electoral violence, voter intimidation, and manipulation of ethnic tensions undermine the principles of free and fair elections, hampering efforts to build inclusive and accountable political systems.

Inclusive governance, participatory decision-making, and respect for human rights stand as indispensable pillars of sustainable peace and stability, especially in regions plagued by conflict and political instability. Inclusive governance mechanisms have been recognised as vital components of democratic societies, fostering social cohesion, promoting justice, and ensuring that the voices of all citizens, including marginalised groups, are heard and respected.

Inclusive governance entails the equitable representation and meaningful participation of all segments of society in decision-making processes and public affairs. It recognises the diversity of identities, perspectives, and interests within a society and seeks to accommodate and reconcile competing demands through dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. Inclusive governance promotes transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

Participatory decision-making empowers citizens to actively engage in shaping policies, programs, and initiatives that affect their lives and communities. African authors recognise that respect for human rights lies at the heart of inclusive governance and democratic practice, serving as a fundamental safeguard against oppression, discrimination, and abuse of power. Their fictional representations depict inclusive governance as encompassing civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, ensuring that individuals are treated with dignity, equality, and fairness under the law. Their narratives provide avenues for promoting social justice and equity by strengthening democratic institutions serving as bulwarks against authoritarianism, corruption, and abuse of power, safeguarding democratic principles and protecting the rights and freedoms of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity.

2.2. Resistance to political changeover through constitutional changes

Democracy in Francophone Africa has been a subject of intense scrutiny and debate since the wave of decolonisation that swept across the continent in the mid-20th century. While many countries celebrated newfound independence from colonial rule, the path to democratic governance has been fraught with challenges, setbacks, and periods of turbulence. From military coups to constitutional manipulations aimed at extending presidential terms, the journey toward stable and inclusive democratic systems has been arduous and complex. These undemocratic practices have not only hindered the consolidation of democratic institutions but have also had far-reaching negative impacts on the stability and development of Francophone African countries.

The initial post-independence era in Francophone Africa was marked by optimism and aspirations for self-governance and democratic rule. However, the euphoria of independence was short-lived as many countries in the region soon succumbed to the scourge of military coups.

The military, often viewing itself as the guardian of national stability, intervened in politics, overthrowing elected governments and assuming power under the pretext of restoring order and safeguarding national interests.

Military coups, far from providing stability, plunged Francophone African countries into cycles of political turmoil and uncertainty. The abrupt disruption of constitutional order undermined the rule of law, eroded public trust in democratic institutions, and fostered a culture of political violence and impunity. Civil liberties were curtailed, dissent was suppressed, and opposition voices were silenced, creating a climate of fear and repression that stifled democratic expression and participation.

The transitional period of multiparty democracy in the 1990s offered a glimmer of hope for democratic renewal in Francophone Africa. Encouraged by internal pressures for change and external support from the former colonial powers and international institutions, many countries embarked on ambitious reforms aimed

at promoting political pluralism, human rights, and accountable governance. Elections were held, opposition parties were legalised, and civil society organisations flourished, signalling a nascent commitment to democratic values and principles.

However, the promise of democratic consolidation was soon overshadowed by persistent challenges and setbacks. The resurgence of military coups in recent years has exposed the fragility of democratic institutions and the persistence of authoritarian tendencies within Francophone African polities. The motivations behind these coups vary, ranging from grievances over government corruption, economic mismanagement, and foreign interests, to disputes over succession and power-sharing arrangements.

Moreover, the resistance to political alternation or changeover has emerged as a recurring obstacle to democratic progress in Francophone Africa. Incumbent leaders, wary of relinquishing power, have resorted to constitutional manipulation and electoral fraud to perpetuate their hold on power. Term limits are circumvented, opposition figures are marginalised, imprisoned or forced into exile, and the political playing field is tilted in favour of the ruling elite, undermining the credibility and integrity of the electoral processes and systems.

Constitutional manipulation, often disguised as legal reforms or amendments, constitutes a grave threat to democratic governance in Francophone Africa. By subverting the constitutional order and concentrating power in the hands of a few, political leaders undermine the principles of separation of powers, checks and balances, and popular sovereignty essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. The erosion of constitutional norms weakens the foundations of democratic governance, paving the way for authoritarian rule and elite capture of state institutions.

The negative impact of undemocratic practices extends beyond the political realm, affecting all aspects of society and undermining prospects for sustainable development and prosperity. Economic growth is stifled, as resources are misallocated, and investment opportunities are squandered amidst

political instability and uncertainty. Foreign investors are wary of committing capital to countries plagued by political risk and governance challenges, hindering efforts to attract foreign direct investment and spur economic diversification.

Social cohesion is also threatened by the erosion of democratic norms and the concentration of power in the hands of a ruling elite. Marginalised groups, including women, youth, and ethnic minorities, are systematically excluded from the political process and denied equal access to resources and opportunities. Inequality and social injustice breed resentment and frustration, fuelling social unrest and ethnic tensions that undermine national unity and solidarity.

Furthermore, the erosion of democratic governance undermines efforts to address pressing social and environmental challenges, including poverty, disease, and climate change. In the absence of transparent and accountable institutions, public resources are often squandered or diverted for personal gain, depriving communities of essential services and infrastructure. Environmental degradation and natural resource depletion exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity, and fuelling conflict over scarce resources.

It is in this regard that African literature serves as a powerful tool for shedding light on the negative impact of undemocratic practices on stability and development in Francophone African countries. Through the lens of literature, authors have crafted narratives that vividly depict the challenges facing democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law in the region. Francophone African literature explores themes of exile, displacement, and belonging in the context of political repression and social upheaval.

Authors challenge the status quo, provoke critical reflection, and inspire collective action in the pursuit of social change. By amplifying the voices of the marginalised and disenfranchised, literature serves as a catalyst for democratic renewal and social transformation in Francophone Africa. Themes of democracy, human rights, and accountability resonate deeply with readers,

offering insights into the complexities of political life and the struggles of ordinary citizens against oppressive regimes. Authors draw inspiration from real-life events and personal experiences to create compelling narratives that challenge conventional wisdom and provoke thought-provoking discussions about the nature of power and authority in society. The promotion of democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law dominates the literary landscape of Francophone Africa, as writers grapple with the complexities of political transition and social transformation.

Francophone literature readers are transported to worlds where the struggle for freedom and equality is fought on the streets, in the corridors of power, and in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. Through the eyes of its protagonist, readers are invited to bear witness to the human cost of tyranny and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. They are introduced to a cast of characters who refuse to accept the injustices of their society and instead choose to confront them head-on. Through their actions, they inspire others to join their cause and work towards building a more just and equitable society for all. They are transported to a world where the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur, as characters grapple with the legacy of colonialism and the struggle for self-determination. Through their journey, they confront the demons of their past and forge a new path towards a future defined by freedom, dignity, and hope.

2.3. The political transition phenomenon

Democratic principles and practices in Francophone Africa have faced significant challenges due to institutional fragility. Since gaining independence, many African nations have embarked on revising their constitutions with the aim of ensuring smooth political transitions that promote both accountability and stability. However, despite these efforts, the region has witnessed a mixed record in terms of democratic progress. While some countries have experienced peaceful transfers of power within multiparty systems in recent years, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Senegal, others have fallen victim to the manipulation of

constitutional changes to prolong incumbency and consolidate power. These undemocratic manoeuvres have exacerbated institutional fragility, fuelling socio-political tensions and leading to repressive measures by those in power. In contemporary political discourse, the concept of democratic transition reflecting constitutional manipulations has emerged as a defining feature of governance in Africa, prompting some critics to label it as the "African style" of democratic governance.

The fragility of democratic institutions in Francophone Africa can be attributed to a variety of factors, including historical legacies of colonialism, weak governance structures, and entrenched political elites. Colonial powers often imposed artificial boundaries and governance systems that failed to account for ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, laying the groundwork for instability and conflict in the post-independence era. Additionally, the legacy of authoritarian rule and one-party states has left a lasting impact on political culture in many African countries, leading to a concentration of power in the hands of a few and undermining the principles of democracy and accountability.

Furthermore, the manipulation of constitutional processes has emerged as a common tactic employed by political leaders to perpetuate their rule and suppress dissent. In some cases, leaders have exploited loopholes in constitutional provisions to extend term limits or consolidate power through authoritarian means, such as curtailing civil liberties, restricting media freedom, and suppressing opposition voices (Kamau Kuria, 1991; Ndulo, 2019; US Department of State, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2024). These actions have not only undermined the credibility of democratic institutions but also eroded public trust in the political process, leading to widespread disillusionment and social unrest.

Moreover, the role of civil society and grassroots movements cannot be overstated in driving democratic change and holding leaders accountable. Across Francophone Africa, activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens have mobilised to demand greater transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights, challenging entrenched power structures and advocating for

democratic reform. These grassroots movements play a crucial role in amplifying marginalised voices, fostering civic engagement, and promoting social justice, thereby contributing to the consolidation of democratic values and institutions.

In response to growing domestic and international pressure, some African leaders have begun to recognise the importance of democratic governance and have taken steps to reform electoral processes, strengthen judicial independence, and promote political pluralism. Even though regional organisations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have attempted to play a role in monitoring elections, they have failed to mediate political crises, and to promote democratic norms and principles across the continent.

Despite the formidable challenges facing Francophone Africa, there have been notable instances of democratic progress that stand as beacons of hope amidst the region's complex political landscape. While countries like the Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Rwanda have grappled with political turmoil and challenges to democratic governance, others such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have garnered praise for their commitment to democratic principles, press freedom, and the peaceful transfer of power through free and fair elections. These success stories underscore the potential for democratic governance to take root and thrive in the African context, provided there is a strong political will, robust institutions, and a steadfast commitment to upholding the rule of law.

In Burundi, for instance, the country has made significant strides in transitioning from decades of authoritarian rule to a more inclusive and participatory political system. Despite facing challenges such as ethnic tensions and political violence, Burundi has managed to conduct relatively peaceful elections and facilitate the transfer of power between different political actors. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the transfer of power from Joseph Kabila to Felix Tshisekedi marked a historic moment in the country's democratic journey. Tshisekedi's second term after a free

and fair democratic election demonstrates the potential for peaceful transitions of power in a region plagued by political instability.

These success stories serve as a testament to the resilience of democratic values and the determination of African citizens to assert their rights and hold their leaders accountable. They highlight the importance of building strong institutions, promoting civic engagement, and fostering a culture of respect for the rule of law as essential pillars of democratic governance. Moreover, they challenge prevailing narratives of African exceptionalism and underscore the potential for democratic progress to take root and flourish across the continent.

However, the road to democratic consolidation in Francophone Africa remains fraught with challenges and obstacles that threaten to derail progress and undermine the gains made thus far. Persistent issues such as corruption, ethnic conflict, and economic inequality continue to erode public trust in democratic institutions and hinder efforts to build resilient and inclusive democracies. Corruption and clientelism particularly pose a significant threat to democratic governance, undermining the credibility of electoral processes, eroding public confidence in government institutions, and perpetuating a culture of embezzlement and impunity among political elites.

Ethnic conflict also remains a persistent challenge in many parts of Francophone Africa, fuelled by historical grievances, competition for scarce resources, and manipulation by political actors seeking to divide and conquer. Ethnic tensions have often been exploited by authoritarian regimes to maintain power and suppress dissent, leading to cycles of violence and instability that undermine efforts to build cohesive and inclusive societies. Addressing the root causes of ethnic conflict requires concerted efforts to promote reconciliation, foster dialogue, and address underlying socio-economic disparities that fuel tensions.

Furthermore, economic inequality continues to pose a significant barrier to democratic consolidation in Francophone Africa, exacerbating social tensions and undermining efforts to build inclusive and equitable societies. Despite significant natural

resources and economic potential, many countries in the region continue to grapple with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, leading to widespread disillusionment and resentment among marginalised communities. Addressing economic inequality requires targeted interventions to promote inclusive growth, expand access to education and healthcare, and create opportunities for meaningful participation in the political and economic life of the country.

Additionally, the rise of authoritarian populism and the erosion of democratic norms pose further threats to democratic governance in Francophone Africa. The growing influence of populist leaders who seek to undermine democratic institutions and consolidate power through divisive rhetoric and authoritarian tactics poses a significant challenge to the region's democratic aspirations. Moreover, the western support to francophone African allies who are known for contributing to the erosion of democratic norms and values often sends a troubling signal to other countries in Francophone Africa, emboldening authoritarian leaders and weakening national solidarity for democratic reform efforts.

2.4. Francophone African crossroads of the confluences of geopolitical strategies and interests

With the advent of independence, African nations harboured profound aspirations for true autonomy and self-determination, envisioning a new era marked by freedom, progress, and prosperity. The collective psyche of the continent was infused with optimism, as people dared to dream of a future unshackled from the bonds of colonial rule. The winds of change swept across the vast African landscape, carrying with them the promise of a brighter future.

As the flags of newly independent nations unfurled and anthems reverberated across the continent, a sense of hope permeated the air. The struggles and sacrifices of generations past had culminated in this historic moment of liberation, igniting a fervent belief in the potential for African nations to carve out their destinies on their own terms. Yet, beneath the surface of euphoria

and jubilation, the seeds of dependency had already been sown, threatening to undermine the aspirations of independence and sovereignty.

The former colonial powers, reluctant to relinquish their grip on African resources and markets, sought to assert their influence through covert means, perpetuating a legacy of exploitation and domination. Economic and military ties forged during the colonial era remained intact, as trade relations and investment patterns favoured the interests of the colonial masters, relegating African nations to the periphery of the global economy.

Moreover, beyond the reach of the former colonial powers, other actors emerged on the African stage, eager to capitalise on the newfound opportunities presented by independence. International organisations and multinationals, driven by profit motives and strategic interests, maneuvered to shape the trajectory of post-independence Africa to serve their own agendas. Under the guise of development assistance and economic cooperation, these entities extended their reach into virtually every aspect of African society, exerting influence over political, economic, and social dynamics.

The reality of dependency was stark and pervasive, permeating all sectors of African society and undermining the aspirations of true independence. Economically, African nations remained ensnared in a cycle of reliance on primary commodity exports, vulnerable to fluctuations in global market forces and beholden to the dictates of external actors. Politically, the spectre of neocolonialism loomed large, as puppet governments and authoritarian regimes, beholden to foreign interests, stifled dissent and perpetuated a culture of corruption and impunity.

Socially and culturally, the imposition of Western values and norms threatened to erode African traditions and identities, fostering a sense of alienation and dislocation among African peoples. Educational systems, shaped by Western paradigms and ideologies, failed to address the unique needs and challenges of African societies, perpetuating a cycle of dependency on foreign expertise and knowledge.

Within this context of pervasive dependency, the Francophone African nations found themselves at the crossroads of intersecting geopolitical strategies and interests, caught in the tangled web of global power dynamics. The historical ties forged with former colonial masters, particularly France, imbued these nations with a unique set of challenges and opportunities, shaping their trajectories in the post-independence era.

France, keen to maintain its influence and interests in its former colonies, adopted a policy of neocolonialism, extending its reach into the political, economic, and cultural spheres of Francophone Africa. Through a network of economic agreements, military alliances, and cultural exchanges, France sought to preserve its privileged position and secure access to key resources and markets in the region.

The consequences of France's neocolonial ambitions were manifold, exerting a profound impact on the development trajectory of Francophone African nations and exacerbating the challenges of dependency and instability. Economic policies dictated by Paris favoured the interests of French corporations and elites, perpetuating a system of unequal exchange and resource extraction that marginalised local industries and hindered sustainable development.

Moreover, the presence of French military forces in the region, ostensibly deployed for peacekeeping and security purposes, often served to entrench authoritarian regimes, and suppress dissent, further eroding democratic principles and exacerbating tensions within society. The legacy of French colonialism cast a long shadow over Francophone Africa, shaping political structures, economic relationships, and social dynamics in ways that continue to reverberate to this day.

In addition to the influence of former colonial powers, Francophone African nations found themselves ensnared in the broader currents of global geopolitics, as rival powers vied for strategic advantage and influence on the continent. The Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, played out on the African stage, further complicated the political landscape, as

competing ideologies clashed, and proxy conflicts erupted in pursuit of strategic dominance. Amidst the confluence of competing interests and agendas, the aspirations of Francophone African nations for sustainable development and self-determination often found themselves marginalised and compromised. The promises of independence and sovereignty remained elusive, overshadowed by the enduring legacy of dependency and exploitation.

The consequences of this dependency were manifold, manifesting in various dimensions of instability and vulnerability across Francophone Africa. Economic stagnation, exacerbated by unequal trade relations and external debt burdens, hindered efforts to achieve meaningful development and prosperity. Social tensions, fuelled by inequality, marginalisation, and political repression, simmered beneath the surface, threatening to erupt into conflict and upheaval. The promise of independence, once held aloft as a beacon of hope and liberation, had been tarnished by the harsh realities of dependency and exploitation.

2.4.1. The role of Bretton Woods Institutions in instability in Africa

When the Bretton Woods Institutions, primarily the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were established in 1944, their mandate was clear: to foster international economic cooperation and facilitate a sustainable global integration. For African nations, these institutions were initially perceived as beacons of hope, offering financial assistance to struggling economies and promising avenues for development and progress (Clapham, 1996, Yansané, 1996). However, the reality of their interventions, particularly through Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), has raised profound questions about their efficacy and impact on African development (Williams, 2007).

The inception of Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s in Africa marked a pivotal moment in the relationship between African nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions. Intended to address balance of payments deficits and promote economic stability, SAPs were predicated on a series of

conditionalities that required recipient countries to implement sweeping reforms across various sectors of their economies.

The theoretical underpinnings of SAPs were rooted in neoliberal economic principles, emphasising deregulation, privatisation, and fiscal austerity as pathways to economic growth and development (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003). However, the practical implications of these policies often diverged from their intended outcomes, exacerbating rather than alleviating the challenges facing African nations.

One of the central criticisms levelled against SAPs is their top-down approach to economic reform, which often failed to account for the unique social, political, and economic realities of African countries. Rather than fostering inclusive and sustainable development, SAPs imposed one-size-fits all models that prioritised the interests of external creditors and multinational corporations over the needs and aspirations of local populations. The consequences of SAPs were far-reaching and profound, impacting virtually every aspect of African society. Economically, the emphasis on export-oriented growth and fiscal austerity measures often led to the neglect of domestic industries and the erosion of social safety nets, exacerbating poverty and inequality (Ferguson, 2006). Politically, the conditionality attached to SAPs undermined the sovereignty and autonomy of African governments, compelling them to implement policies dictated by external actors in exchange for financial assistance. This erosion of national sovereignty contributed to a deepening sense of dependency and undermined the legitimacy of African governments in the eyes of their citizens (Thomson, 2010).

Militarily, the cuts in military spending imposed by SAPs had far-reaching implications for security and stability across the continent. In many cases, the demobilisation of military forces, intended to reduce government expenditures and redirect resources towards development priorities, created power vacuums and exacerbated internal conflicts, leading to widespread insecurity and instability (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Educationally, the reforms imposed by SAPs often failed to address the systemic challenges facing African education systems, including inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and unequal access to quality education. Instead of empowering individuals and communities through education, SAPs perpetuated a cycle of dependency and disempowerment, further entrenching inequalities and hindering social mobility.

In conclusion, evaluating the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on African development necessitates an examination of the unique experiences encountered by individual countries. SAPs have encountered significant criticism for their role in fostering developmental disintegration, which often manifests in widespread social unrest and economic instability across the continent. The implementation of SAPs typically has led to the deterioration of public services, factors that have contributed to the contentious nature of these programmes.

Throughout Africa, the implementation of SAPs has frequently exacerbated levels of poverty and income inequality, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable segments of society. Additionally, some of the imposed reforms have often led to substantial increases in the prices of essential goods and services. Moreover, the conditions attached to SAPs by international financial institutions and Western donor countries have further constrained the policy options available to African governments.

Consequently, many nations have found themselves ensnared in cycles of debt dependency and economic vulnerability, exacerbating the challenges associated with sustainable development.

2.4.2. African countries with resources as prey to armed conflicts sponsored by external economic interests.

Historically, raw materials have indeed played a pivotal role in driving economic growth across continents and civilisations. The allure of abundant resources has often been the catalyst for exploration, trade, and sometimes conflict. In the modern era, as the world grapples with climate change and seeks sustainable energy

solutions, the African continent stands out for its immense potential in renewable energies.

Africa boasts a vast array of renewable energy sources, ranging from solar and wind to geothermal resources. The continent receives abundant sunlight throughout the year, making solar energy an especially promising avenue for development. Wind patterns across various regions offer significant potential for harnessing wind power, while geothermal activity in select areas presents opportunities for clean energy generation. Additionally, Africa is endowed with substantial reserves of fossil fuels such as oil, gas, coal, and uranium, alongside strategic minerals essential for various industries.

Amidst growing global concerns about climate change and the imperative to transition towards cleaner energy sources, Africa finds itself at a critical juncture. The shift towards renewable energy presents not only an opportunity to address environmental challenges but also to spur economic development and improve livelihoods across the continent. However, realising this potential necessitates substantial investments in infrastructure and energy production capabilities.

Infrastructure development is essential to facilitate the efficient generation, transmission, and distribution of renewable energy. Investments in transport networks, including roads and railways, are crucial for facilitating the movement of equipment, materials, and personnel to and from energy project sites. Moreover, enhancing energy production capacities requires investments in advanced technologies, research, and development, as well as skilled labour and workforce training programmes.

Yet, despite the evident benefits of transitioning to renewable energy, Africa faces significant challenges in attracting the necessary investments. The lack of capital, technological expertise, and supportive policies often impedes progress in the renewable energy sector. Recognising the urgency of addressing climate change and fostering sustainable development, developed countries have a moral obligation to support Africa's energy transition efforts.

International solidarity and mutually beneficial partnerships are key to overcoming the barriers to investment in Africa's energy sector. Developed nations, with their advanced technologies and financial resources, can play a pivotal role in accelerating the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure across the continent. Through collaborative initiatives, such as joint ventures, technology transfer agreements, and financial assistance programs, developed countries can contribute to unlocking Africa's renewable energy potential.

However, while the transition to renewable energy holds promise for driving inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa, it also raises important socio-economic considerations. Critics of the notion of "green growth" rightly emphasise the need to ensure that the benefits of this transition are equitably distributed and reach the most vulnerable populations. In many African countries, disparities in access to energy and economic opportunities persist, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

Thus, alongside efforts to promote renewable energy deployment, policymakers must prioritise social inclusion and poverty alleviation. Investments in education, healthcare, and skills development are essential for empowering communities and fostering economic resilience. Moreover, policies that promote local ownership and participation in renewable energy projects can help ensure that communities directly benefit from the dividends of sustainable development.

Nevertheless, the transition to renewable energy in Africa is not without its challenges and complexities. One of the most significant obstacles is the prevalence of conflicts and instability in many resource-rich regions of the continent. From the Sahel to the Great Lakes region, conflicts fuelled by competition over natural resources and external interference pose serious threats to peace, security, and development.

Proxy wars, often driven by geopolitical interests and rivalries, exacerbate existing tensions and perpetuate cycles of violence and instability. In countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, the presence of valuable minerals, including cobalt and

coltan, has fuelled armed conflicts and contributed to human rights abuses.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is indeed a land of immense natural wealth, boasting some of the world's largest reserves of strategic minerals. These resources, particularly cobalt and lithium, are critical to produce batteries used in electric vehicles and renewable energy storage systems. As the global push for green energy intensifies, the DRC has attracted significant foreign interest from multinational corporations and countries seeking to secure a steady supply of these essential minerals. However, this scramble for resources has exacerbated armed conflicts, fuelled human rights abuses, and posed significant ethical challenges for global supply chains.

Cobalt, a key mineral found abundantly in the DRC, is indispensable for manufacturing the lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles and store renewable energy. According to the Cobalt Institute (2024), The DRC accounts for approximately 70% of the global cobalt supply, making it a focal point for companies transitioning to green energy. According to a report by the Cobalt Institute, the demand for cobalt is expected to surge, driven by the electric vehicle market, which is projected to grow exponentially in the coming decade.

The immense value of the DRC's mineral wealth has not only attracted legitimate business interests but also various militias and rebel groups. These groups, often supported by neighbouring countries with vested economic and geopolitical interests, engage in violent confrontations to control lucrative mining areas. According to the United Nations Group of Experts on the DRC (2024), these conflicts have resulted in widespread instability and suffering among the local population. The illegal mining operations, often controlled by armed groups, are marked by severe human rights abuses, including forced labour and child exploitation.

Neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda have been implicated in supporting militias within the DRC to gain access to its mineral wealth. Since 2012, the UN report (2012) has

consistently detailed how these countries have facilitated the smuggling of minerals across borders, undermining the DRC's sovereignty and contributing to ongoing conflicts. To address these challenges, the traceability of minerals in the supply chain has become a critical focus. To ensure that minerals are sourced responsibly and do not fund conflict or human rights abuses is a complex task. Efforts to improve traceability have led to initiatives like the Responsible Cobalt Initiative (RCI) and the Conflict-Free Smelter Programme (CFSP), which aim to certify the origins of minerals and promote ethical sourcing practices.

Several high-profile court cases have highlighted the complicity of major high-tech companies in the illegal exploitation of minerals in the DRC. These cases have brought global attention to the ethical and legal responsibilities of corporations involved in these supply chains. More recently, in April 2024, the DRC accused Apple of using illegally exploited minerals from the conflict-torn east. The country's lawyers sent a formal cease and desist notice to Apple, stating their products are "tainted by the blood of the Congolese people."

Beyond the DRC, many African countries with rich natural resources face similar challenges. The competition for resources often leads to political instability, corruption, and armed conflict, driven by both internal power struggles and external economic interests. The pursuit of these resources can fuel cycles of violence and exploitation, as seen in countries like Nigeria with its oil wealth, and Angola with its diamonds.

The involvement of multinational corporations and foreign powers in resource extraction often exacerbates social and environmental injustices, further marginalising local communities. Addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in resource-rich regions is essential for creating an enabling environment for sustainable development and renewable energy investment. This requires concerted efforts to promote peacebuilding, good governance, and respect for human rights. International cooperation and diplomatic engagement are crucial for resolving

conflicts and addressing the underlying drivers of violence and insecurity.

Furthermore, promoting responsible and sustainable natural resource management is essential for ensuring that the benefits of renewable energy development are shared equitably and contribute to long-term socio-economic development. This entails adopting transparent and accountable governance mechanisms, combating corruption, and promoting inclusive decision-making processes that involve local communities and stakeholders.

In conclusion, Africa's transition to renewable energy represents a historic opportunity to foster sustainable development, mitigate climate change, and improve the lives of millions of people across the continent. However, realising this potential requires overcoming numerous challenges, including the lack of investments, socio-economic inequalities, and conflicts fuelled by resource competition. By prioritising international cooperation, social inclusion, and responsible governance, Africa can harness its renewable energy potential to build a brighter and more sustainable future for generations to come.

2.4.3. The Françafrique: understanding the foundations of anti-France sentiments in Francophone Africa.

The conceptualisation of Françafrique encapsulates the turbulences of the historical relationship between France and its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. Coined in the late 1950s by then-Ivoirian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the term of Françafrique initially conveyed positive connotations, emphasising the close ties between France and its former African territories. However, over time its interpretation has evolved, reflecting the intricacies and nuances of the post-colonial relationship between France and its African partners.

At its core, Françafrique encompasses a wide array of political, economic, military, cultural, and linguistic interactions between France and its former Sub-Saharan African colonies. These countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic,

Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, have remained closely intertwined with France in various aspects of governance and international relations and cooperations.

Following the independence of sub-Saharan African countries from France in the 1960s, the concept of *Françafrique* persisted, albeit in evolving forms. France sought to establish new modes of partnership with its former colonies, envisioning a renewed Francophone community. However, in practice, France continued to assert its influence over these nations through defence agreements, monetary unions, customs arrangements, and cultural ties. This resulted in complex dynamics where former colonies retained a degree of autonomy in managing domestic affairs, while still being subject to French oversight and influence.

The legacy of *Françafrique* is hence characterised by a mix of conflicting interests, power transactions, and economic dependencies. Having benefited economically from the exploitation of energy resources and mineral reserves in its former colonies, France sought to maintain privileged access to these resources. Additionally, sub-Saharan francophone Africa served as a strategic stronghold for France, with the region viewed as what is commonly referred to its "pré carré", meaning its own backyard. This zone of France's control was essential for safeguarding against rival influences, including those of the Soviet Union and the United States, through the maintenance of military bases and security arrangements.

However, throughout the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century, *Françafrique* faced increasing scrutiny and criticism, both domestically within France and among African nations. One notable aspect of *Françafrique*'s operation that has made headlines (Decouty, 2008; Bouanchaud, 2011 ; Chanda, 2019; Haski, 2023; Valdigué, 2023) was the clandestine use of African funds to finance French political parties, a practice that persisted well into the 1990s. African emissaries were known to travel to France with suitcases filled with cash, seeking to secure the loyalty and support of French politicians, regardless of electoral outcomes.

Nevertheless, despite the growing discontent and calls for change, it was not until the late 1990s that *Françafrique* began to be seriously challenged within French political circles. Even then, no French president openly questioned the concept until 2012 when President François Hollande publicly declared it was time to end *Françafrique* (Chafer, 2014, Faye, 2023). However, the desire to maintain French influence in Africa, particularly to advance security interests, has remained a key priority for successive French administrations.

However, the landscape of *Françafrique* is undergoing significant transformation, driven in large part by shifting attitudes and dynamics within sub-Saharan Africa itself. Across the region, there is a growing sense of disillusionment and resistance to the neocolonial legacy of *Françafrique*. Many Africans view the concept as emblematic of exploitation, inequality, and subjugation, and are actively challenging the entrenched power structures that sustain it.

The rejection of *Françafrique* is evident in the rise of grassroots movements, civil society activism, and political mobilisation across sub-Saharan Africa. From Mali to Senegal, from Burkina Faso to the Democratic Republic of Congo where France's influence has been significantly sustained, voices calling for an end to France's interference and influence are becoming increasingly heard and contagious.

In response to these evolving dynamics, there have been efforts to redefine and reconfigure the Franco-African relationship. Calls for greater transparency, accountability, and mutual benefit have gained momentum, challenging the paternalistic and asymmetrical nature of *Françafrique*. African leaders are increasingly asserting their agency and pursuing alternative partnerships with a diverse range of global actors, seeking to diversify economic ties and reduce dependency on former colonial powers. One of the key drivers of anti-France sentiment in Africa is the perception of neo-colonialism, the idea that France continues to exert undue influence over the political and economic affairs of its former colonies. This perception is fuelled by a number of factors,

including France's role in supporting authoritarian regimes, its control over key sectors of the economy, and its interventions in African conflicts.

The sentiment of "France Dégage" slogan meaning "France Get Out" symbolises a broader demand for self-determination, sovereignty, and genuine partnership based on mutual respect, equality, and win-win exchange. This rejection of France's African policies and partnerships is rooted in historical legacies, perceptions of neo-colonialism, economic grievances, and discontent with France's military presence on the continent. It has become a rallying cry for many young Africans, reflecting a deep-seated dissatisfaction with France's role and influence in the region.

In many African countries, French companies hold significant stakes in key sectors such as telecommunications, energy, and natural resources. Critics (Chafer, 2005; Taylor, 2019; Ndiaye, 2022) argue that these economic interests often take precedence over the needs and aspirations of the local population, leading to disparities in wealth distribution and perpetuating dependency on foreign investment.

Furthermore, France's military presence in Africa has been a source of contention for many years. France has maintained a network of military bases and operations across the continent, ostensibly to combat terrorism and support peacekeeping efforts. However, these military interventions have often been criticised for their lack of transparency and accountability, as well as for their unintended consequences, including human rights abuses. The recent wave of anti-France sentiment in Africa has been fuelled by a number of high-profile events and developments. In Mali, for example, the French military intervention in 2013 to counter Islamist militants was initially welcomed by the government but has since faced growing opposition from segments of the population who view it as a continuation of colonial-era interventionism.

Similarly, in Senegal, there has been widespread public outcry against France's support for President Macky Sall's government, particularly in the wake of controversial constitutional reforms and

crackdowns on political dissent. The "France Dégage" movement has gained traction among young Senegalese who feel disenfranchised and marginalised by the political establishment and its ties to France.

In Burkina Faso, the 2014 popular uprising that ousted long-time President Blaise Compaoré was facilitated in part by anger over his close ties to France and perceived subservience to French interests. The subsequent transition to civilian rule was seen as an opportunity to break free from France's influence and chart a new course for the country.

In Niger, the issue of French military presence has been a subject of heated debate, particularly in the wake of the deadly ambush of Nigerien troops by Islamist militants in 2017. Many Nigeriens have questioned the effectiveness of France's counterterrorism efforts and expressed concerns about the impact of its military operations on civilian populations.

Elsewhere, there has been growing resentment towards France's support for incumbent governments and its perceived interference in domestic politics. Opposition figures and civil society groups have accused France of propping up authoritarian regimes and undermining democratic institutions.

The rise of anti-France sentiment in Africa represents a significant challenge for French policymakers and policymakers in African countries alike. It underscores the need for a fundamental re-evaluation of France's approach to its former African colonies and partners, and a more inclusive and transparent engagement with governments and civil society. One of the key issues that needs to be addressed is the question of economic sovereignty. African countries must have the freedom to pursue their own development agendas without undue interference from foreign powers. This means promoting local industries, diversifying the economy, and ensuring that natural resources are managed in a transparent and equitable manner. Similarly, there is a need to rethink France's military presence in Africa and its role in regional security affairs.

France's involvement in Africa has long been a subject of intense debate and scrutiny. While the country has a legitimate interest in combating terrorism and promoting stability, its military

interventions must be conducted in a manner that respects the sovereignty and aspirations of African nations. To address these concerns, France must adopt a more transparent and accountable approach to its military operations in Africa. This means providing clear information about the objectives and progress of its missions, as well as ensuring that any allegations of misconduct are thoroughly investigated and addressed. Greater consultation with local authorities is also essential, as this will help to ensure that military interventions are aligned with the needs and aspirations of African countries, rather than being driven solely by French interests. At the same time, African countries must take greater ownership of their own security and development agendas. This requires investing in strong institutions that can effectively manage and respond to security threats, as well as promoting democratic governance and the rule of law. Strong institutions are crucial for ensuring that security forces are accountable and operate in a manner that respects human rights and the rule of law. They also help to build trust between the government and the population, which is essential for effective counter-terrorism efforts.

Promoting democratic governance is another key aspect of this process. Democratic governments are more likely to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of their populations, and they are better equipped to address the underlying drivers of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. This, in turn, can help to reduce the appeal of extremist groups and other violent actors.

Fostering regional integration and cooperation is also essential for addressing common security challenges in Africa. Many of the threats facing African countries, such as terrorism, organised crime, and trafficking, are transnational in nature and require coordinated responses. Regional organisations, such as the African Union and regional economic communities, have a crucial role to play in this regard. By working together, African countries can pool their resources and expertise, share information and intelligence, and develop joint strategies for addressing common security threats.

Furthermore, diversifying partnerships is another important aspect of this process. While France has traditionally been a key partner for many African countries, it is important to reduce dependence on any single external actor. This means building relationships with a wider range of countries and international organisations. Diversifying partnerships can help to ensure that African countries have access to a broader range of resources and expertise, and it can also help to reduce the influence of any single external actor on their domestic affairs.

Finally, the rise of anti-France sentiment in Africa should be seen as an opportunity for constructive dialogue and engagement between France and its African partners. It is a chance to build more equitable and mutually beneficial relationships based on respect, cooperation, and shared prosperity. This will require a willingness on both sides to listen to each other's concerns and aspirations, and to work together to address the root causes of discontent. For France, this means recognising that its traditional approach to Africa is no longer viable and that it must adapt to the changing realities on the ground. This may involve rethinking its military strategy, shifting its focus towards supporting local capacity-building efforts, and placing greater emphasis on development and governance issues. It also means being willing to engage in honest and open dialogue with African countries, and to listen to their concerns and aspirations. For African countries, this means taking greater ownership of their own security and development agendas and being willing to engage constructively with France and other external partners. This will require strong leadership, political will, and a commitment to democratic governance and regional cooperation. It will also require a willingness to diversify partnerships and to seek out new opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit. It is only by addressing the root causes of discontent and working together to forge a new path forward that France and Africa can build a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive future for all.

Chapter

3

Reading the representation of perennial instability in Francophone Africa

The representation of perennial instability in Francophone African literature is deeply intertwined with broader trends and movements within the region's literary landscape. From the existentialist writings of early post-independence authors to the more recent emergence of Afrofuturism and speculative fiction, Francophone African literature has evolved in response to shifting political, social, and cultural dynamics. This diversity of voices and perspectives reflects the complexity and richness of the African experience, challenging stereotypes and offering alternative narratives that defy easy categorisation.

The evolution of Francophone African literature can be seen as a mirror reflecting the region's tumultuous history. Early post-independence writers, influenced by existentialist thought, grappled with themes of alienation, disillusionment, and the search for identity in the wake of colonial rule. These authors, such as Cameroon's Mongo Beti (1957) and Senegal's Ousmane Sembène (1960), used their narratives to critique the newly established political systems and the lingering impacts of colonialism. Their works often highlighted the betrayal of revolutionary ideals and the pervasive corruption and authoritarianism that plagued their societies. The existentialist influence allowed these writers to delve into the psyche of their characters, exploring the internal conflicts and moral ambiguities that arise in times of political instability.

In contemporary Francophone African literature, the study of literary representations of instability serves as a valuable lens through which to explore the complex interplay of history, politics, and culture in shaping the region's identity and aspirations. By critically examining the themes, motifs, and narrative approaches

employed by authors, the study can provide deeper insights into the underlying causes and consequences of instability in the region, as well as the ways in which individuals and communities navigate violent encounters and resist oppressive systems of power.

One recurring theme in Francophone African literature is the critique of postcolonial statehood. Authors often depict the failure of post-independence governments to fulfil the promises of liberation and development. Corruption, nepotism, and authoritarianism are common motifs, as writers expose the disillusionment and betrayal felt by people. Novels such as Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les soleils des indépendances* (1968), Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998), and Yambo Ouologuem's *Le Devoir de Violence* (2018) portray the brutal realities of postcolonial regimes and the ways in which they replicate colonial systems of exploitation and repression.

Another significant theme is the impact of conflict and violence on individuals and communities. Civil wars, coups, and ethnic strife are recurrent topics, as authors seek to document and interpret the traumatic experiences of their societies. Works like *Le baobab fou* (2010) and Véronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002) provide intimate portrayals of the human cost of instability, exploring themes of loss, memory, and survival. These narratives serve as powerful testimonies to the resilience of African people in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, the study of Francophone African literature offers a broader understanding of the role of art and culture in processes of social change and political transformation. By documenting and analysing the ways in which authors engage with issues of instability, oppression, and resistance, the literary analysis of the chosen corpus can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the region's ongoing struggles for democracy and human rights. Through literary works, novelists offer not only a critique of the status quo but also a vision of a more just and equitable future, inspiring readers to imagine new possibilities for social and political change.

The transformative potential of literature is evident in the ways authors use their narratives to challenge dominant discourses and propose alternative visions of society. For example, the work of Alain Mabanckou (2005) often employs satire and humour to subvert official narratives and expose the absurdities of political power. The irreverent and playful styles allow the author to critique social and political issues while engaging readers in a reflective and critical dialogue. By defying conventional forms and expectations, such authors create spaces for questioning and reimagining the world.

Moreover, Francophone African literature frequently engages with the theme of migration and diaspora, reflecting the transnational experiences of many Africans. The works of authors like Fatou Diome (2003) and Alain Mabanckou (2005) explore the challenges and opportunities of migration, highlighting issues of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity. These narratives underscore the interconnectedness of global and local dynamics, illustrating how instability in Africa is often linked to broader geopolitical and economic factors. By situating their stories within a global context, these writers emphasise the need for solidarity and collective action to address shared challenges.

In addition to thematic diversity, the stylistic and formal innovations of Francophone African literature are noteworthy. Authors often experiment with narrative structures, language, and literary forms to capture the complexities of their realities. Oral traditions, proverbs, and African languages are frequently incorporated into written texts, creating a rich and multilayered literary tapestry. This blending of oral and written forms not only preserves and celebrates cultural heritage but also challenges the hegemony of Western literary conventions. By asserting the validity and vitality of African storytelling traditions, these authors contribute to a more inclusive and diverse global literary landscape.

The role of literature in documenting and shaping collective memory is another crucial aspect of Francophone African literary production. Through their narratives, authors contribute to the preservation and transmission of historical and cultural knowledge.

Novels serve as repositories of collective memory, capturing the experiences and struggles of different generations. This process of documentation is particularly important in contexts where official histories are often contested or suppressed. By giving voice to marginalised and silenced perspectives, literature becomes a powerful tool for reclaiming and asserting cultural identity. By examining these factors, scholars can gain insights into the broader socio-economic and political contexts that shape literary production and reception. Through literary works, novelists offer not only a critique of the status quo but also a vision of a more just and equitable future, inspiring readers to imagine new possibilities for social and political change.

3.1. From resistance writing to a literature of disenchantment

Postcolonial African literature has long been characterised by its role as a platform for resistance, embodying the struggle against the oppressive colonial rules and practices. The works produced before independence served as a powerful denunciation of colonial injustices while simultaneously advocating for cultural emancipation. These early African novels acted as vehicles and channels for the ideals of freedom and independence, making significant contributions to the decolonisation process. However, by the early 1960s, a new phase emerged within the literary landscape of African literature. African writers began to explore and expose the tumultuous challenges associated with the transition from colonisation to independence. This marked the birth of a new dimension of literary critique, one that vividly portrayed the collective disenchantment that accompanied the postcolonial era. Consequently, the literature of disenchantment flourished, becoming a pivotal element of the African literary canon.

The eve of francophone Africa's independence witnessed a surge in literary works that exposed the harsh realities of colonialism. Writers such as Camara Laye, author of *L'Enfant noir* (1953), Mongo Beti and his *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956), and Ferdinand Oyono, with his famous novel *Une vie de boy* (1956), used their literary prowess to denounce injustices endured under

colonial rule. These novels provided a voice for African communities that had long suffered under the oppressive yoke of colonialism and began to inspire a sense of identity and cultural pride.

Moreover, these works did not merely critique colonial injustices; they also played a significant role in advocating for cultural emancipation. Writers sought to revive and celebrate the rich cultural heritage that colonialism had systematically eroded. The cultural awakening was encapsulated in novels like Sembène Ousmane's *Le Docker noir* (1956) and Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961). The literary narratives of pre-independence Africa not only served as powerful tools of resistance but also as guiding lights for the quest for cultural rebirth.

However, with the dawn of African independence in the early 1960s, a new era of literary expression emerged. While independence brought the promise of freedom and self-determination, it also ushered in a wave of political and social upheaval. The transition from colonial rule to self-governance was fraught with challenges, including political instability, economic disparities, and, in some cases, violence. African writers were quick to recognise the complexities and ambiguities of the postcolonial period. The sense of disillusionment and disenchantment that permeated this era became a central theme in the novels.

Among the seminal novels of this period is Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968), which offers a satirical and critical portrayal of the post-independence period in the Ivory Coast, effectively capturing the disenchantment vis-à-vis the post-independence politics. Through his characters and their actions, Kourouma vividly depicts the unfulfilled promises, power struggles, identity dislocation and cultural alienation as African nations struggled to reconcile traditional values with the demands of modernity. Kourouma's work explores the enduring influence of colonialism on post-independence Africa. The scars left by colonial exploitation and cultural suppression are evident throughout the novel, emphasising that independence did not immediately erase the deep-rooted problems caused by years of colonial rule.

There is also Mongo Beti's *Main basse sur le Cameroun* (1972), which skilfully portrayed the disillusionment that accompanied the postcolonial experience in Cameroon. In this novel, President Ahidjo's crimes, facilitated by French neo-colonialism, come under vehement scrutiny. Mongo Beti's narrative unveils the paradox where former French colonies, ostensibly independent since the 1960s, still find themselves under France's tight control. Beti's work sheds light on the enduring post-colonial power dynamics, exposing the lingering influence of colonial forces despite the facade of independence. His scathing critique of the political elite and their collusion with foreign interests resonated with readers across the continent. This novel, like many others of its time, exposed the stark contrast between the ideals of independence and the stark realities of the postcolonial era. Apart from Mongo Beti and Ahmadou Kourouma, other novelists have also dominated that period, including Williams Sassine, Sony Labou Tansi, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, Bernard Nanga, Alioum Fantouré, Tchicaya U Tam'si, Henri Lopes and many more.

Ahmadou Kourouma, an Ivorian author, made significant contributions to this genre with his novel *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000). Kourouma's work is a searing indictment of the use of child soldiers in the various conflicts that plagued postcolonial Africa. Through his narrative, he highlighted the brutal consequences of political power struggles and the impact on the continent's youth.

The literature of disenchantment in Francophone Africa has evolved over the years to encompass a wide range of themes and styles. While early postcolonial literature primarily focused on the disillusionment associated with political independence, contemporary works continue to engage with issues such as globalisation, neo-colonialism, and cultural identity. Prolific writers like Dominique M'Fouillou with *La Soumission* (1977), *Le Quidam* (1995), *La salve des innocents* (2000), *Ondongo* (2000), *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* (2000), and *Le mythe d'Ange* (2006) continue to offer valuable insights into the African experience and its ongoing struggles with disenchantment.

3.2. Representation of military coups proliferation in Africa

Since the dawn of African independence, the continent has been marred by the recurring and often tumultuous transitions of power, frequently instigated by military forces. These military coups have been documented (Pabanel, 1985; Boisvert, 2022). While they have been relatively silent in 1990s, they are now resurfacing. They include military coups in Guinea-Bissau (2012), Mali (2012, 2020, 2021), Egypt (2013), Central African Republic (2013), Burkina Faso (2015, 2022), Zimbabwe (2017), Sudan (2019, 2021), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Niger (2023), and Gabon (2023).

These coups, however, are rarely born out of the genuine desire to instigate change but are rather orchestrated by various actors, including colonial powers and national elites, to advance their own interests. When these external forces collude with national elites, the quest for true sovereignty becomes challenging. This complex web of interests triggering military coups forms a central theme in African literature, reflecting the intricate relationships that underlie the militarisation of governance in many African countries.

Throughout the years, several Francophone African novelists have indeed taken up the task of delving into the world of military coups, exploring the motivations and intricate circumstances that lead to these disruptive events. They provide a window into the psyche of coup plotters and the socio-political contexts in which they operate. By doing so, novelists offer readers a more comprehensive understanding of the political forces at play, the societal tensions that simmer beneath the surface, and the aspirations for change that can turn into revolutions or coups, sometimes at a high human and social cost. These novels go beyond mere accounts of political upheaval; they delve into the human dimension of coups, vividly portraying the suffering, violence, and turmoil that affect ordinary people caught in the crossfire.

The emotional and psychological toll of coups on individuals and communities becomes a central theme in many of these works. By immersing readers in the lived experiences of characters who grapple with the chaos of coups, these authors create a powerful emotional connection that fosters empathy and understanding.

An example of the most recent narrative representation of military coups in Francophone Africa is the short novel *Coup d'État du 30: Non au coup d'État en Afrique* by Parfait Passinri Payang (Passinri, 2023), which reflects on causes, manifestations, and solutions to that form of political power transfer. The chaos of a coup can be seen as a microcosm of the broader societal issues plaguing many African nations, prompting readers to contemplate the deeper roots of the problems and the urgent need for reform. Paradoxically, despite their reputation as sources of instability, military coups have also fuelled a quest for democracy within Francophone African literature. In response to the recurring theme of coups, writers have turned to their craft as a means of advocating for democratic governance, human rights, and accountability. These authors use their storytelling skills to challenge authoritarian regimes propped up by external forces and powers. Their words become a rallying cry for change and a call to action. Moreover, the struggle for stability, the quest for justice, and the fervent desire for meaningful change are themes that take a prominent place in these narratives.

3.3. Democratic aspirations of the 1990s and sterility of political transitions

The representation of historical and political contexts in Africa through Francophone novels has been a fascinating journey marked by a shift from Afro-pessimism during the 1970s and 1980s to democratic aspirations in the 1990s. This transformation mirrors the changing landscape of the African continent and the multifaceted challenges it has faced over the years. Literature of these periods has provided invaluable insights into the challenges and complexities of African governance and has served as a powerful vehicle for critiquing and understanding the continent's ever-changing political realities. While the path to democracy may be fraught with obstacles, Francophone novelists continue to offer a vital perspective on the ongoing struggle for political stability and the aspirations for a better future in Africa.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Francophone African literature bore witness to a significant volume of representation cantered on

the instabilities caused by social transformations, ethnic and political violence, and dictatorships. This period was characterised by an absurd form of normalcy in which authoritarian rule and political oppression had become tragically routine. The Afro-pessimism of this era captured the grim reality of African nations struggling under the weight of oppressive regimes and the violence that often accompanied them. Novelists of this time crafted narratives that exposed the harsh realities of life under dictatorships, shedding light on the suffering of the ordinary citizens who lived in these oppressive environments. These works served as poignant critiques of the political systems that perpetuated violence and instability. Writers like Sony Labou Tansi and Ahmadou Kourouma used fictional narratives to portray the absurdity and brutality of these regimes, offering readers a vivid, if bleak, depiction of life under authoritarian rule.

The 1990s, however, brought a new dawn to Africa's political landscape. This was a decade of transition, characterised by the emergence of multiparty systems in many African countries. The single-party systems that had dominated the previous decades were challenged, and the hopes and dreams of political transitions to pluralistic democracy began to take root. African nations embarked on a path toward the multiparty system, which eventually led to the downfall of some dictatorships.

During this period, Francophone African literature became a medium through which democratic aspirations were articulated. Novelists saw an opportunity to depict the changing political dynamics and the desire for more inclusive and representative forms of governance. Literature of the 1990s began to reflect the optimism and enthusiasm surrounding the transition to democracy. Novelists explored themes of political change and empowerment. Their works celebrated the resilience and determination of ordinary citizens who fought for their rights and participated in the democratic process and transitions. They depicted hope and promise of a brighter future, embodying the spirit of change that was sweeping across the continent.

However, as the 1990s progressed, it became clear that the transition to democracy was not without its challenges. While the multiparty system brought initial optimism, many African countries faced periods of violence and instability as they navigated the complex process of political change. By the end of the decade, one could observe that the democratic aspirations of the 1990s had transformed into a decade marked by political stagnation in terms of meaningful transitions.

This shift from optimism to stagnation was accompanied by a series of complex factors that contributed to the difficulties of democratic consolidation. The perpetuation of clientelist politics, manipulation of constitutions, geopolitical interests, and the influence of global powers all played a role in shaping the political landscape. These challenges made it clear that the path to democracy was not a linear one, and the road to political stability was riddled with obstacles. Authors like Francis Bebey, Mongo Beti, Alain Patrice Nganang, Stanislas Ouoham Tchidjo, Dominique M'Fouilou, Tchivéla Tchichellé, Pius Ngandu Nkashama, Bernard N'Kaloulou or Achille Ngoye explored the challenges of democratic transition and the obstacles that hindered meaningful change. Their novels presented nuanced perspectives on the political realities of the time, capturing the disillusionment and frustration that emerged as democratic aspirations faced setbacks.

In many ways, francophone literature of the 1990s served as a mirror to the complex political and social dynamics at play in Africa. It revealed the struggles, setbacks, and the intricate set of factors that influenced the course of democratic transitions. The novels of this period provided readers with a deeper understanding of the challenges that African nations faced on their journey towards political change and highlighted the need for sustained efforts to achieve stability and democracy.

3.4. From fateful powerlessness to a retrospective and analytical dimension of resilience

The 1990s were a turbulent time for many African nations, including those in Francophone Africa. The struggle for democracy and the

protection of fundamental rights seemed to be constantly thwarted by autocratic regimes and their allies. However, the 2000-2023 period tells a different story. It is a tale of resilience, a narrative of people's determination to defend democracy and the values it represents. These first two decades of the 21st century have borne witness to remarkable shifts in the political landscape of Francophone Africa. Unlike the turbulent 1990s, marked by the struggle for multiparty democracy and the often-stifled hopes for freedom and rights, these years have seen a strong manifestation of resilience against authoritarian rule. This transformation, driven by the collective efforts of communities and societies, intellectuals, and writers, is the cornerstone of political critiques. Critics can notice the transition from the stagnation of democratic processes to the resilience and resistance against dictatorships, while acknowledging the manipulations of constitutions by dictators in collusion with internal and external forces. Moreover, it seems the most recent military coups have redefined their role, moving away from undemocratic power grabs to transformative enterprises aimed at securing and safeguarding national unity and stability.

One of the most prominent tactics employed by authoritarian leaders in the 2000-2023 period was the manipulation of constitutions to extend their rule, a situation that John Mukum Mbaku (2020) describes as "The rise of the constitutional coup". Such constitutional changes were recorded in Burkina Faso (2014), Rwanda (2015), Democratic Republic of Congo (2015-2018), Togo (2017-2019), and Sudan (2018-2019). Such actions are considered a hindrance to democratic foundations of these nations, eroding the people's trust in the political system (Peace and Security Council, 2019; Jensen, Kuenzi, & Mehanna, 2022). External forces, often motivated by their own interests, played a role in enabling these manipulations. These tactics were not limited to a single region but were observed in various Francophone African countries.

In response to these attempts to subvert democracy, we see a growing resilience among citizens and civil society groups. Protests, demonstrations, and activism became powerful tools to challenge these manipulations. Francophone Africa witnessed the rise of a new generation of activists and leaders who were committed to upholding democratic principles.

As a response to these undemocratic constitutional amendments and other forms of political manipulations to stay in power, military coups are widely applauded by young generations as transformative enterprises. While military coups are generally associated with undemocratic power grabs and instability, in the 2000-2023 period, they took on a different character. They were no longer solely driven by ambitions of individual officers seeking power. Instead, they emerged as transformative enterprises aimed at securing national unity and stability. In some cases, they were initiated by military leaders who believed that their intervention was necessary to protect their nations from further chaos and authoritarian rule.

As literature has always been a powerful medium for reflecting and shaping society's values and aspirations, Francophone narratives have played a crucial role in articulating the resilience against dictatorships and the defence of democracy. Recent works by African authors have provided insightful perspectives on the collective struggles to defend democratic values. One notable work is Jean-Marie Mbailao's *Le Prostitué Politique* (2021), which explores the moral and political dilemmas faced by individuals within a corrupt political system. It reflects on the complex choices and sacrifices made by those who choose to resist and stand up for democratic ideals. Alimou Sinta's *Le sang pour l'alternance* (2021) and Dianguina Diarisso's *A l'épreuve des urnes* (2021) also contribute to the discourse of political resilience and resistance.

These novels offer poignant portrayals of individuals and communities confronting the challenges of electoral manipulation and the erosion of democratic norms. They depict the courage and determination of those who refuse to surrender to authoritarian forces. These works of fiction serve as a good reflection of the evolving political landscape in Francophone Africa. They provide a retrospective and analytical dimension of resilience and offer valuable insights into the complexities of the struggle for democracy. By reflecting the emotional and ethical dimensions of political challenges, they empower African nations on their path to democratic transformation.

The 2000-2023 period stands as a testament to the power of resilience and the determination of citizens to defend democracy and protect the values it represents. The journey from turbulence to transformation is an ongoing one, and the lessons learned from this period may serve as a beacon for the democratic aspirations of the continent. It is portrayed by many novelists as a period of hope, progress, and collective action that is likely to impact future Francophone African narratives.

3.5. The corpus and its spatial, social, historical, and political context.

To comprehensively analyse the perennial instability in Francophone Africa through the literary discourse, a carefully selected set of fifteen novels spanning the years from the 1990s to 2021 has been used as textual references. These novels serve as windows into the extent to which the representation of instability they display reflects any enduring patterns or perennity when compared to the previous postcolonial decades. By decrypting the narratological structures and themes of these works, we can gain insights into different social, political, and historical struggles that define sub-Saharan Africa. These novels, selected for their geographical significance, provide a panoramic view of the regions, offering a thorough understanding of the persistent challenges it has faced.

Without ignoring the variable geometry attached to the African geography, which fluctuates according to the geopolitical strategies of the day, the novels in the corpus are categorised within the frameworks of Central and West Africa regions. Central Africa includes the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Cameroon, as well as Chad located to the north of the Central African Republic. Central Africa represents a heavyweight in the French-speaking world, both in terms of literary productions and the number of French speakers and Francophiles. As for West Africa, it includes Guinea (Conakry) and Senegal, which have seen a significant flourishing of French-language literature since the 1930s. All these six countries in both

regions have faced challenges related to democratic transitions since 1990s, which prompt novelists to track political dynamics and their consequences on their fellow citizens.

3.5.1. Central Africa

The 1990s marked a tumultuous era for Central Africa, as the region experienced a series of crises that brought about the downfall of several regimes. Major General Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda, along with his Burundian counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira, met a tragic end when they were assassinated. Meanwhile, the reign of Marshal Mobutu (also known as Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga) in Zaïre and President Pascal Lissouba in Congo-Brazzaville crumbled amidst brutal and destructive civil wars, leading to their ousting from power.

The regional destabilisation caused by these events often spread like a chain reaction, amplifying social, economic, and political instabilities across the affected nations. The interconnectedness of Central Africa's political landscape became evident as governments struggled to maintain control amidst growing opposition and conflict. The fragility of political authority and the resulting power struggles served as fertile ground for both internal and external actors to exploit, further exacerbating the turmoil.

While external influences certainly played a significant role, especially in the case of Zaïre, these violent events were also intricately tied to internal dynamics within each state. Internal factors included weak and fragile political authority, clashes of political ambitions among national political stakeholders, and shifting alliances on the international stage. The consequences of these developments extended far beyond national borders, carrying substantial implications at the national, regional, and international levels.

Central Africa in the 1990s faced not only the challenge of addressing domestic issues but also the complex web of international interests and alliances that influenced the course of events. The 1990s signified a pivotal moment with the end of the Cold War, which had defined global geopolitics for decades. With this shift, the world witnessed the dissolution of the bipolarity of alliances, where two

superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, had dominated global affairs. This shift created a new geopolitical landscape with evolving dynamics. A decade later coincided with the ascent of previously emerging economies, such as those in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) group. This growth raised the prospect of these economies challenging the traditional power structures in the global market. The rise of these economic powerhouses could potentially lead to fragmentation and the disintegration of the existing global economic or world order, impacting the balance of power.

On 1 January 2024, the BRICS group expanded and additional 5 countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates) became members, further shaping the geopolitical landscape. These shifts in geostrategic alliances are not isolated events; they have far-reaching implications for governance, trade, and political relations, including in Africa, as nations on the continent adapt to these changes and navigate new avenues for cooperation and development. This evolving landscape underscores the need for adaptability and strategic thinking in the realm of international relations that often have impact on social and political tensions in many African countries.

These crises underscored the intricate interplay between internal dynamics and external pressures, revealing the region's vulnerability to both domestic and international factors, which collectively shaped its turbulent history during this period.

In the complex political landscape of Cameroon, democratic protests against the enduring presidency of Paul Biya have been a defining feature for many years. Paul Biya, who assumed power on 6 November 1982, has maintained a stronghold on the nation's leadership for over four decades, and this prolonged tenure has been a source of persistent debate and discontent, both within the country and on the international stage.

Despite Paul Biya's re-election on 7 October 2018, which marked yet another extension of his rule, the opposition to his regime has intensified. This election stirred unprecedented levels of discontent, reflecting a growing frustration among the Cameroonian populace. The disillusionment of the masses has been

primarily fuelled by issues of corruption and unproductive relations with France, which have led to significant social and governance crises. Corruption not only erodes public trust but also hampers economic progress and exacerbates inequality. The consequences of these issues have become more pronounced in recent years, adding to the urgency of political change.

The challenges facing Cameroon are multifaceted, encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions. While the path to change is complex and often fraught with obstacles, the resilience of the Cameroonian people in pushing for democratic reform is a testament to their determination to shape their nation's future. The collective mobilisations and protests that have gained momentum in Cameroon are emblematic of a population that yearns for a more transparent and accountable government. These movements have voiced the demands of the people for meaningful political reform and an end to the deeply rooted problems of mismanagement.

In the case of Chad, the nation remained devoid of political change during Idriss Déby Itno's lengthy rule, which spanned 30 years and concluded with his death in April 2021. Initially emerging as a rebel leader, he challenged the authority of Hissène Habré and took power in December 1990. Throughout the last three decades, Chad bore witness to numerous incidents of violence, marked by recurring insurgent attacks that occasionally imperilled the regime's stability. Nevertheless, an illusion of stability persisted through the uninterrupted leadership of Idriss Déby, often buttressed by elections tainted by allegations of fraud and amendments to the constitution.

The constitutional alteration of 6 June 2005, granted the outgoing President the ability to seek limitless new terms, fostering radicalisation within certain governing bodies. Armed conflict gradually became a socially and politically accepted route to power acquisition. Following a sequence of unsuccessful coup attempts and defections within the Chadian National Army to join rebel factions, Idriss Déby Itno succumbed to injuries incurred while personally leading his troops against insurgents in the northern

regions. A military council, led by his son, General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, succeeded the late president. After a three-year political transition, Chad is presently coming out of the presidential elections of May 2024, with General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno as President.

Amid the shifting dynamics of Central Africa, a notable correlation emerged between the pursuit of democratic transitions and the alarming proliferation of political violence in certain countries within the region. As nations grappled with the complexities of democratisation, political actors found themselves embroiled in intense power struggles, each vying for control over the reins of the state. This turbulence often manifested in the form of political violence, as various factions and interest groups contested the direction and leadership of their countries.

Intriguingly, the realm of literature and fictional narratives became a potent platform for both reflection and critique during this transformative period. Authors and storytellers drew inspiration from the profound social and political changes taking place in Central Africa. Their works served as a lens through which to scrutinise the injustices, antidemocratic practices, and the distressing consequences of political violence. These narratives shed light on the struggles of ordinary citizens who endured the fallout of political turmoil, offering a vivid portrayal of their resilience and determination in the face of adversity.

In this context, fiction played a dual role: it not only highlighted the harsh realities of the region's political landscape but also provided a space for creative exploration and artistic expression. Through the medium of fictional narratives, Central African novelists articulated the grievances of their societies and provided a voice for those who sought democratic reforms. These narratives were not only a mirror reflecting the challenges faced by the region but also a catalyst for dialogue and change, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the quest for democracy or at least better governance in Central Africa.

Cameroun

- Stanislas Ouomah Tchidjo, *Par décret présidentiel...* (Décret), 1993

Par décret présidentiel... [By Presidential Decree...] serves as a literary lens into the dynamics underlying the financial collapse of Cameroonian institutions. It sheds light on the glaring incompetence of leaders who ascend to the helm of state institutions through the fiat of Head of States. In this novel, what should be a beacon of excellence guiding the employment sector and public administration is eclipsed by the shadows of favouritism. Within the labour market, employment decisions are not based on the potential to drive economic prosperity or serve national interests; instead, they are swayed by socio-tribal affiliations and interpersonal relationship considerations. This systemic flaw perpetuates a cycle of inequity and undermines the very fabric of meritocracy.

In this regard, the novel presents readers with a moral quandary: to acquiesce to the corrupt regime in exchange for coveted positions of power or to resist and uphold one's integrity with associated security risks. However, in the confines of a dictatorial regime, even resignation becomes a precarious choice, construed as an act of defiance against the presidential decree that bestowed the appointment. Such a rebellious act would symbolise a quest for individual liberty, a fundamental right seemingly monopolised by the Head of State.

Moreover, the novel illustrates how adhering to principles of proper governance, free from the shackles of favouritism and partisan interests, is misconstrued as a betrayal against the presidential decree. It underscores the pervasive influence of executive orders in shaping the socio-political landscape of Africa, particularly in Cameroon, where institutional decay thrives amidst the corrosive tendrils of corruption.

Through the narrative, the author exposes the pernicious grip of presidential decrees, which serve as instruments of control in orchestrating economic and moral decay. It lays bare the internal fissures of governance, where systemic malaise erodes trust and

perpetuates a cycle of disillusionment among citizens. In doing so, the novel beckons towards a reckoning with the entrenched forces of autocracy and the imperative of fostering transparent, accountable governance structures.

- **Patrice Nganang, *La promesse des fleurs* (Promesse), 1997**

Although Alain Patrice Nganang warns that all names of individuals, places, cities, and even countries mentioned in *La promesse des fleurs* [The Promise of Flowers] are fictional, and any resemblance is purely coincidental, the name of Cameroun is nonetheless mentioned multiple times in his novel. This novel delves deeply into the myriad challenges that Cameroun has faced in its unsuccessful quest for democratic transitions. Given the repressive nature of the nepotistic regime, the novel illustrates the sacrifices that are deemed necessary for future generations to glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel.

Nganang vividly portrays Cameroun as a nation where social justice is virtually non-existent and where the concept of love has vanished from the social lexicon. In a society plagued by pervasive misery, love becomes incomprehensible. As Nganang poignantly asks,

*Qui peut comprendre l'amour là où il n'y a que la misère?
Qui peut comprendre l'amour quand les neuf-dixième de la
population du quartier se prostituent d'une manière ou
d'une autre pour survivre? Qui peut comprendre l'amour
quand le cœur ne bat plus soixante-dix fois par minutes que
pour cracher une déception qui ne fait que le détour du sang
pour revenir en trombe? (p.62)*

[Who can understand love where there is only misery? Who can understand love when nine-tenths of the neighborhood's population prostitute themselves in one way or another to survive? Who can understand love when the heart no longer beats seventy times per minute except to spit out a disappointment that only makes the detour through the blood to return with a rush?]

Nganang's portrayal of Cameroun extends beyond the political sphere, delving into the personal and emotional toll on its citizens. The repressive environment not only stifles political freedoms but also corrodes the very fabric of social relations, stripping away the capacity for love, solidarity, and hope. The novel's characters navigate a landscape where survival often necessitates moral and ethical compromises, further entrenching the cycle of disillusionment and despair.

La promesse des fleurs uses powerful imagery to convey the depths of disillusionment experienced by many postcolonial Africans. Nganang captures the essence of a society in turmoil, where the promise of a better future remains an elusive dream. The call for sacrifice is a recurring theme, emphasising the notion that true change requires enduring hardship.

Through his poignant narrative, Nganang sheds light on the harsh realities of life in Cameroun and, by extension, other postcolonial African nations, urging readers to recognise the profound human cost of political repression and social injustice. The flowers symbolise hopes and dreams, as well as the stoic endurance of people who continue to live under tyrannical regimes in francophone Africa since independence. These flowers, with their beauty yet thorny nature, represent the enduring hope and persistent struggle against oppressive forces.

- **Eugène Nzamboung, *L'amour à l'ombre des guerres tribales (Amour)*, 2018**

The narrative of *L'amour à l'ombre des guerres tribales* [Love in the mist of tribal wars] finds its roots in a social reality marked by an incident that reignited historical tensions and tribal conflicts between the Mabi and Bonua tribes in Kribi, a Cameroonian resort town also serving as a bustling port city in the South Province. For generations, these tribes have been locked in strife, their identities entwined with a legacy of animosity and division. Within this tumultuous backdrop, the union of Bapite, a Bonua, and Nabvuna, a Mabi, emerges as a poignant illustration of identity struggles. Despite the deep-seated animosities borne from centuries of tribal

warfare, the love shared between Bapite and Nabvuna transcends the confines of tribal allegiance. Their relationship, forbidden by the historical relations of their respective communities, becomes a symbol of hope amid the shadows of discord. Their love story becomes a beacon of defiance against the rigid boundaries of tribal identity, challenging the entrenched norms that have perpetuated division.

Readers of this novel are invited to navigate the Cameroonian multiculturalism, where the understanding of the threads of social cohesion requires exploring the complexities of identity and nationhood. The narrative explores the delicate balance between unity and diversity, portraying a society grappling with the dual imperatives of forging a collective national identity while embracing the richness of its cultural mosaic.

Unlike the prevailing pessimism often depicted in the works of African novelists regarding the fractures of communal affiliations, this narrative offers a refreshing perspective. It celebrates the triumph of love as a universal force capable of dismantling the barriers of prejudice and division. In a continent often defined by its struggles with identity politics, the novel underscores the transformative power of love in fostering understanding, empathy, and ultimately, reconciliation. In essence, this novel serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring capacity for love to transcend the boundaries that seek to divide people. It is a call to embrace the common humanity that binds people, and to envision a future where bridges of compassion and understanding triumph over the walls of prejudice and discord.

Congo-Brazzaville

- **Dominique M'Fouillou, *Vent d'espoir sur Brazaville* (Vent), 1991**

Vent d'espoir sur Brazaville [The wind of hope blowing over Brazzaville] by Dominique M'Fouillou reflects on the social, economic, and political significance of events that unfolded over three days in 1963 that left an indelible mark on the history of Congo. The authors argues that the intensity and significance of these events were unlike anything the country had experienced

before. Yet, what is intriguing is how noble actions taken by revolutionary groups, which seized upon this unforeseen social upheaval, are often overlooked in the collective memory. For today's younger generation, on one hand, this chapter of history remains largely untold and untaught, as if it were a meaningless footnote. The older generation, on the other hand, possesses only vague recollections. The memory of three glorious days is uttered with reverence, but its detailed narrative is shrouded in obscurity. The omission of this crucial historical episode from school curricula is a missed opportunity, as these events deserve recognition and a place of prominence in the nation's historical narrative. The echoes of those three days of a historical uprising in Congo-Brazzaville from 13 to 15 August 1963 continue to reverberate in the country's collective memory, reminding Congolese of their enduring significance (Vent, p.9).

• **Dominique M'Fouillou, *Le Quidam* (Quidam), 1994**

Le Quidam by Dominique M'Fouillou is a novel that narrates the story of an ordinary man who becomes emblematic of the struggles faced by many in Congo-Brazzaville. The protagonist, referred to as *Le Quidam* (Someone or A Guy), navigates a world characterised by corruption, extrajudicial practices, and social injustice. The narrative follows *Le Quidam*'s journey as he incarnates Franklin Boukaka, a Congolese songwriter, singer, and guitarist, renowned as a pioneer of Congolese popular music.

As an artist in a country beset by political repression, Franklin Boukaka responds to the messianic call to fight nepotism, a stance that ultimately leads to his cold-blooded murder in 1972. *Le Quidam*, as Boukaka's avatar, becomes a legend for both his artistic contributions and his resistance efforts. Despite his anonymity and seeming insignificance in politics, he embodies the collective experience of the oppressed Congolese people. His interactions with various oppressive characters underscore the pervasive issues of power abuse, poverty, and the struggle for dignity and survival.

The novel paints a chilling picture of the socio-political landscape, capturing the resilience and tenacity of its people in the

face of systemic repression. Through the protagonist's perspective, readers are exposed to the deep-seated problems afflicting the nation, from corrupt officials and militarised oppression to the exasperation of ordinary citizens striving for a better life. *Le Quidam* serves as a poignant reflection on the human condition, exploring themes of political repression, resistance, and the quest for meaning and justice in an often unforgiving world. Dominique M'Fouillou's novel is both a personal and universal tale, offering a profound commentary on the socio-political challenges of Congo-Brazzaville and resonating with broader struggles for equity and human rights in Francophone Africa.

• **Tchivéla Tchichellé, *Les fleurs des lantanas (Fleurs)*, 1997**

Les fleurs des lantanas [The lantanas flowers] by Tchivéla Tchichellé is a novel that delves into the socio-political fabric of Congo-Brazzaville. The storyline follows Bukadjo, a dedicated medical doctor whose life is marked by his commitment to ethical practices and his ambition to contribute positively to the development of his country, particularly in the healthcare sector.

Bukadjo's journey takes a dramatic turn when he refuses to pass Nwéliza in the entry examination for the School of Nursing, defying the demands of Marshal Sokinga. This act of integrity yet interpreted as a defiance leads to Bukadjo's arrest on false charges and his subsequent imprisonment. Upon his release, Bukadjo faces a tragic fate by being murdered under the orders of regional prefect Motungisi.

The lantana flowers, which feature prominently in the novel, symbolise both the opulence enjoyed by corrupt officials and the hardships endured by the underprivileged. They also represent societal resilience in the face of rampant nepotism. Through Bukadjo's experiences, Tchichellé explores the complex balance between personal ambition and societal expectations.

Bukadjo's story serves as a personal odyssey that expands into a broader commentary on the human condition amidst socio-political turmoil. The narrative highlights how undemocratic practices serve as a catalyst for political, social, and economic instability in Francophone Africa. The novel paints a poignant picture

of Congo-Brazzaville's complex political landscape, offering a vivid reflection on the effects of corruption and the struggle for justice. It underscores the resilience of individuals who, despite facing overwhelming adversity, strive to uphold their principles and contribute to a better society. Through Bukadjo's tragic yet inspiring story, Tchivéla Tchichellé provides a compelling critique of the socio-political challenges that plague his homeland, making *Les fleurs des lantanas* a significant literary work that resonates with the themes of integrity, citizenship, sacrifice, and the enduring fight for justice.

- **Dominique M'Fouillou, *La salve des innocents (Salve)*, 1997**

The narrative of *La salve des innocents* [The execution of the innocent] is informed by the events that occurred in Congo Brazzaville on 7 February 1978, the date on which ten people who had been sentenced to death by a military tribunal were summarily executed. Falsely accused of participating in the assassination of President Marien Ngouabi on 18 March 1977, the trial of the accused, although public, took place under conditions that did not respect the basic fundamentals of human rights in Congo. The evidence of their innocence presented by the defence lawyers were dismissed and could not save them from the firing squad. The Congolese government ensured that the sentences of capital punishment were final. They powerlessly died without knowing how they were scapegoats placed at the heart of political-military intrigues the country was experiencing. By eliminating the head of state, by falsely accusing and eliminating troublesome opponents, the junta of conspiring military officers had achieved its objective: gaining absolute power. Ever since, the memories of these bona fide law-abiding citizens who died without justice remain alive in the minds of many Congolese. The novelist demonstrates the unfortunate and terrible connivance between the judges and some officers aimed at settling political scores with tribal overtones.

- **Dominique M'Fouillou, *Ondongo*, 2000**

Ondongo stands as a monumental emblematic statue in the heart of Brazzaville, adorning Liberty Boulevard with its imposing presence. Despite its gigantic yet unattractive appearance to certain

observers, this statue holds profound significance for Congo-Brazzaville, transcending mere physical form to embody a powerful narrative of liberation and resilience. The statue, with its depiction of breaking chains, serves as a poignant symbol of Congo's tumultuous yet triumphant history.

Through the eyes of the novelist, Ondongo is more than just a statue; it is a catalyst for stirring the national consciousness and reconnecting individuals and communities with their historical roots. The novelist skilfully utilises Ondongo as a visual metaphor to evoke memories of past struggles and triumphs, urging readers to reflect on the nation's journey towards revolution and freedom.

Within the pages of the novel, Ondongo becomes a beacon of hope, celebrating the remarkable courage and unity exhibited by revolutionary mass movements during the turbulent 1960s in Congo-Brazzaville (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 1996; Bernault, 1996; Dabira, 1997; Dorier-Apprill, 1997). These movements, born out of a desire for justice and equality, brought together communities fractured by deep-seated identity differences. Ondongo's symbolic representation of breaking chains resonates as a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and solidarity among the Congolese people.

In essence, Ondongo transcends its physical unappealing shape to become a timeless emblem of liberation and collective strength. It serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made and the struggles endured in the pursuit of revolution and freedom, inspiring future generations to cherish and preserve the hard-fought gains of the past.

- **Bernard N'Kaloulou, *Le pousse-pousse de Makélékélé : Une jeunesse au Congo (Pousse-pousse)*, 2021**

Le pousse-pousse de Makélékélé: Une jeunesse au Congo [The Makélékélé hand-pulled rickshaw: Being young in Congo] examines the tumultuous lives of six young Congolese individuals: Nino, Sukisa, Jean-Serge, Célio, Côme, and Pandy. Even though they are portrayed taking different life paths, they are all united and guided by the same will, and the same ideal of being agents of

change to succeed in their own lives and those of their comrades drawn to the same destiny.

Their journeys intertwine against the backdrop of Marien NGOUABI University, the main educational institution in the Republic of Congo, founded in 1959 and established in the heart of Brazzaville. However, their academic experience at the university is abruptly disrupted, as circumstances compel them to end their studies prematurely.

Despite facing myriad challenges and adversities, these resilient young people embark on a quest to carve out meaningful existences for themselves, both within the confines of Congo and across the vast expanse of Africa and the Western world. Their narratives oscillate between triumphs, trials, and the perpetual search for identity and purpose.

Through the novel, Bernard N'kaloulou uses skilfully narratological techniques to meticulously dissect the intersectionality between the harsh realities of destitution, lack of opportunities, and violence endured by Congolese youth, as well as the imaginative complexity of contemporary socio-political dilemmas. N'kaloulou deftly navigates through the labyrinth of their aspirations, exposing the raw nerve of societal indifference and institutional neglect that plagues their aspirations.

Within these pages lies a poignant indictment of national leaders and the global community, whose collective failure to nurture solidarity and provide opportunities for the burgeoning dreams of youth stands as an affront to the principles of justice and equality. The narrative serves as a rallying cry for systemic change, urging stakeholders to heed the urgent call for proactive measures that empower and uplift the next generation. As the characters traverse the intricacies of hope and disillusionment, their stories resonate as a testament to the indomitable human spirit, resilient in the face of adversity and unwavering in its pursuit of a brighter tomorrow. Through their tribulations, they illuminate the complexities of contemporary Congolese society while beckoning towards a future defined by inclusivity, compassion, and unwavering solidarity.

Chad

- **Jean-Marie Mbailao, *Le prostitué politique (Prostitué)*, 2021**

The plot of the novel *Le Prostitué politique* [Politically Prostituted] revolves around the oppressive regime reigning over the fictitious country Tador, like many African countries grappling with dictatorship. At its centre stands the main protagonist Bahi, whose childhood years and educational journey unfold against the backdrop of Tador's autocratic rules. Bahi's academic pursuits lead him to France, after earning a doctoral scholarship. After defending a doctoral thesis in biology, he is presented with the options to either remain in France, to accept a contract for a position at a Canadian university, or to return to Tador. He is quickly lured back to Tador by the regime's fervent calls for skilled young citizens to contribute to the country's development.

Enticed by the regime's promises of prosperity and opportunity, Bahi returns home, envisioning a future where he can play a pivotal role in reshaping Tador's destiny. Yet, his aspirations swiftly unravel in the face of persecution and humiliation, common afflictions suffered by many young African intellectuals under oppressive regimes. For Bahi, the allure of political power becomes irresistible as he forsakes his intellectual integrity in exchange for a ministerial position, a symbol of the opulent lifestyle that accompanies political prominence. In his pursuit of power, Bahi sacrifices his principles, integrity and dignity, blinded by the illusion of authority and privilege.

However, Bahi's ascent to political prominence proves fleeting as he grapples with the harsh realities of Tador's political landscape. Bound by shifting alliances and devoid of ethical moorings, Bahi navigates a treacherous world where loyalty is transient, and survival demands compromise. Ultimately, Bahi's tragic demise serves as a sobering reminder of the moral decay inherent in the pursuit of political power. *Le Prostitué politique* offers a searing critique of a society where young Africans, driven by ambitions and desperation, find themselves ensnared in a web of political machinations, forsaking their ideals in a quest for validation and success. Through Bahi's journey, the novel exposes the corrosive nature of political ambitions

and the toll it exacts on individuals and societies alike, echoing the struggles faced by countless Africans striving for dignity and self-determination in the face of oppressive regimes.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- **Achille Ngoye, *Kin-la joie, kin-la folie* (Kin), 1993**

This novel *Kin-la joie, kin-la folie* [Kin of joy, Kin of madness] by Achille Ngoye offers a vivid portrayal of Kinshasa, the bustling capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, during the era when the nation bore the name Zaïre under the rule of Marshal Mobutu. The narrative unfolds the tale of resolute revolutionaries determined to dismantle an entrenched autocratic regime in Kinshasa. Armed with nothing more than screwdrivers and machetes, these young Congolese embark on a daring mission to topple the oppressive dictatorship. Through the lens of dark humour, the novel celebrates the courage and conviction of these protagonists as they navigate the perilous terrain of political upheaval. It highlights their incredible commitment to ushering in a new era of freedom and justice for their nation.

However, amidst the fervour of revolution, there is a sobering acknowledgment of the profound human cost. The narrative confronts the harsh realities of violence and bloodshed that inevitably accompany such seismic shifts in power. The streets of Kinshasa become a battleground, where the clash between hope and despair plays out in tragic proportions. The novel juxtaposes the exuberance of youth, fuelled by the promise of change, with the grim spectre of state-sanctioned brutality. The joy of liberation is tinged with the anguish of loss as lives are lost and families torn apart by the ruthless machinery of repression. It lays bare the moral complexities inherent in the struggle for freedom, as ideals collide with the harsh realities of political tyranny.

Throughout the narrative, Kinshasa emerges as a vibrant yet tumultuous backdrop, its streets pulsating with the rhythm of revolution. The city becomes a symbol of resilience, embodying the spirit of defiance that courses through the veins of its inhabitants. This novel serves as a poignant testament to the indomitable human

spirit in the face of oppression. It is a tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who dare to challenge the status quo and defy the forces of tyranny in pursuit of a brighter tomorrow for their nation.

- **François Mbiyangandu Tshibila, *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha (Destin)*, 2020**

Le Destin de Laurent Tshiosha [The Destiny of Laurent Tshiosha] is a novel by François Mbiyangandu Tshibila. The story centres on Laurent Tshiosha, a dedicated student navigating the complexities of an education system that often fails to accommodate individual abilities within its rigid programme design and course delivery approaches. The novel critiques the ineffective student orientation strategies and the absence of adequate support mechanisms, which frequently lead to academic failure.

Despite Laurent's relentless efforts to engage with his studies, he finds himself unable to achieve the expected grades. The education system, rather than nurturing his unique potential, stifles his aspirations, leaving him on the brink of joining a generation condemned to a vegetative existence in juvenile delinquency. However, Laurent chooses a different path. He rejects the notion of succumbing to the same fate as many of his peers and returns to his village where he leverages his entrepreneurial skills, not only to seek self-fulfilment but also to contribute meaningfully to the development of his community.

Through Laurent's journey, Tshibila highlights a critical issue: the misalignment of education systems in Africa with both individual and societal needs. These systems, deeply rooted in a colonial mindset, prioritise the creation of an elite class, often neglecting those whose abilities and aspirations do not align with top-down educational reforms. This elitist focus leaves many students, like Laurent, struggling to find their place and purpose within a framework that does not recognise or support their unique talents and goals.

Tshibila's narrative is a poignant reminder that education should be a tool for empowerment and development, not a barrier to personal and communal growth. The novel calls for a re-evaluation of educational priorities. It suggests that true progress and development

can only be achieved when education systems are reformed to be more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of students and their communities. By showcasing Laurent's determination and entrepreneurial spirit, *Le Destin de Laurent Tshiosha* advocates for an education that empowers individuals to pursue their passions and contribute positively to society. The novel ultimately concludes that for Africa to truly progress, its education systems must break free from colonial legacies and align their outcomes with local and national priorities. They must embrace a more holistic, inclusive approach that nurtures and values every individual's potential.

3. 5.2. West Africa

Since 1970s, the history, political landscape, and social dynamics of West African Francophone countries have been marked by a mixture of progress and challenges. This period witnessed significant political transformations, social movements, economic developments, and regional dynamics that have shaped the trajectory of these nations.

The history of West African Francophone countries since 1970s is characterised by a complex interplay of historical legacies, colonial influences, and contemporary challenges. Many of these nations gained independence from France in the 1960s, but the legacy of colonialism continues to shape political institutions, economic structures, and social identities.

Economic development and regional integration have been key priorities for many West African Francophone countries in the 21st century. The establishment of regional blocs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) has facilitated cooperation and coordination on issues such as trade, security, and development.

However, youth unemployment across the region is a pressing issue, with high levels of joblessness contributing to social discontent and political instability. Many young people, frustrated by limited economic opportunities and government corruption, have been at the forefront of social movements and protests calling for political reform and economic justice.

Social inequalities, particularly along ethnic and regional lines, have also fuelled tensions and conflicts in several West African Francophone countries. In countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso, some communities in the north feel marginalised and have longstanding grievances over political representation, economic development, and cultural recognition, leading to cycles of violence and instability.

Furthermore, the lack of regional solidarity triggered by geopolitical reconfiguration of alliances have led to the disintegration of ECOWAS following the three members exit, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, on 28 January 2024.

Politically, some West African countries have been characterised by a mix of democratic progress, authoritarian tendencies, and political instability. Many countries in the region have faced significant political turmoil and instability. Military coups, political unrest, and governance crises have threatened stability and undermined democratic institutions. The issue of presidential term limits has been a contentious issue in several West African Francophone countries. Leaders such as Alpha Condé in Guinea and Alassane Ouattara in Côte d'Ivoire have faced criticism and protests for seeking to extend their time in office beyond constitutional limits, raising concerns about democratic backsliding and political authoritarianism. For a long time, one notable exception had been the consolidation of democratic governance in countries such as Senegal, which had been hailed for holding regular and competitive elections, and experienced peaceful transfers of power, demonstrating a strong commitment to democratic principles.

However, the recent unfortunate events that characterised the failed attempt to amend the constitution and the postponement of general elections in Senegal are undermining the country's longstanding association with democratic stability with a strong tradition of political pluralism and civil liberties.

Traditionally Senegal has a strong democratic culture of holding free, and fair elections, which have been widely recognised as transparent and credible by domestic and international observers. Since 2000, Senegal has conducted several presidential,

legislative, and local elections, with peaceful transfers of power occurring through the electoral process.

Even though the 2012 presidential elections took place on 26 February amid debate over President Abdoulaye Wade's eligibility for a third term, the process underscored Senegal's commitment to democratic principles, as the incumbent president accepted the results and peacefully transferred power to the newly elected president, consolidating Senegal's reputation as a model of democratic governance in Africa. However, despite its democratic achievements, Senegal faces a range of challenges in consolidating and deepening its democratic governance. Persistent issues such as corruption, nepotism, and impunity pose significant threats to democratic institutions and the rule of law, undermining public trust in government and eroding confidence in the political process.

Economic inequality and social exclusion remain pressing concerns in Senegal, with disparities in access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities exacerbating social tensions and contributing to political instability. Furthermore, Senegal's democratic progress was recently tested by both internal and external factors. Internally, despite the constitutional limit of two terms, Macky Sall attempted pursuing a third term in June 2023 but the pressure from the public prevented him from reaching that goal. In January 2024, he postponed the general elections, and some critics characterised the action as a constitutional coup. On 5 February 2024, the Senegalese Constitutional Court made a landmark decision, nullifying President Macky Sall's proposed delay of the presidential election.

Consequently, the court mandated a rescheduling of the election to 31 March 2024. The decision's ramifications extended beyond mere electoral logistics, as it underscored deep-rooted tensions and uncertainties within the political landscape, setting the stage for a pivotal moment in the nation's history. On 24 March 2024, Senegalese presidential election resulted in the opposition candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye winning it in the first round, only 10 days after his release from prison.

Regarding Guinea, it is a diverse country with numerous ethnic groups, languages, and cultural traditions. Despite its rich cultural heritage, Guinea has grappled with social tensions and

divisions along ethnic lines, particularly between the Fulani, Malinke, and Soussou ethnic groups. Social inequalities, poverty, and limited access to basic services have exacerbated social discontent and fuelled periodic outbreaks of violence and unrest. High levels of unemployment, especially among youth, have contributed to social instability and migration, with many Guineans seeking better opportunities abroad.

Economically, Guinea is rich in natural resources, including bauxite, iron ore, gold, and diamonds, yet the country continues to face significant economic challenges. Weak governance, corruption, and mismanagement have hampered economic development and hindered the equitable distribution of wealth and resources.

Politically, has been characterised by a mixture of authoritarian rule, democratic transition, and periodic political unrest. Following decades of authoritarian rule under President Lansana Conté, Guinea experienced a historic transition to multi-party democracy with the election of Alpha Condé in 2010. Alpha Condé's presidency initially raised hopes for democratic consolidation and economic reform, but his tenure has been marred by allegations of corruption, human rights abuses, and political repression. The government's heavy-handed response to protests and opposition demonstrations has led to widespread criticism from domestic and international observers, undermining Guinea's democratic credentials and eroding public trust in state institutions.

The 2020 presidential election, in which Alpha Condé secured a controversial third term in office, sparked widespread protests and violence, highlighting deep-seated divisions within Guinean society, and raising concerns about the country's democratic future. The opposition and civil society groups accused the government of electoral fraud and repression, leading to a protracted political crisis and further polarisation of the political landscape.

In West African countries, the realities of corruption, undemocratic practices, and political instability have served as fertile ground for novelists seeking to capture and fictionalise the

complex socio-political dynamics of their respective nations. Since 1970, authors in these West African countries have increasingly turned to literature as a means of exploring and critiquing the realities of governance, power, and society.

Novels published in Senegal and Guinea since 1970s often reflect the lived experiences of ordinary citizens grappling with the consequences of corruption and authoritarian rule in what should be the democratisation era. Through fictional narratives, authors shed light on the pervasive influence of corruption in daily life, from its impact on access to basic services to its corrosive effect on the moral fabric of society. Characters in these novels navigate a world where nepotism and embezzlement are endemic, revealing the ways in which corruption permeates every aspect of public and private life.

Undemocratic practices, such as electoral fraud, political repression, and human rights abuses, feature prominently in the fictional landscapes of Senegal and Guinea. Authors use their works to explore the tensions between political ideals and authoritarian realities, depicting characters who struggle to assert their rights and freedoms in the face of entrenched power structures. Through vivid storytelling and compelling narratives, these novels offer readers a glimpse into the challenges of political dissent, activism, and resistance in societies where dissent is often met with repression and violence.

Political instability, characterised by constitutional coups, protests, and civil unrest, provides a backdrop for many fictional narratives set in Senegal, Guinea and neighbouring counties.

Authors draw on historical events and contemporary developments to craft stories that capture the tumultuous nature of political life in their countries. From the aftermath of contested elections to the legacy of colonialism and dictatorship, these novels explore the complexities of nation-building and statehood in contexts marked by instability and uncertainty. In addition to critiquing the darker aspects of governance and politics, novels also celebrate the resilience and ingenuity of their characters.

Guinea Conakry

- **Alimou Sinta, *Le sang pour l'alternance* (Sang), 2021**

Le sang pour l'alternance [The Blood for Change] by a Guinean author Alimou Sinta, stands as a compelling narrative set in the fictional country of Guiny, a nation that mirrors the political realities of several African countries. Through the vivid portrayal of its characters and events, the novel offers profound insights into the perils of lifelong presidency and the struggle for democracy in a society plagued by authoritarian rule.

Against the backdrop of opulence and luxury, Guiny serves as a microcosm of the broader African political landscape, where the trappings of power often mask the harsh realities faced by ordinary citizens. In this context, the ascension of Décon, a law professor, to the highest office in Guiny in 2010 symbolises a glimmer of hope for democratic renewal and political reform.

Initially hailed as a beacon of integrity and change, Décon's presidency raises expectations of a departure from the entrenched culture of autocracy and oppression. Many in Guiny view his leadership as a watershed moment, signalling the dawn of a new era characterised by transparency, accountability, and respect for democratic principles.

However, as Décon's second and final term draws to a close, ominous signs emerge of his intentions to perpetuate his hold on power. The prospect of amending the constitution to circumvent term limits and extend his presidency indefinitely threatens to undermine the fragile democratic gains made by Guiny in recent years.

Amidst growing discontent and disillusionment, the people of Guiny refuse to remain passive bystanders in the face of encroaching tyranny. Fuelled by a collective desire for change and justice, grassroots movements such as the National Coalition for the Defence of the Constitution emerge as bulwarks against authoritarianism, mobilising citizens from all walks of life to defend the principles of democracy and constitutionalism.

At the forefront of this resistance stands Faba, the courageous leader of the opposition, whose unwavering

commitment to the cause galvanises a new generation of activists and idealists. Despite the looming threat of reprisals and violence, Faba and his comrades remain steadfast in their resolve, determined to safeguard the hard-won freedoms and liberties of people in Guiny.

As tensions escalate and the spectre of political crisis looms large, the struggle for democracy in Guiny takes on a heightened urgency. Street protests, civil disobedience, and acts of civil resistance become the hallmark of a burgeoning movement determined to reclaim the soul of the nation from the clutches of autocracy.

The narrative unfolds against a backdrop of uncertainty and upheaval, where the fate of Guiny hangs in the balance. The stakes are high, as the battle for the country's future unfolds on the streets, in the halls of power, and within the hearts and minds of its citizens.

Through its portrayal of political intrigue, moral dilemmas, and acts of courage leading to bloodshed, *The Blood for Change* offers a powerful testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and resistance that defines the African struggle for democracy since the last three decades. In the face of formidable odds, the characters of the novel exemplify the indomitable human spirit, drawing strength from the collective will of the people to confront oppression and injustice. Through its evocative storytelling and profound insights into democratic martyrs, *The Blood for Change* transcends its fictional setting to resonate as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of oppression and adversity.

Senegal

- **Dianguina Diarisso, *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* (Oiseaux), 2014**

The novel *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* [And the birds were singing] by Dianguina Diarisso, set between 1979 and 1988 during Mali's second republic, serves as a profound exploration of the socio-political landscape of the time. Authored by Diarisso Dianguina, it delves into the struggles faced by the National Union of Pupils and

Students of Mali, providing a thorough portrayal of the challenges and choices confronting individuals in a period of political turmoil and repression. This clandestine student union's courageous resistance against the tyranny of the state, embodying the collective aspirations and struggles of Mali's disenfranchised youth. Through acts of protest, solidarity, and defiance, the union confronts the repressive apparatus of the regime, challenging the hegemony of power and demanding accountability and reform. In Dianguina's portrayal, the student union emerges as a potent symbol of hope and resilience, embodying the aspirations of a generation determined to chart a new course for their country.

At the heart of the narrative are two central characters, Tiémoko and Kissima, cousins who share a bond forged through upbringing. Their divergent paths, one embarking on entrepreneurship while the other enlists in the military, reflect the multifaceted experiences and dilemmas encountered by many Malians during this tumultuous era of political instability.

Dianguina's meticulous attention to detail unveils the subtle yet potent warning signs heralding the impending change in Mali's political landscape. The author exposes the fissures and contradictions inherent in the country's governance structure, laying bare the systemic injustices and abuses of power perpetrated by the ruling elite.

This novel serves as a poignant reflection of the harsh realities faced by the Malian people, where the authoritarian behaviour of leaders leaves little room for dissent or recourse. Elites with ethical behaviours and youth alike are confronted with stark choices: acquiesce to the repressive regime's dictates, risk their lives through defiance, or take the exile path. This dichotomy, emblematic of the existential quandary confronting young Africans under oppressive regimes, resonates deeply within the narrative fabric of post-independent Africa.

Against the backdrop of political upheaval, the characters of Tiémoko and Kissima embody the divergent trajectories of ambition, resilience, and sacrifice. Tiémoko's entrepreneurial endeavours symbolise the aspirations of a generation yearning for

economic empowerment and self-determination. In contrast, Kissima's decision to join the military underscores the allure of stability and security in a society rife with uncertainty and upheaval.

Their intertwined narratives serve as a microcosm of Mali's societal fabric, wherein familial bonds and personal aspirations intersect with the broader currents of political struggle and social change. Through their experiences, Dianguina navigates the complexities of identity, agency, and resistance in the face of entrenched oppression.

The novel's exploration of Mali's second republic transcends mere historical documentation, offering a searing indictment of the systemic injustices and institutionalised corruption that pervade the country's political landscape. Dianguina's incisive critique lays bare the contradictions of a regime purportedly founded on democratic principles yet mired in authoritarian excesses and human rights abuses.

To this end, the novel underscores the pivotal role of literature as a vehicle for social critique and political resistance in the African context. Through its nuanced depiction of the human experience, the novel transcends mere storytelling, offering a powerful indictment of injustice and oppression while affirming the enduring resilience and agency of the African people.

- **Dianguina Diarisso, *A l'épreuve des urnes (Epreuve)*, 2021**

A l'épreuve des urnes [To the test of the ballot-box] by Dianguina Diarisso is a novel that mirrors the recent political dynamics in many African countries. Historically, these nations have often been dominated by dictatorial regimes. However, this narrative explores the emerging opportunities for political transformation, driven by a wave of change and the efforts of a charismatic opposition leader named Dakan. Alongside other political activists, Dakan is invigorated by the promise of a new era. Despite numerous political upheavals, they find strength in traditional values of fraternity, which they use to educate their fellow citizens and foster democratic ambitions. Diarisso emphasises the importance of hard

work and innovation for political success. He states,

On ne peut pas être en tête de la foule si on ne l'a pas travaillée ; puisque dans la vie on ne récolte que ce que l'on a semé. Alors, il faut toujours travailler. Travailler pour réussir, travailler pour s'épanouir. Car pour réussir, il faut créer. Pour créer, il faut risquer

[You cannot lead the crowd if you have not galvanised it; because in life, you only reap what you sow. In this regard, it is always necessary to work hard. Working leads to success, working allows fulfilment. To succeed, you must hence innovate. Innovation requires taking risks].

This philosophy underpins the efforts of Dakan and his allies as they navigate the tumultuous political landscape. Despite the deplorable state of the nation, marked by corruption, political repression, violence by security forces, poverty, social and political exclusion, xenophobia, and military coups, there is a significant shift. National mobilisation, driven by charismatic leaders, trade unions, political alliances, and the media, have facilitated a change in political attitudes and mindsets. Political opponents are no longer seen as enemies but as participants in a peaceful political transformation and transition. This evolution is evident in the fictional country of Noubel Kelly, where Dakan is poised to replace the dictator.

Diarisso's novel underscores the necessity of political education for the ballot-boxes to reflect a fair national verdict. It argues that many Africans need to be educated about the political roles, benefits, and democratic processes to ensure that political rivalries do not escalate into violent confrontations. The narrative advocates for a culture where political engagement is marked by mutual respect and constructive dialogue. The story of Dakan and his journey towards democratic leadership offers a hopeful vision for the future of many African countries. It highlights the potential for positive change through collective effort and the power of traditional values in modern political contexts.

3.6. Understanding the binary nature of reality and fiction in francophone African narratives, and related theoretical frameworks.

The intersection of reality and fiction within African Francophone literature is a captivating subject that has drawn the attention of scholars and critics in the field of Francophone studies for decades. The relationship between reality and fiction within these narratives is not merely a dichotomy but a dynamic interplay that shapes both the narrative structures of literary works and the broader socio-political dynamics and cultural discourses they reflect.

Literature serves as a mirror to society, reflecting its complexities, contradictions, and aspirations (Moura, 1999). In the context of African Francophone literature, this reflection is particularly poignant, as writers grapple with the legacies of colonialism, the decoloniality, the challenges of postcolonial nation-building, and the complexities of identity in a rapidly changing world. Through the lens of fiction, authors explore the intricacies of human experience, offering insights into the collective psyche of their societies and the individual struggles of their characters. Thus, critical theory provides a theoretical framework for interrogating the power dynamics inherent in literary representation. Drawing from the insights of thinkers such as Jacques Derrida in *Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences* (1966) and Michel Foucault, critical theorists analyse the ways in which language constructs and shapes reality. Derrida's concept of deconstruction challenges the notion of stable meaning, suggesting that texts contain inherent contradictions that destabilise traditional interpretations. Through deconstructive reading practices, critics can uncover the latent tensions within literary texts, revealing the underlying power struggles that shape representations of reality and fiction.

Critics and researchers have long been intrigued by the ways in which African Francophone literature blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, challenging conventional notions of truth and representation. One of the central concerns of literary analysis in this context is the exploration of narrative structures and techniques employed by authors to convey their messages and insights. Through close reading and interpretation, critics uncover the underlying meanings and symbolic resonances embedded

within the text, illuminating the ways in which fiction serves as a vehicle for exploring deeper truths about the human condition. Hence, literary analysis forms the bedrock of any exploration into the dichotomy of reality and fiction within African Francophone literature. Michel Riffaterre (1957, 1970, 1979, 1983) has emphasised the importance of understanding the interplay between text and reader, highlighting how literary devices construct alternative realities that challenge conventional interpretations. Michel Riffaterre's concept of "hypogram" similarly highlights the transformative power of literary language. In *Semiotics of Poetry* (1983), Riffaterre argues that texts contain hidden layers of meaning that become accessible through close reading and interpretation. By uncovering the linguistic clues embedded within texts, readers can unlock the latent meanings that lie beneath the surface. Riffaterre's approach highlights the dynamic relationship between language and reality, suggesting that fiction serves as a medium through which alternative truths can be articulated.

In his work *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983) [*Discours du récit: essais de méthode*, 1972], literary theorist Gerard Genette explores the rich relationship between narrative form and narrative content, highlighting the ways in which narrative structures shape our understanding of reality. Genette's concepts of narrative voice, focalisation, and narrative time provide valuable tools for analysing the narrative strategies used by authors in African Francophone literature. By examining the ways in which stories are told, critics can uncover the underlying logic of narrative construction and its implications for the representation of reality.

Apart from Gerard Genette, Roland Barthes, another influential figure in literary theory, offers insights into the ways in which language constructs and shapes our perception of reality. In his essay *The Death of the Author* (1977) [*La mort de l'auteur*, 1967], Barthes argues against the notion of authorial intentionality, suggesting that the meaning of a text is not fixed but is instead produced through the act of reading. For Barthes, the text exists independently of its author, and its meaning is determined by the reader's interpretation. In his work *S/Z* (2009), Roland Barthes

deconstructs the narrative structure of Honoré de Balzac's novella *Sarrasine* (1830), revealing the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the text. By breaking down the narrative into smaller units or "lexias", Barthes demonstrates how fiction operates as a system of signs that invite interpretation and reinterpretation. Through his analysis, Barthes illuminates the fluidity of meaning within literary texts, suggesting that fiction transcends the boundaries of reality to create new conceptual spaces. This perspective challenges traditional notions of authority and authenticity in literature, opening up new possibilities for understanding the relationship between fiction and reality in African Francophone literature.

Michel Foucault's theory of discourse provides a framework for analysing the ways in which power operates through language and knowledge. In works such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002) [*L'archéologie du savoir*, 1969] and *Discipline and Punish* (1977) [*Surveiller et punir : Naissance de la prison*, 1975], Foucault explores the ways in which discursive formations shape our understanding of reality and construct social hierarchies. For Foucault, knowledge is not a neutral reflection of reality but is instead produced within specific historical and cultural contexts, reflecting the interests and agendas of those in positions of power. By applying Foucauldian analysis to African Francophone literature, scholars can uncover the ways in which dominant discourses shape our understanding of reality and perpetuate systems of oppression and marginalisation.

Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens through which to examine the ways in which colonialism continues to shape the cultural and political landscapes of postcolonial societies. Building on the insights of scholars such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, postcolonial theorists explore the ways in which colonial legacies inform the representation of reality in literature. Fanon's concept of colonial alienation and Said's notion of orientalism highlight the ways in which colonial discourses construct the alterity or the otherness as a means of asserting colonial dominance and control. By interrogating the ways in which these discourses are reproduced and challenged in African Francophone literature, scholars can gain

insights into the complexities of postcolonial identity and resistance.

Historical contextualisation situates African Francophone literature within specific temporal and spatial contexts, shedding light on the historical forces that have shaped literary production and reception. Achille Mbembe (2005) and Frederick Cooper, scholars explore the colonial legacies, post-independence struggles, and socio-economic realities that inform African Francophone narratives.

Historical contextualisation is essential for understanding the ways in which African Francophone literature emerges within specific temporal and spatial contexts. By situating literary texts within broader historical narratives, literary critics can uncover the ways in which authors respond to and engage with historical events and social transformations, offering insights into the ways in which literature reflects and refracts the realities of the societies in which it is produced.

By examining the historical trajectories that have shaped the literary traditions of African Francophone countries, one can gain insights into the ways in which colonialism, decoloniality, and independence movements have influenced the representation of reality in literature. By understanding the historical backdrop against which these narratives unfold, scholars can discern the significance and resonance of literary texts within contemporary society.

Furthermore, postcolonial theory provides a critical lens through which to examine the enduring legacy of colonialism within African Francophone literature. Building on the works of great critics such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, postcolonial theorists analyse the ways in which colonialism has influenced cultural production and identity formation. By exploring themes of resistance, hybridity, and cultural negotiation, postcolonial theory reveals the complexities of postcolonial subjectivity and the ongoing struggle for decolonisation. In his seminal work "Black Skin, White Masks," Fanon explores the psychological effects of colonialism on the individual psyche, highlighting the ways in

which colonial domination perpetuates systems of racial and cultural oppression.

Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens through which to examine the enduring legacy of colonialism within African Francophone literature. Building on the works of scholars such as Frantz Fanon (Haddour, 2019) and Edward Said (Burney, 2012), postcolonial theorists analyse the ways in which colonialism has influenced cultural production and identity formation. By exploring themes of resistance, hybridity, and cultural negotiation, postcolonial theory reveals the complexities of postcolonial subjectivity and the ongoing struggle for decolonisation.

Finally, Socio-political theory provides a framework for understanding the broader social and political forces that shape African Francophone literature. Drawing from the insights of theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1976) and Ernesto Laclau (1977, 2001, 2015), socio-political critics examine issues such as governance, nationalism, and globalisation within literary texts. By analysing the ways in which literature reflects and refracts societal concerns, socio-political theorists illuminate the intersections between fiction and reality, revealing the ways in which literary texts engage with broader political discourses and social movements.

In conclusion, interdisciplinary methodologies offer a holistic approach to analysing the dichotomic dimension of fiction and reality within African Francophone literature. By drawing from diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, scholars can unravel the complexities of literary representation and its intersection with socio-political reality. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, scholars can generate nuanced insights that deepen our understanding of African Francophone literature and its broader cultural significance.

Chapter

4

Analysing the literary representation of instability spiral in Francophone Africa

This literary study provides insights into the profound societal reflections on different forms of instabilities embedded within the novels comprising our corpus. Across the diverse societal landscapes of Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Senegal, and Guinea Conakry, these literary works serve as profound mirrors, illuminating the intricacies of the enduring nature of violence in post-independence Francophone Africa. Novelists construct characterisations and rich plotlines that navigate the complex and often turbulent terrain of ethnic tensions in Francophone Africa. These narratives serve as potent reflections of the profound impact of ethnicity on societal dynamics, shedding light on the deep-seated divisions that frequently act as catalysts for conflict (Munyangeyo, 2024a, 2024b).

These narratives offer a nuanced examination of the historical legacies and power struggles that continue to shape the anthropological and socio-political landscape of the region. Through their storytelling prowess, novelists unpack the complexity of ethnic identity formation, tracing its roots to colonial legacies, migration patterns, and sociological inter-group relations (Munyangeyo, 2022). These narratives offer readers compelling insights into the ways in which ethnic affiliations intersect with issues of power, privilege, and belonging, illuminating the complex interplay between identity politics and societal norms.

While these novels offer a multifaceted exploration of the consequences of ethnic tensions on individual lives, they also reflect on instability as collective destinies. Through the lens of diverse characters and perspectives, authors portray the personal and communal experiences of discrimination, marginalisation, and violence that often accompany ethnic conflicts. By humanising the

complexities of identity-based struggles, these narratives invite readers to empathise with the hopes, fears, and aspirations of those caught in the crossfire of historical animosities and contemporary realities.

4.1 (De)Construction of the State: nation-building in the midst of colonial legacies

The post-independence era in Africa has been marked by the complex task of (de)constructing the state. Francophone novelists provide a critical lens on this process, highlighting the continued dependency on former colonial powers and the internal challenges posed by clientelism and tribalism. The narratives suggest that true State building, independence and national solidarity can only be achieved through the dismantling of existing systems and the end of foreign dominance.

In the aftermath of colonial rule, African nations grappled with numerous challenges in constructing their states. Pre-colonial social and political organisations, which were characterised by complex interdependencies, underwent transformations under colonial rule that skewed towards clientelism, serving the interests of the colonial powers. Consequently, post-colonial Africa found itself ensnared in a regime of dependency, both externally and internally. Through their narratives of dissent and resistance, Francophone novelists shed light on the inherent difficulties in transitioning from colonial rule to independent statehood, highlighting the tensions between continuity and change.

Newly independent African leaders frequently focused on establishing systems and strategies designed primarily to access and maintain power. In doing so, they largely neglected the social, cultural, ethnic, and tribal diversity of their countries, as well as the aspirations of their populations. This approach can be attributed to several factors, including the immediate need for stability, the lack of experience in self-governance, and the overwhelming influence of the former colonial powers. One of the most significant relationships in this context was the power imbalance between the new regimes in Francophone Africa and their former colonial

power, France. This relationship often became the foundation for constructing and managing an ostensibly independent State. However, this independence was frequently superficial, as the new states relied heavily on external support, particularly from France, rather than developing robust internal national dynamics.

The reliance on external support is vividly illustrated in Dominique M'Fouillou's novel *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*. The protagonist, President Décon, seeks security not from his national Congolese forces but from Paris. He states,

Je contacterai l'Elysée dès que vous serez prêt, et vous aurez les troupes du régiment militaire français basé à Bangui, dont vous avez besoin. Après tout, c'est de là-bas que viendra notre protection. On ne peut pas compter sur l'armée congolaise. D'ailleurs elle est pratiquement inexistante et ses officiers ont pris fait et cause pour les manifestants (Vent, p.64).

[I will contact the Elysée Palace as soon as you are ready, and you will have the troops you need from the French military regiment based in Bangui. After all, that is where our protection will come from. We cannot count on the Congolese army. Besides, it is practically non-existent, and its officers have sided with the protesters]

This reliance on external military support exemplifies the externally-driven construction of a dependent State. Such dependence undermines the autonomy of the State and perpetuates a form of neo-colonialism, where the former colonial power continues to exert significant influence over the newly independent nation.

Internally, this strategy of constructing a dependent state fostered clientelism, a system where resources and opportunities are distributed based on loyalty rather than merit. This system exacerbated existing inequalities and hindered the development of a cohesive national identity. Clientelism became a tool for maintaining power, with leaders distributing favours to secure

support, often at the expense of broader social and economic development.

The colonial legacy of divide-and-rule continued to dominate state-building initiatives, further undermining national solidarity. By exacerbating ethnic and tribal divisions, colonial powers had maintained control, and this strategy persisted in the post-colonial period. Leaders often played different groups against each other to prevent the formation of a unified opposition. This approach is poignantly highlighted in M'Fouillou's *La salve des innocents*, where he observes:

Beaucoup ont cédé à cette tentative traîtresse qu'on nous offrait, les uns pour combattre certains, les autres pour utiliser les uns, ce qui est deux façons différentes de réduire à néant dans nos tête cette idée d'union et de solidarité nationale. Mais si le tribalisme devait continuer, il faut trouveront un jour des vengeurs décidés (Salve, p.229). (vent, p.71).

[Many have succumbed to this treacherous attempt offered to us, some to fight against each other, some to use others, which are two different ways of killing in our minds the idea of union and national solidarity. But if tribalism is to continue, we must know that those who perpetuate or regenerate it will one day face determined avengers]

This statement underscores the detrimental impact of clientelism and tribalism on national unity and the principles of state construction. The persistence of clientelism and tribalism eroded national solidarity, making it difficult to forge a unified national identity. The divisions created by these practices hindered the development of consensus on social projects and policies aimed at national development. Instead of working towards common goals, different groups were often pitted against each other, leading to conflict and instability.

The involvement of external neo-colonial powers, particularly France, in the internal politics of newly independent African States

further complicated the situation. These powers often had their own strategic interests and sought to maintain their influence in the region. They provided military and economic support to regimes that were willing to align with their interests, regardless of the regime's domestic policies or level of popular support. This external involvement often undermined efforts to build truly independent and self-sufficient States. It perpetuated a cycle of dependence, where the survival of the regime depended on external support rather than internal legitimacy and effectiveness. This dynamic is clearly illustrated in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, where President Décon relies on French military support to maintain his regime. Such reliance on external powers undermines the sovereignty of the State and its ability to develop independently.

The long-term impact of these dynamics on state building in post-colonial Africa has been profound. The reliance on external support, the persistence of clientelism and tribalism, and the neglect of social and economic development have all contributed to a fragile state structure. Many African States have struggled to develop effective governance institutions, build national unity, and achieve sustainable development.

The legacy of colonialism and the strategies used by post-colonial leaders have left many African states in a precarious position. The focus on power maintenance rather than inclusive development has hindered the ability of these states to meet the needs and aspirations of their populations. As a result, many African states continue to face challenges in achieving stability, development, and true independence.

Literature, particularly the works of Francophone novelists like Dominique M'Fouillou, provides valuable insights into the complexities of state building in post-colonial Africa.

Through their narratives, these novelists highlight the challenges and contradictions inherent in the process of transitioning from colonial rule to independent statehood. They shed light on the tensions between continuity and change, the impact of external influences, and the internal dynamics of power and clientelism. M'Fouillou's novels offer a nuanced understanding

of the interplay between external and internal factors in State building. They illustrate how external dependence and internal clientelism undermine efforts to build cohesive and independent States. By portraying the struggles and aspirations of the people, these novels also highlight the potential for resistance and change.

In response to exclusionary practices that undermine state construction, some Africans advocate for the complete dismantling of existing state management systems. They view this as a prerequisite for rebuilding a state that truly reflects national dynamics and the aspirations of the people. This radical perspective is powerfully articulated in the novel *La Promesse des fleurs*. The protagonist's father is depicted as believing that total destruction is necessary to achieve a meaningful statehood, equality, and unity:

Pour lui, il fallait que tout dans le monde, dans notre pays, dans notre quartier, dans nos vies soit détruit. Mon père était devenu anarchiste par la force de la vie, mais il n'était pas anarchiste jusqu'au bout. Mon père n'était pas un nihiliste à la peau noire et aux pieds aplatis. Il croyait que seulement après la destruction systématique de tout, les hommes seraient égaux dans la ferraille, dans la souffrance ; dans les ruines ; il croyait que seulement une guerre civile pourrait unifier les restes des villas de Bastos avec les pans de la Briqueterie, et c'était une chance unique de recommencer tout à zéro. Mon père voulait seulement recréer le monde en exigeant sa destruction, en appelant de tous ses vœux la venue de l'heure zéro (Promesse, p.101).

[For him, everything in the world, in our country, in our neighbourhood, in our lives had to be destroyed. My father had become an anarchist by circumstances, but he was not an anarchist to the core. My father was not a black-skinned and flat-footed nihilist. He believed that only after the systematic destruction of everything would men be equal in the rubble, in suffering; in the ruins; he believed that only a civil war could unify whatever remains of Bastos villas with parts of Briqueterie, and it was a unique chance to start all over again. My father only wanted to

recreate the world by demanding its destruction, by fervently calling for time reset to zero hour]

This advocacy for civil war and destruction reflects a belief that peace can only be achieved through conflict. The chaos envisioned is not an end but a means to a new beginning, symbolising a horizon of rebirth. The novel suggests that achieving this rebirth requires the contributions of the country's vital forces. In this view, the complete dismantling of existing systems is seen as a necessary step to eliminate the deeply entrenched structures of inequality and corruption that undermined state-building and were inherited from the colonial era and perpetuated by post-colonial regimes.

The protagonist's father in *La promesse des fleurs* is emblematic of a broader sentiment among certain radical thinkers who see the current state apparatus as irredeemably flawed. They argue that incremental reforms are insufficient and that only through a complete overhaul - often imagined as a violent and total break with the past - can a truly just and equitable society be built. This perspective is grounded in a profound disillusionment with the existing state and its inability to deliver on the promises of independence.

Dominique M'Fouillou's works further explore the dynamics of confronting both national and foreign forces in the quest for State reconstruction. M'Fouillou portrays a populace caught between two forces: a national force attuned to popular aspirations and foreign forces that undermine state sovereignty. The union leader in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* highlights this tension:

Nos relations avec l'armée congolaise nous encouragent déjà à intervenir afin de radicaliser la direction du mouvement. Ce qui nous sera par contre nécessaire, c'est de nous informer sur les intentions de l'armée française de telle sorte que nous connaissions leur plan et de savoir s'il y a possibilité ou non d'une intervention de leur part (vent, p.71).

[Our relations with the Congolese army already encourage us to engage in radicalising the movement's leadership. What we will need to know, however, is the French army's intentions so that we know their plan and whether there is a possibility of their intervention or not]

Here, the revolutionary movement seeks to dismantle undemocratic systems and views foreign forces as occupying entities that must be expelled. The departure of foreign military presence is seen as a crucial step toward true independence. As expressed in the novel:

Le régime populaire que nous envisageons s'effondrera, vous le savez aussi bien que moi. C'est pourquoi, la première négociation la plus urgente que nous serons amenés à engager, dès lors que nous aurons réussi notre coup, c'est le départ de notre sol de l'armée française. On ne peut se dire libres si nous avons sur place les fusils de l'armée coloniale qui nous guettent (Vent, p.79).

[The current regime that looks popular will collapse, you know that as well as I do. That is why the first and most urgent negotiation we will have to undertake, once our endeavour succeeds, is to ensure the French army leaves our motherland. We cannot call ourselves free if we have the colonial army's guns watching us]

M'Fouillou suggests that the removal of foreign forces will coincide with the end of ethnic and tribal conflicts perpetuated by divide-and-rule strategies. This sentiment reflects a broader anti-imperialist stance that is prevalent in post-colonial discourse. The presence of foreign military forces is seen as a continuation of colonial domination, undermining the sovereignty, autonomy, and state-building efforts of the newly independent nations. The expulsion of these forces is thus viewed as a necessary step in the decolonization process, allowing the state to rebuild itself based on indigenous values and priorities.

The interaction between internal and external forces is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, internal forces, including national armies, political movements, and civil society, are often divided along ethnic, tribal, and ideological lines. These divisions are frequently exacerbated by external actors who have a vested interest in maintaining a certain level of instability to exert influence. In *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, the union leader's awareness of the need to understand the French army's intentions underscores the strategic considerations involved in confronting both internal and external adversaries. The revolutionary movement's goal to dismantle undemocratic systems requires a clear understanding of the geopolitical landscape and the manoeuvres of foreign powers. This strategic awareness is essential for any revolutionary movement seeking to achieve lasting change leading to a meaningful state-building.

The symbolic importance of the departure of foreign forces cannot be overstated. It represents a reclaiming of sovereignty and a rejection of the neo-colonial influence that has persisted since independence. This act of expulsion is seen as a precondition for the establishment of a truly independent state that can pursue its own path to development and justice. However, the removal of foreign forces is not a panacea. It must be accompanied by substantive changes in the internal structure of the state to address the underlying issues of clientelism, corruption, and inequality. The radical vision articulated in *La promesse des fleurs* suggests that without such fundamental changes, any newfound independence will be superficial and short-lived.

Nevertheless, the persistence of ethnic and tribal conflicts remains one of the most significant challenges to state-building in post-colonial Africa. These conflicts are often rooted in the colonial policy of divide-and-rule, which deliberately exacerbated divisions to facilitate control. In the post-colonial period, these divisions have continued to undermine efforts at national unity and cohesion. M'Fouillou's works highlight how these conflicts are manipulated by both internal and external actors to maintain power and influence. The revolutionary movement's focus on the departure of

foreign forces to end ethnic and tribal conflicts underscores the interconnectedness of internal and external factors. The hope is that by removing the external influences that perpetuate these divisions, it will be possible to foster a sense of national solidarity and common purpose for nation-building.

To address the challenges of state-building in post-colonial Africa, it is essential to move beyond the legacy of colonialism and the strategies of clientelism and external dependence. This requires a renewed focus on inclusive development, national unity, and self-sufficiency. Leaders must prioritise the needs and aspirations of their populations, address inequalities, and build effective governance institutions. Efforts to build national unity must involve concrete actions to address ethnic and tribal divisions. This includes promoting inclusive policies, fostering dialogue and reconciliation, and ensuring that all groups have a stake in the state.

External powers also have a role to play in supporting these efforts. Rather than perpetuating dependence, they should focus on building the capacity of African states to govern themselves effectively. This includes providing support for governance reforms, economic development, and regional integration. By promoting self-sufficiency and reducing dependency, external powers can help African States achieve true independence and sustainable development.

The radical call for the dismantling of existing systems and the expulsion of foreign forces is ultimately rooted in a vision of rebirth and renewal. This vision sees the current state apparatus as fundamentally flawed and incapable of delivering social justice and equality. By dismantling these systems and using existing synergies to rebuild the nation, it is possible to recreate a State that truly reflects the aspirations of the people.

This vision is not without its challenges. The process of dismantling existing systems and building new ones requires broad-based movements that can mobilise countries' vital forces and sustain the momentum for change. It also requires a clear and compelling vision of what the new State will look like and how it will address the issues of the past.

4.2. Ethnic affiliations and political weaponisation of identity-based rhetoric

From access to resources and opportunities to the representation in political institutions, ethnic affiliations often serve as determinants of social status and power dynamics within society. The narratological structures offer to navigate these complex intersections, highlighting the ways in which ethnicity intersects with class, gender, and regional disparities to perpetuate cycles of inequality and marginalisation. The role of ethnicity in shaping collective memory and national narratives is part of the narratological structure representing a recurrent instability.

Through evocative storytelling and historical allegory, novelists interrogate the construction of national identities and the mythologies that underpin them. In many countries, these narratives challenge dominant narratives of unity and cohesion, revealing the fissures and fractures that exist beneath the surface of national consciousness. By unveiling and examining the silenced voices and forgotten histories of marginalised communities, authors disrupt simplistic narratives of national identity, offering alternative perspectives on the complexities of belonging, democratic participation, and citizenship in post-colonial Africa. In this regard, this literary analysis underscores the ways in which ethnic identities serve as sites of contestation and negotiation in the context of evolving political landscapes. From struggles for self-determination and autonomy to debates over the recognition of minority rights, authors illuminate the complex dynamics of ethnic politics and state-building efforts in Francophone Africa.

Politically, these narratives offer critical reflections on the challenges of forging inclusive and pluralistic societies in the aftermath of colonial rule, highlighting the tensions between centralised authority and local autonomy. They offer nuanced portrayals of the strategies and tactics employed by both state and non-state actors to mobilise ethnic identities for political gain. From the manipulation of ethnic grievances to the weaponisation of identity-based rhetoric, authors expose the ways in which ethnicity is often instrumentalised to consolidate power and maintain

control. These narratives challenge simplistic perceptions of ethnic essentialism, emphasising the contingent and constructed nature of ethnic identities in the context of political struggle.

Ethnic and tribal affiliation is indeed one of the primary problematic identity factors addressed by francophone African novelists as a catalyst for instability in its social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions. These narratives often explore how deeply ingrained ethnic divisions and allegiances contribute to various forms of instability and conflict, highlighting the profound impact of these affiliations on African societies.

In their works, francophone African novelists depict the destructive consequences of ethnic and tribal affiliations. These affiliations, deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and social contexts, often serve as the basis for societal divisions and conflicts. The novels reveal how these affiliations can be weaponised by political leaders and elites to maintain or gain power, often leading to significant social fragmentation and conflicts. This manipulation perpetuates a cycle of violence, corruption, and instability that hinders the development and progress of African nations.

In *La salve des innocents*, Dominique M'Fouillou examines the profound blindness that characterises ethnic adherence and the ensuing inequalities. M'Fouillou presents ethnic and tribalistic passions as leading to several immediate and damaging consequences, including lethargy, nepotism, corruption, and the formation of political parties driven not by ideological choices but by ethnic and tribal solidarity. M'Fouillou writes:

Par ailleurs, la division de la population se décomposait dans le tribalisme aveugle. Elle se transformait en une foule amorphe. L'armée ainsi que les différents services transformait de la sécurité de l'Etat soutenait l'exploitation, l'oppression du pays par le système dictatorial du Bureau politique. En même temps, le népotisme progressif et la corruption formaient un enchaînement indissoluble traumatisant, paralysant (Salve, p.177).

[Moreover, the population was blindly divided tribalism, leading to an amorphous crowd. The army and the various State security services supported the exploitation and oppression of the country by the dictatorial system of the political party executive. At the same time, nepotism and corruption were on the rise, reflecting an indissoluble, traumatic, and paralysing chain of events]

This statement encapsulates the detrimental effects of ethnic divisions on governance and societal cohesion. The transformation of the population into an "amorphous crowd" signifies a loss of individual and collective agency, as people are subsumed into polarised ethnic identities. This creates a fertile ground for manipulation by authoritarian regimes that exploit these divisions to maintain control. The army and state security services, rather than serving the public good, become instruments of oppression. They support the exploitation of the country by the dictatorial system of the political party leaders, reinforcing a cycle of violence and repression.

The impact of ethnic divisions extends beyond the immediate oppression. M'Fouillou highlights how rise, institutionalisation, and normalisation of nepotism and corruption form an "indissoluble chain of events," creating a governance system that is both traumatic and paralysing. Nepotism, where positions of power and influence are allocated based on ethnic affiliation rather than merit, leads to widespread inefficiency and resentment. Corruption becomes endemic as officials prioritise the interests of their ethnic group over the national agenda, siphoning off resources that could otherwise be used for development. The result is a society where governance structures are weakened, and social cohesion is eroded.

The focus on ethnic loyalty over competence undermines the effectiveness of institutions, leading to poor public services, economic stagnation, and social unrest. The division of the population into ethnic factions hinders the development of a unified national identity, which is essential for stability and progress. M'Fouillou's work underscores the importance of

addressing ethnic divisions to build a more cohesive and stable society. By illustrating the profound and pervasive impact of these divisions, *La salve des innocents* calls for a re-examination of how ethnic identities are politicised and exploited. It advocates for a governance system based on merit and inclusivity, where ethnic and tribal affiliations do not dictate one's access to power and resources.

The population, divided along tribal lines, loses its collective agency, and becomes vulnerable to manipulation and oppression by authoritarianism. This fragmentation within the population weakens the social fabric, making it easier for dictatorial regimes to exploit these divisions for their own gain. By fostering and exacerbating tribal tensions, these regimes can maintain control and divert attention from their own failures and abuses. The transformation of security agencies into instruments of oppression for specific ethnic groups further exacerbates this instability. These agencies, rather than protecting the people, become what could be referred to as ethnic militias that serve certain groups while oppressing others based on shared or non-shared identities. This deliberate manipulation of security forces undermines the rule of law and perpetuates a cycle of violence and repression.

The distortion of security agencies into ethnic militias has several profound implications. Firstly, it destroys trust between the public and the State. When citizens perceive that security forces are biased and serve only particular ethnic interests, their faith in the state's ability to protect them diminishes. This leads to a breakdown in social cohesion as people increasingly turn to their own ethnic groups for protection and support, further entrenching tribal divisions. The lack of a neutral and fair security apparatus emboldens those in power to use violence and intimidation against dissenting ethnic groups, reinforcing their authoritarian grip.

Beyond the security apparatus, the judiciary also suffers from impartiality caused by nepotism and tribalist orientations. M'Fouillou underscores this in *La salve des innocents*:

La vérité comme la justice sont écrasées sous la botte de quelques galonnés, appuyées par une certaine presse

immonde, défendus par toute la fripouille du pays, soutenus par l'odieuse tribalisme (Salve, p.178).

[Truth and justice are crushed under the boot of a few non-commissioned officers, supported by a vile press, defended by all the country's scoundrels, and sustained by heinous tribalism]

This highlights the erosion of judicial independence and the pervasive influence of tribalism in the social and political discourse, legal and security systems. When justice and security are manipulated to serve ethnic interests, they lose their institutional credibility and fail to provide a foundation for social order and stability.

The judicial system's lack of independence is portrayed as a critical issue that exacerbates the overall instability. When courts are influenced by tribal loyalties rather than adherence to the law, they become tools of oppression rather than institutions of justice. This not only denies individuals fair trials and legal recourse but also sends a message that the rule of law is subordinate to ethnic considerations. The resulting mistrust in the judiciary further alienates the population, making it harder to resolve conflicts through legal means and more likely that disputes will be settled through violence.

Additionally, the media propaganda plays a significant role in perpetuating these divisions. When the press becomes complicit with security officers and officials, and supports tribalist agendas, it distorts public perception and inflames ethnic tensions. Instead of acting as a check on power and a platform for diverse voices, the media becomes another tool for authoritarian control and division. This contributes to a climate where misinformation and propaganda thrive, making it even more difficult for people to make informed decisions or hold their leaders accountable.

The combination of a biased security apparatus, a compromised judiciary, and a complicit media creates a feedback loop of repression and instability. As authoritarian regimes continue to exploit tribal divisions, they undermine the very foundations of a

cohesive and just society. The cycle of violence and repression becomes self-perpetuating, with each act of oppression reinforcing tribal loyalties and further eroding trust in state institutions. Ethnic divisions are often presented as the driving force of violence in its multiple forms, perpetuating instability.

The social and political discourse, when co-opted by those in power, frames conflicts through an ethnic lens, emphasising and sometimes exaggerating these divisions to serve political agendas. This portrayal not only misrepresents the true nature of conflicts but also exacerbates them by fostering an environment of mistrust and hostility among different ethnic groups. M'Fouillou's work illustrates the detrimental impact of ethnic favouritism on various societal levels. Ethnic favouritism leads to social, economic, and political sterility, hindering the overall progress and development of a society. The witness of Le Quidam's death reflects on this stark reality:

J'étais bouleversé à l'idée des massacres associés aux clivages ethniques. Ce n'était pas l'idée du massacre, mais la peur de sa stérilité qui m'effrayait. Car cette barbarie sortait du cerveau. La froide cruauté était préméditée dans les moindres détails en vue de l'effet final (Quidam, p.10).

[I was heartbroken at the thought of the massacres associated with ethnic divisions. It was not the idea of the massacre per se that frightened me, but the fear of its unproductive nature. Because this barbarity was committed by brainy people. The cold cruelty was premeditated in the smallest details for the ultimate effect]

This statement captures the calculated nature of ethnic violence and the profound fear of its consequences. The meticulous planning and deliberate execution of ethnic violence underscore its chilling and premeditated nature. The witness's reflection highlights not just the immediate horror of the violence but the long-term implications it has for society. The worst aspect of ethnic favouritism is not the immediate violence it entails but the long-term effect in undermining social cohesion and development. Ethnic favouritism is portrayed as stifling social mobility, economic development, and

political progress, creating a cycle of poverty, disenfranchisement, and conflict. When positions of power and opportunities are allocated based on ethnic identity rather than merit, it leads to widespread disillusionment and resentment. Talented individuals from marginalised ethnic groups are denied opportunities, often leading to the brain-drain where the best and brightest either leave the country or are forced into underemployment.

Economically, ethnic favouritism also results in inefficient allocation of resources. Projects and investments are often directed towards regions and groups favoured by those in power, rather than based on economic need or potential for growth. This not only hampers overall economic development but also widens the gap between different ethnic groups, fuelling further resentment and tension. Politically, the entrenchment of ethnic favouritism erodes the legitimacy of governance. When political appointments and policies are seen as serving only certain ethnic interests, it undermines the principle of equal representation and fairness in government. This breeds political instability as excluded groups may resort to protests, uprisings, or even armed rebellion to fight for their rights and representation.

The cycle of ethnic favouritism and its resulting violence and developmental sterility can only be broken through deliberate and sustained efforts to promote inclusivity and equality. Rethinking the positive role of social and political discourse is crucial, ensuring that it serves as an unbiased platform that fosters unity rather than division. Additionally, merit-based systems in education, employment, and political appointments must be established and enforced to ensure that opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of ethnic background.

Only through such comprehensive synergies and strategies can societies overcome the destructive legacy of ethnic favouritism, fostering an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from social, economic, and political progress.

Furthermore, francophone African novelists delve into the underlying causes of the use of ethnic identities as factors of political rallying. Among these causes, the lack or sterility of ideas stands out

prominently. In *A l'épreuve des urnes*, Dianguina Diarisso confirms that political discourse becomes institutionally and sustainably tribalised during a crisis of political and ideological arguments. He writes,

Les hommes politiques, en mal de programme, enfourchaient le cheval de l'ethnie pour se maintenir ou conquérir le pouvoir (Epreuve, p.17).

[Due to lacking credible manifestos, politicians use ethnicity as a trampoline to access or maintain power]

This observation underscores the opportunistic use of ethnic identities by politicians who lack substantive policy ideas, political agendas, and platforms. When political leaders resort to ethnic rhetoric, it signifies a failure to engage in meaningful dialogue about governance and development. Instead of presenting coherent plans and policies that address the needs and aspirations of the people, these leaders fall back on ethnic divisions to rally support. This tactic is not just a sign of intellectual and policy bankruptcy but also a dangerous strategy that deepens societal fractures. By exploiting ethnic identities, politicians divert attention from their inability to provide viable solutions to pressing issues, such as economic development, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. When leaders frame their political agendas around ethnic lines, they also create an environment where loyalty to one's ethnic group supersedes national unity. This undermines efforts to build cohesive and inclusive societies, as people are encouraged to see themselves primarily through the lens of their ethnic identity rather than as citizens with shared interests and goals. The resulting polarisation can lead to social unrest, conflict, and even violence, as ethnic groups vie for power and resources.

Furthermore, the tribalisation of political discourse hinders the development of robust democratic institutions. A healthy democracy relies on the competition of ideas and policies, where political parties and leaders are judged based on their vision and ability to deliver on their promises. When ethnicity becomes the

primary currency in political contests, it erodes the accountability mechanisms that are crucial for good governance. Leaders who gain power through ethnic mobilisation are less likely to feel accountable to the broader population, leading to governance that is more about maintaining ethnic allegiances than addressing national issues.

Despite the portrayal of tribalism and ethnocentrism which is often pessimistic, francophone African novelists frequently conclude their novels with an optimistic tone, suggesting the possibility of productive resilience. In this vein, the character of Faba in Alimou Sinta's *Le sang pour l'alternance* dreams of days when people transcend ethnic, regional, religious, and ideological affiliations. Faba's vision is encapsulated in the following words:

Nous rêvons d'un peuple nouveau qui transcende les appartenances ethniques, régionales, religieuses, doctrinales. Nous formons un seul peuple. Nous avons la même histoire, les mêmes souffrances, les mêmes craintes, le même présent et le même futur (Sang, p.91).

[We dream of new people who transcend ethnic, regional, religious, ideological affiliations. We are one nation. We have the same history, the same sufferings, the same fears, the same present and the same future]

Faba's dream represents the hope for a unified national identity that can overcome the divisions that have historically plagued African societies. This vision of unity is seen as essential for building a State capable of breaking the cycle of violence and instability. By recognising shared experiences and common aspirations, this new identity offers a foundation for social cohesion and collective progress. The narrative often embodies this dream of shared fate through characters who, despite facing the harsh realities of ethnic and tribal strife, envision a future where these divides are transcended. This idea serves as a powerful counter-narrative to the fragmentation and discord depicted in post-colonial African settings.

The exploration of ethnic and tribal affiliations in francophone African literature reveals the complexities and challenges of identity politics in post-colonial Africa. The manipulation of ethnic identities for political gain is a recurrent theme, highlighting the detrimental effects on governance, social cohesion, and economic development. These novels serve as a critique of the ways in which ethnic divisions are exploited by political elites to maintain power, often at the expense of national unity and stability. The characters and plotlines in these novels frequently illustrate the destructive consequences of such manipulation, where political leaders exploit ethnic tensions to fortify their own positions, thereby perpetuating a cycle of mistrust and conflict.

Moreover, the novelists emphasise the importance of addressing the underlying causes of ethnic conflict. The lack of substantive political and ideological discourse is identified as a key factor driving the tribalisation of politics. In the absence of meaningful policy debates, politicians resort to ethnic rhetoric, deepening divisions and perpetuating instability. The novels often highlight the potential for political reform and the establishment of institutions that can foster inclusive governance, illustrating through their narratives the possibilities for a more integrated and equitable society. Addressing this issue requires a commitment to developing inclusive and comprehensive political platforms that address the needs and aspirations of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

The portrayal of the judiciary and the media in these novels underscores the broader implications of ethnic favouritism. When institutions that are supposed to uphold justice and inform the public become compromised by ethnic allegiances, the very foundations of democracy and rule of law are undermined. Restoring the independence and impartiality of these institutions is crucial for building trust and ensuring that they serve the interests of all citizens. The narratives frequently depict the struggles of individuals and communities seeking justice and the truth in environments where these institutions have been co-opted by partisan interests, thus highlighting the urgent need for systemic reform.

The optimism found in the conclusions of these novels is not merely a narrative device, but a reflection of a broader belief in the possibility of social transformation. Characters like Faba embody the aspirations of many who seek to rise above the historical and contemporary divides that fragment their societies. These characters often undergo personal transformations that mirror the broader societal change envisioned by the authors. Through their experiences and reflections, the novels convey a message of hope, resilience, and the possibility of a brighter future. Faba's dream of a new people transcending ethnic, regional, religious, and ideological divides resonates deeply in the context and perceptions of post-colonial African renaissance. It reflects a desire to move beyond the legacies of colonialism and the internal divisions that have hindered progress. This vision is not an idealistic fantasy but a call to action, urging individuals and communities to work towards a more unified and just society. The novels suggest that achieving this vision requires a collective effort, one that involves rethinking and reshaping identities and fostering a sense of shared purpose and belonging.

The potential for achieving Faba's dream lies in the recognition of common humanity and shared experiences. The novels frequently depict moments of solidarity and mutual support that transcend ethnic and other divides. These moments serve as reminders that, despite the differences that may exist, there is a fundamental interconnectedness that can be the basis for building a more cohesive society. The narratives underscore the importance of empathy, understanding, and cooperation in overcoming the barriers that divide people.

The themes explored in these novels are highly relevant to contemporary discussions about identity, governance, and social cohesion in peacebuilding in Africa and beyond. They offer valuable insights into the ways in which ethnic and tribal affiliations can be both sources of strength and sources of conflict. By highlighting the potential for unity and resilience, the novels contribute to a broader conversation about how societies can

navigate their diversity and build more inclusive and harmonious communities.

In conclusion, in the context of identity, these novels delve deeply into the complexities of ethnic and tribal affiliations, and their effects. They reveal how these identities are formed, framed maintained, and manipulated within society. Characters often grapple with their sense of self in relation to their ethnic background, facing both internal and external pressures. This exploration helps readers understand the multifaceted nature of identity and the various forces that shape it. By portraying characters who transcend these boundaries to forge new identities, the novels suggest that it is possible to move beyond divisive affiliations towards a more inclusive sense of self. The novels often critique the ways in which political leaders exploit ethnic divisions to maintain power, undermining democratic processes and social stability. Through their narratives, the authors highlight the detrimental impact of such practices on governance, emphasising the need for leaders who promote unity and inclusivity. They call for political systems that prioritise the common good over narrow ethnic interests, advocating for reforms that enhance transparency, accountability, and representation for all citizens. By doing so, these novels offer a vision of governance that can support sustainable peace and development.

Social cohesion, as depicted in these novels, is also intricately linked to the concepts of identity and governance. The stories illustrate how ethnic and tribal divisions can lead to conflict and fragmentation, disrupting the social fabric of communities. However, they also show how shared experiences and common aspirations can foster a sense of solidarity and collective identity. Characters often find themselves united by common struggles and goals, highlighting the potential for building bridges across ethnic divides. This theme is particularly relevant to peacebuilding efforts, as it underscores the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support within diverse communities.

Furthermore, the novels offer practical insights into peacebuilding strategies. By portraying the challenges and

successes of characters working towards unity, they provide valuable lessons on conflict resolution and reconciliation. These stories often emphasise the importance of dialogue, empathy, and understanding in bridging divides. They suggest that peacebuilding efforts must be inclusive, addressing the needs and aspirations of all community members. This approach aligns with contemporary peacebuilding practices that prioritise local ownership and participation, recognising that sustainable peace can only be achieved through collective effort.

Finally, the optimistic conclusions of these novels serve as a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit. Despite the grim realities of ethnic conflict and political manipulation, the characters' visions of unity and hope offer a source of inspiration. They remind readers that, even in the face of significant challenges, it is possible to envision and work towards a better future. This message is particularly important for contemporary peacebuilding efforts, as it reinforces the idea that positive change is possible and worth striving for to facilitate and foster stability.

4.3. Corruption and nepotism: unequal distribution of resources and opportunities

In Francophone African literature, corruption is a recurring theme that significantly impacts socio-economic and political stability. This pervasive issue is closely linked to the pursuit of opulence and nepotism, manifesting in various ways across the continent. Through their exploration of the human toll of clientelism, the narratives urge readers to critically examine the corrosive effects of corruption and nepotism on the fabric of society. They highlight the ways in which entrenched interests erode trust in institutions, undermine social cohesion, and perpetuate a culture of impunity where accountability and transparency are often sacrificed in the pursuit of power and privilege. Such narratives reflect a profound disillusionment experienced by young generations and undermines integrity across Francophone Africa. Aspirations and ambitions, often fuelled by dreams of a better future, collide with systemic barriers and societal constraints, leaving young

protagonists grappling with the harsh realities of their circumstances.

At the core of public management's contentious issues is the problematic entanglement of personal and state assets. Political power and appointments to high-responsibility positions are often pursued for their potential to generate wealth, as decision-making authority frequently translates into a lucrative income source. Consequently, political aspirations often intertwine with entrepreneurial strategies, leading to a pervasive culture of corruption. Stanislas Ouomah Tchidjo's novel *Par décret présidentiel...* illustrates this phenomenon. Tchidjo provides a detailed depiction of how politicians and senior officials in Francophone African countries exploit their control over various sectors for personal enrichment. He asserts,

Les hommes politiques et les hauts fonctionnaires ont compris qu'il faut s'enrichir aussi rapidement, sinon plus rapidement que les hommes d'affaires, par le contrôle qu'ils exercent sur un certain nombre de secteurs (Décret, p. 19).

[Politicians and senior officials have understood that they must get rich as quickly as possible, if not more quickly than businessowners, through the control they exert over many sectors]

This statement highlights a systemic issue where political positions are viewed not as opportunities for public service but as avenues for personal gain. The rapid enrichment of politicians at the expense of the public underscores a deep-seated corruption that permeates the political landscape. In many societies, political power is supposed to be wielded for the greater good, with leaders serving the interests of their constituents and working towards the betterment of their communities. However, Tchidjo's observation reveals a starkly different reality. In this context, political offices are coveted not for the opportunity to serve, but for the personal wealth and power they can generate. This shift in motivation marks a significant departure from the principles of good governance and ethical leadership.

The statement also sheds light on the mechanisms through which politicians and senior officials amass wealth. By exerting control over various sectors, these individuals can manipulate resources and opportunities to their advantage. This control often extends to public contracts, licenses, and other regulatory powers, which can be exploited for personal enrichment. The influence they wield allows them to sidestep the checks and balances that are supposed to prevent such abuses of power.

One of the most troubling aspects of this phenomenon is the impact it has on the broader society. When political leaders prioritise their own financial gain over the welfare of the public, resources that should be directed towards essential services and development projects are instead diverted into private coffers. This misallocation of funds exacerbates inequality, as the rich become richer, and the poor are left with inadequate public services. It also erodes trust in public institutions, as citizens become increasingly disillusioned with leaders who seem more interested in lining their pockets than in addressing the needs of their communities. As political positions become more lucrative, the competition for these roles intensifies. Aspiring politicians may engage in corrupt practices to secure their positions, knowing that once in power, they will have the opportunity to recoup their investments many times over.

Moreover, this systemic corruption can have far-reaching implications for the economy and society. When politicians and officials prioritise personal gain, they may make decisions that are not in the best interest of the country. This can lead to inefficient policies, mismanagement of resources, and a lack of long-term planning. The focus on short-term enrichment undermines sustainable development and can hinder economic growth. To address this issue, it is crucial to implement measures that promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in public office. The novel seems to argue that fostering a culture of ethical leadership through education and public awareness campaigns can encourage politicians to prioritise public service over personal gain.

Furthermore, Tchidjo's narrative also illustrates the wealth disparity through social gatherings in the fictional country of Vilanie. He describes,

En Vilanie, une réception digne suppose toujours du champagne, non pas une bouteille comme chez les radins Blancs, mais des cartons ! Car boire le champagne ici signifie en avaler tout son saoul. Personne ne veut boire dans une coupe à champagne, mais plutôt dans de grands verres. C'est à peine si l'on ne boit pas à même le goulot (Décret, p. 8).

[In Vilanie, a proper reception always requires champagne, not just one bottle like in the case of stingy white people, but boxes! Drinking champagne here means drinking until you get completely drunk. No one wants to drink from a champagne flute, but rather from large glasses. It would be unusual if they did not even drink directly from the bottle]

Tchidjo's depiction of societal norms in Vilanie, where a proper reception necessitates champagne, offers a stark illustration of the opulent lifestyles enjoyed by the elite. This extravagance is not merely about having a single bottle of champagne but necessitates entire boxes. In Vilanie, drinking champagne until one is completely drunk symbolises status and wealth. The choice of drinking vessels further emphasises this excess; large glasses are preferred over the traditional champagne flutes, and it is not uncommon for individuals to drink directly from the bottle. Such practices reflect a culture where ostentatious displays of wealth are not just accepted but expected.

This extravagant consumption of champagne highlights the gross inequalities in Vilanie, exacerbated by systemic corruption. While the elite can afford to indulge in such luxury, the broader population grapples with poverty and deprivation. The resources that could potentially improve the lives of many are instead concentrated in the hands of a few, who use them to fund their lavish lifestyles. This situation is not unique to Vilanie; it mirrors

broadier trends where corruption enables a small elite to accumulate vast wealth at the expense of the general population.

Corruption plays a central role in fostering these inequalities. When leaders and influential figures engage in corrupt practices, they divert public resources into their own pockets. This diversion of funds often results in a lack of investment in critical public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Consequently, most of the population suffers, as they do not have access to the resources necessary for a decent quality of life. The portrayal of drinking champagne until drunkenness in large glasses or directly from the bottle reflects more than a simple display of wealth. It is a manifestation of a deep-seated culture of corruption and inequality. The elite's behaviour sends a clear message about their power and privilege. By openly flaunting their ability to waste resources, they reinforce the social hierarchy that keeps them at the top and the poor at the bottom. This behaviour is both a symptom and a perpetuator of the existing inequalities.

Moreover, this culture of excess has a psychological impact on society. It normalises the idea that wealth and status are paramount, often achieved through unethical means. This normalisation can lead to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and disillusionment among the general population. When people see that corruption and excess are rewarded, they may feel that there is little point in striving for a better future through honest means. This, in turn, can perpetuate a cycle of corruption and inequality, as individuals seek to secure their own positions in a fundamentally unjust system.

Dianguina Diarisso's novel *A l'épreuve des urnes* further explores the theme of extreme money-making endeavours, delving into the creation of the strong-leader image. Diarisso depicts the growing influence of the regime in Noubel Kelly. He writes,

La personnalisation du pouvoir de Noubel Kelly glissait vers les limites de l'insupportable, dans une influence aussi générale. Le régime s'enfonçait de plus en plus profondément dans ses turpitudes. Sa dérive était telle que l'affairisme avait des proportions si insupportables qu'il fallait y mettre le holà (Epreuve, p.14).

[The personalisation of political power in Noumbel Kelly was sliding towards the limits of tolerance in relation to the spread of influence exertion. The regime was depravity sinking deeper and deeper. Its drift was such that the lucrative money-making strategy had reached such unbearable proportions that it had to be stopped]

This narrative captures the destructive nature of power concentration, where corruption becomes a deeply ingrained part of the political system. The extreme and insatiable greed described by Diarisso points to a political environment where the personalisation of power leads to widespread corruption and necessitates drastic measures to curb its excesses.

In Tchidjo's novel *Par décret présidentiel...*, the political personalisation and the entanglement of personal and state assets create an environment where corruption flourishes. The rapid enrichment of politicians through their control over various sectors is presented as a common practice. This suggests that the pursuit of wealth is often prioritised over public service, leading to a culture of corruption that permeates all levels of government. Similarly, Diarisso's depiction of the growing influence in Noumbel Kelly and the regime's descent into depravity highlights the dangers of power concentration.

The extreme opulence depicted in Tchidjo's portrayal of social gatherings in *Vilanie* and the unbearable personalisation of power described by Diarisso both serve to highlight the stark contrast between people in power and the broader population. In *Vilanie*, the elite's indulgence in excessive luxury stands in stark contrast to the poverty experienced by the general population. This disparity underscores the gross inequalities fostered by corruption and the need for systemic change to address these issues. Ultimately, both Tchidjo's and Diarisso's works highlight the pervasive nature of corruption in Francophone African countries and its detrimental effects on society. The entanglement of personal and state assets, the pursuit of wealth through political power, and the personalisation of power all contribute to a cycle of corruption that undermines socio-economic and political stability. Tchidjo and

Diarisso provide a powerful critique of the socio-political systems in Francophone Africa where a re-evaluation of governance practices is imperative to promote transparency and accountability.

In many cases, corruption is underpinned by nepotism, which is deeply entrenched in decision-making bodies. Nepotistic attitudes and practices result in the misappropriation of state assets and services as private property by those in power. This misuse of resources in education and healthcare exacerbates poverty and social exclusion, severely undermining the national policies and the loss of sense of citizenship among the most disadvantaged. In *A l'épreuve des urnes*, Dianguina Diarisso captures this:

L'exclusion, la crise des valeurs, la misère et la pauvreté avaient successivement été accumulées et aggravées. Au cœur de ce mal profond, la citoyenneté s'était effondrée aux yeux des populations abandonnées à elles-mêmes par les politiques de gestion qui avaient ruiné et affaibli le pouvoir d'achat en sacrifiant l'éducation, la santé, l'environnement, etc. (Epreuve, p.14).

[Exclusion, the crisis of values, misery, and poverty had continuously increased and worsened. At the heart of this deep malaise, the sense of citizenship had collapsed in the eyes of people who had been left out by national policies that had ruined and diminished spending power, by sacrificing education, health, the environment, etc]

The author captures the profound consequences of systemic neglect and corruption. This quote sheds light on the myriad ways in which the abandonment of fundamental public services and policies by corrupt leaders catalyses widespread disenfranchisement, leading to a pervasive breakdown of social cohesion. When leaders prioritise personal gain over the well-being of their citizens, resources meant for public services are often siphoned off. This diversion of funds from essential sectors like education, healthcare, and environmental protection directly impacts the quality of life of the people. Education, for instance, is a cornerstone of societal

development. It equips individuals with knowledge and skills necessary for personal growth and economic participation. When educational systems are underfunded and neglected, the prospects of a nation's youth are severely compromised, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. Schools become dilapidated, teachers are underpaid, and educational materials become scarce, creating an environment where learning is stifled, and the potential of the younger generation remains unfulfilled.

Similarly, the neglect of healthcare services has dire consequences for public health and well-being. In societies where corruption is rampant, hospitals and clinics often lack the necessary equipment, medications, and staff to provide adequate care. This leads to increased mortality rates, the spread of preventable diseases, and a general decline in the health of the population. When individuals cannot access the healthcare they need, their trust in the state erodes, and they feel abandoned by those in power. The environment suffers as the exploitation of natural resources without regard for sustainable practices depletes the environmental protection strategies, leading to long-term ecological damage and the loss of livelihoods for communities that depend on these resources.

The cumulative effect of neglecting these fundamental services is a profound sense of disenfranchisement among the population. When citizens feel that their basic needs are not being met and that their leaders are indifferent to their plight, a sense of citizenship and belonging deteriorates. This erosion of social cohesion manifests in various ways, including increased crime rates, social unrest, and a general breakdown of trust within communities. People begin to feel disconnected from the state and from each other, weakening the societal bonds that are essential for a functioning democracy.

The crisis of values that Diarisso mentions is indicative of a deeper moral and ethical decay within the society. When leaders engage in corrupt practices with impunity, it sends a message that integrity and accountability are not valued. This can lead to a pervasive sense of cynicism and apathy among the populace, where people lose faith in the possibility of positive change. As the sense of

citizenship collapses, so too does the collective drive to work towards common goals and societal improvement.

Nepotism in these contexts extends beyond familial ties, encompassing tribal affiliations and broader networks of influence. Dominique M'Fouillou's Le Quidam addresses the role of the single-party system in facilitating corruption and the creation of privileges. He argues that this system fosters a dubious caste of privileged individuals whose interests overshadow the general welfare. M'Fouillou writes, Le grand malheur pour notre pays, c'est que les intérêts du Parti, confondant avec ceux des dirigeants, l'emportent dans l'esprit de chacun l'intérêt général. [...] Il s'est formé à l'occasion une caste de privilégiés douteux qui veulent en avoir plus que les autres. La réussite, disent-ils. Et tout cela se passe sur un fond de paresse presque congénitale. Le but inavoué est de réduire tout le monde à une maussade médiocrité qui maintiendrait la population dans une situation humiliée. Ce qui explique peut-être cette permanente expression de souffrance docile qu'on observe dans le pays (Quidam, p.25).

[The great misfortune for our country is that the interests of the single Party, conflated with those of the leaders, outweigh in everyone's mind the general interest. [...] A dubious caste of privileged individuals has formed, wanting to get more than others. They call this success. And all this happens against a backdrop of laziness that is almost congenital. The unspoken goal is to reduce everyone to a sullen mediocrity that keeps the population in a humiliated state. This perhaps explains the permanent manifestation of docile suffering observed in the country]

This passage illustrates how the single-party system entrenches a culture of corruption, hindering national development and perpetuating social inequities. The privileged few enjoy the spoils of power while the majority languishes in poverty and humiliation, perpetuating a cycle of mediocrity and suffering.

The broader implications of M'Fouillou's critique are significant. Nepotism and favouritism, when intertwined with a single-party system, create an environment where meritocracy is undermined, and competence is not the primary criterion for positions of power and influence.

Instead, loyalty to the party and personal connections take precedence, leading to inefficiencies and stagnation. This system not only undermines the potential of capable individuals who are sidelined in favour of the well-connected but also erodes public trust in institutions meant to serve the people.

M'Fouillou's observation that this dynamic occurs "against a backdrop of laziness that is almost congenital" points to a deeper cultural malaise. The systemic corruption and lack of accountability foster a sense of futility among the populace. When effort and talent are not rewarded, and success is seen as a product of connections rather than hard work, it discourages initiative and innovation.

The "sullen mediocrity" that M'Fouillou describes is a direct consequence of a society where the rules of fair play are consistently undermined.

Furthermore, the notion of reducing the population to a "*humiliated state*" is particularly poignant. The psychological impact of living under such a system cannot be understated. The constant subjugation and marginalisation of the majority create a pervasive sense of powerlessness and despair. This state of "docile suffering" becomes normalised, making it even more challenging to mobilize for change. People become resigned to their fate, believing that the system is immutable, and that resistance is futile.

The cycle of mediocrity and suffering that M'Fouillou describes has far-reaching consequences for national development. When the governance structure prioritises the interests of a privileged few over the common good, it results in poor policy decisions and misallocation of resources. Essential services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure suffer, further entrenching poverty and inequality. The lack of investment in human capital stifles economic growth and innovation, trapping the nation in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment.

M'Fouillou's critique also highlights the role of ideology in perpetuating this system. The single-party system often justifies its actions through a narrative of unity and stability, portraying itself as the guardian of national interests. However, this narrative masks the underlying reality of power consolidation and exclusion. By conflating the interests of the party with those of the nation, the ruling elite legitimises its hold on power. This ideological manipulation further entrenches the status quo, making it difficult for alternative voices and perspectives to emerge.

Addressing the issues M'Fouillou raises requires a multifaceted approach. Breaking the monopoly of the single-party system can create space for diverse voices and more representative governance. Anti-corruption measures and strengthening institutions are crucial to ensure that power is exercised transparently and in the public interest. Additionally, fostering a culture of meritocracy and encouraging civic engagement can help to dismantle the structures of nepotism and favouritism. Furthermore, education also plays a critical role in this process. Empowering citizens with knowledge and critical thinking skills can challenge the narratives that sustain corrupt systems. Civic education can raise awareness about rights and responsibilities, encouraging active participation in the political process.

Clientelism is also identified by Diarisso as a catalyst for underdevelopment, as major societal projects such as education, health, and environmental protection are deprioritised in favour of personal enrichment. The cultivation of a personality cult, exemplifying the "strongman" concept, further entrenches corrupt practices. In *A l'épreuve des urnes*, Diarisso notes,

Sur le terrain politique, le clientélisme s'était forgé de nouvelles mœurs pendant que le discours creux avait conservé ses marques. L'intérêt commun et la solidarité avaient buté sur tous les retranchements par le calcul égoïste et le culte de la personnalité (Epreuve, p.14).

[On the political front, clientelism had forged new behaviours while hollow rhetoric retained its marks. The common interest and

solidarity had stumbled on all fronts due to selfish calculations and the cult of personality]

This critique highlights how corrupt leaders prioritize personal power and loyalty over genuine development efforts, stalling progress and exacerbating societal woes. The focus on personal loyalty and the consolidation of power ensures that developmental projects are sidelined, leaving critical areas like education and healthcare underfunded and neglected. The pervasive corruption and nepotism create an environment where public trust is eroded, and the social contract between the state and its citizens is broken. As Diarisso describes, the absence of the population from national policies has led to a collapse in citizenship and a deepening of social malaise. The neglect of essential services such as education, healthcare, and environmental protection not only deprives the population of basic needs but also diminishes their spending power and overall quality of life. This neglect breeds disenfranchisement and a sense of abandonment, further entrenching social exclusion and poverty.

M'Fouillou's analysis of the single-party system in *Le Quidam* highlights how this political structure facilitates the entrenchment of corruption and privilege. The interests of the party and its leaders overshadow the general welfare, creating a privileged class that thrives at the expense of the majority. This system perpetuates social inequities and hinders national development. The result is a society where the population remains in a state of humiliation and despair.

Diarisso's critique in *A l'épreuve des urnes* also underscores how clientelism and the focus on personal loyalty undermine genuine development efforts. The prioritisation of selfish calculations and the consolidation of personal power stall progress and national development. This dynamic ensures that critical areas such as education, healthcare, and environmental protection remain underfunded and neglected, further entrenching poverty and social exclusion.

In agrarian economies, the detrimental effects of land misappropriation and corruption extend far beyond financial embezzlement. Leaders often seize large tracts of land that should

be used to feed the population, exacerbating issues of hunger and unemployment. Dianguina Diarisso's *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* illustrates this through the character Mamadi, who laments to his friend Tiekoroba,

Je t'avais une fois dit que les querelles qui ont pour motif des problèmes de terre ne finissent jamais. Nos peuples ont faim, le chômage s'amplifie de jour en jour ; chaque jour qui passe voit le bas peuple assassiné par la faim ou la maladie (Oiseaux, p.42).

[I once told you that land disputes never end. Our people are hungry, unemployment grows day by day; every passing day sees the lower classes killed by hunger or disease]

This reflection outlines the grim reality that land disputes, driven by corruption, lead to widespread hunger and disease, particularly affecting the lower classes who suffer the most from such mismanagement. The story of Mamadi and his friend Tiekoroba is a microcosm of the broader issues facing agrarian economies plagued by corruption. When land, a critical resource for food production and livelihood, is misappropriated by those in power, the immediate consequence is a reduction in the land available for agriculture. This reduction not only diminishes the overall food supply but also limits the opportunities for agricultural employment, which is a primary source of income for many in these economies.

Like in many developing countries, agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa is the backbone of the economy, providing employment to a significant portion of the population. However, when leaders expropriate land for personal gain, it disrupts the agricultural sector, leading to a cascade of negative effects. Farmers who lose their land are forced to seek employment elsewhere, often in sectors that do not have the capacity to absorb the influx of labour. This shift contributes to rising unemployment rates and increases the strain on already limited resources and services.

The consequences of land misappropriation are portrayed in Diarisso's work, where Mamadi's words resonate with the suffering experienced by the lower classes. Hunger becomes a daily reality as food production declines, and the lack of employment opportunities forces individuals into poverty. This dire situation is further exacerbated by the spread of disease, which thrives in conditions of malnutrition and inadequate living standards. The lower classes, already vulnerable due to their economic status, are disproportionately affected by these issues, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and suffering.

Corruption, as highlighted in the narrative, allows those in power to manipulate resources for personal gain while neglecting the needs of the population. In agrarian societies, where community and collective well-being are paramount, corruption creates divisions and fosters a sense of hopelessness among the people. Moreover, land disputes driven by corruption often lead to social unrest. When people see their livelihoods and means of sustenance being stripped away by those who are supposed to protect them, it breeds discontent and can spark conflicts.

These disputes are not just about land; they are about the right to survive and the fight against systemic injustice. The frustration and anger of the affected communities can lead to protests and even violent clashes, further destabilizing the region and hindering economic development.

The narrative in *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* serves as a reminder of the human cost of corruption and land misappropriation. It emphasises that the impact of these actions extends beyond economic metrics and touches the very core of human dignity and survival. The tribulations of characters like Mamadi and Tiekoroba underscores the urgent need for reforms that prioritise equitable land distribution and transparent governance.

To address these issues of misappropriation, it is crucial for governments to put in place and implement policies that ensure fair land tenure and protect the rights of smallholder farmers. Strengthening legal frameworks to prevent land grabbing and

promote sustainable agricultural practices can help mitigate the adverse effects of corruption. Additionally, fostering community-based approaches to land management can empower local populations and enhance their resilience to external pressures.

Investing in education and healthcare is also essential to break the cycle of poverty and disease. Providing access to quality education can open alternative employment opportunities for those displaced from agriculture, while improving healthcare services can reduce the burden of disease exacerbated by malnutrition and poor living conditions. Ultimately, addressing the root causes of land misappropriation and corruption requires a multifaceted approach that combines legal, economic, and social interventions. By promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive development, it is possible to create a more just and equitable society where the rights and well-being of all citizens are protected. The story of Mamadi and Tiekoroba in *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* is a call to action, urging readers to confront these challenges and strive for a better future for agrarian economies and the communities that depend on them.

Economic reforms in some African countries often provoke mixed reactions, as illustrated in Achille Ngoye's novel *Kin-la joie, kin-la folie*. The narrative delves into the economic crisis in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), a country rich in strategic minerals yet plagued by systemic instability and corruption. Despite the nation's abundant resources, the local population has suffered due to mismanagement and exploitative policies under President Mobutu's regime.

In *Kin-la joie, kin-la folie*, Ngoye explores the profound implications of Mobutu's decision to liberalise the trade of strategic minerals, a move intended to stimulate the economy. However, this decision epitomises instability and highlights the multifaceted reactions from different sectors of the society. Ngoye writes:

Le Guide venait de libéraliser le commerce des pierres précieuses. Il avait même présenté sa décision dans une dialectique militante: tout "zed" devrait vivre décemment du sous-sol national! Jo comprenait, certes, les réactions

divergentes suscitées par cette volte-face. Si d'aucuns la considèrent comme un remède miracle au chômage généralisé, d'autres, les trafiquants notoires notamment, la fêtèrent comme une sortie de la clandestinité, tant que les populations des zones minières concernées la qualifièrent d'appel au pillage systématique de leurs terres (Kin, p.110).

[The Guide had just liberalised the trade of precious minerals. He had even presented his decision in a political rhetoric: every 'zed' [Zairean] should live decently off the national minerals! Jo understood, of course, the divergent reactions provoked by this U-turn. While some saw this liberalism as a miracle cure for widespread unemployment, others, notably notorious mineral traffickers, celebrated it as an escape from illicit trade, while people from the affected mining areas called it an invitation to systematic looting of their lands]

This passage underscores the chaotic consequences of such liberalisation. Instead of fostering economic stability and prosperity, it incited illicit trade and exploitation, deepening the crisis.

The narrative reveals how Mobutu's policies, despite their seemingly populist rhetoric, often resulted in exacerbating the very issues they purported to solve. The promise that every citizen should benefit from the national wealth resonated with many who were desperate for economic relief. For the unemployed people, this liberalisation represented a beacon of hope, a potential end to their financial struggles. They envisioned opportunities for employment and improved living conditions, believing that access to the country's mineral wealth would finally be democratised.

However, the reality was starkly different. The liberalisation of mineral trade unleashed a wave of opportunism among notorious traffickers and criminal organisations. These groups, previously operating in the shadows, now found a legitimate cover for their illicit activities.

The policy shift and the absence of mineral trade traceability mechanisms provided them with a legal framework to exploit resources more aggressively, leading to increased smuggling and black-market transactions. This not only deprived the state of valuable revenue but also undermined efforts to establish a regulated and fair economic system.

Moreover, the local populations in mining areas bore the brunt of this policy. Instead of witnessing development and prosperity, they experienced heightened exploitation and environmental degradation. The influx of opportunistic miners and traders led to the systematic looting of their lands. The promise of benefiting from the national subsoil turned into a nightmare as their communities were overrun by outsiders seeking to extract wealth with little regard for the long-term consequences. This led to social unrest and conflict, further destabilising the region.

Ngoye's depiction of these events highlights the complex interplay between government policies and their real-world impacts. The narrative critiques the superficiality of Mobutu's populist rhetoric, exposing the underlying motives of power consolidation and self-enrichment. By focusing on the divergent reactions to the liberalisation policy, Ngoye emphasises the importance of considering the broader social and economic context in which such reforms are implemented.

The novel also raises important questions about the role of governance in managing natural resources. It underscores the need for transparent and accountable systems that ensure equitable distribution of wealth. Without proper oversight and regulation, policies aimed at economic liberalisation can easily be co-opted by powerful interests, leading to further marginalisation and exploitation of communities.

Ngoye further elaborates on the desperation and corruption entwined with the diamond trade in the Mbuji-Mayi diamond zone, painting a vivid picture of the dire situation. He describes a scene where thousands of people converge on Mbuji-Mayi, each driven by the hope of discovering diamonds. The allure of these precious stones draws a large, desperate crowd, everyone seeking a

way to improve their dire circumstances through the mining of diamonds.

Ngoye writes,

Des milliers de personnes vauaient dans ce village des environs de Mbuji-Mayi à la recherche des diamants. Pour accéder à l'aire d'exploitation, ils avaient dû s'acquitter d'une taxe perçue par le commandant local de l'armée ; une raison de s'affoler lorsque des kakis surgirent sur le site en compagnie d'une escouade de surveillance de ladite société (Kin, p.111).

[Thousands of people were busy in this village near Mbuji-Mayi searching for diamonds. To access the mining area, they had to pay a tax to the local army commander; a reason to panic when people in military uniform showed up on the site accompanied by a mining company's squad]

Accessing the mining area is not a straightforward process. Instead, it is fraught with exploitation and corruption. To enter the mining zone, individuals must pay a tax, not to a legitimate government authority, but to the local army commander. This tax acts as a gatekeeper's toll, transforming a potentially prosperous venture into an extortion scheme. The military's involvement in the diamond trade exemplifies the entrenched corruption, as those in power exploit their positions for personal gain at the expense of the miners and local communities.

Ngoye notes the palpable tension and panic that arise when military personnel, clad in their distinctive khaki uniforms, arrive on the scene, accompanied by a squad from the diamond company. This presence signals an imminent shake-up in the already fragile balance of power and control over the mining activities. The sight of these armed men instils fear among the miners, who are acutely aware of the potential for violence, extortion, and further exploitation. The military's intervention disrupts the miners' operations and compounds their struggles, highlighting the pervasive influence of corruption.

This scenario underscores the deep-rooted corruption involving both the military and local authorities. These entities exploit the lucrative diamond trade for their benefit, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and hardship for the miners and their families. The military's role in this system of exploitation is particularly egregious, as they are supposed to maintain order and protect the populace. Instead, they contribute to the miners' suffering, extracting bribes and imposing their will through force.

The local communities bear the brunt of this corruption. Their hopes for a better future are continually dashed by the predatory practices of those in power. The miners, who endure harsh and dangerous conditions in search of diamonds, find themselves trapped in a system that enriches a few, while impoverishing many. The tax collected by the local army commander is just one of many obstacles they face, as the entire framework of the diamond trade Democratic Republic of Congo is riddled with corruption and exploitation.

Ngoye's depiction of the diamond trade in Mbuji-Mayi illuminates the stark reality faced by those on the front lines of the diamond mining industry, where dreams of prosperity are overshadowed by the harsh truths of exploitation and injustice. The involvement of the military and local authorities in this corrupt system highlights the urgent need for traceability reform and accountability to alleviate the suffering of the miners and ensure a more equitable distribution of the wealth generated by the diamond trade.

In environments where development has come to a halt, frustration among the populace can lead to two primary reactions: resignation or revolt. This is a phenomenon that Achille Ngoye captures with poignant accuracy in his work. He provides a scathing critique of the systemic dysfunction that characterises the nation, emphasising how laws are manipulated to serve the interests of those in power. In a particularly evocative passage, he writes,

Oui, le pays est mort. Sa dépouille se dispute entre des individus qui font et défont les lois, les contournent, les

aménagent selon leurs besoins. Seuls les aventuriers et les hors-la-loi s'en sortent. Quant aux autres, ils rêvent d'un pays ratissé par un Robin des bois dont nul ne voit le profil à l'horizon (Kin, p.87).

[Yes, the country is dead. Its remains are fought over by individuals who make and break laws, circumvent them, adapt them to their needs. Only adventurers and outlaws manage to get by. As for the law-abiding citizens, they dream of a country swept clean by a Robin Hood whose arrival cannot be seen on the horizon]

Ngoye's depiction is not just a critique but a mirror reflecting the deep-seated despair and disillusionment felt by ordinary citizens. This despair stems from a recognition that the rule of law has been perverted to the extent that it no longer serves its fundamental purpose of justice and equity. Instead, it has become a tool for the powerful to maintain their dominance. The imagery of a nation being fought over by self-serving individuals paints a bleak picture of societal decay, where the concept of the common good has been all but abandoned.

The reference to "adventurers and outlaws" underscores the chaotic and lawless environment that has emerged as a result of this corruption. In such a setting, those who succeed are not those who adhere to societal norms and legal frameworks, but those who are willing to bend or break the rules to their advantage. This creates a perverse incentive structure where integrity and honesty are liabilities rather than virtues, further entrenching the power of the corrupt and the criminally inclined.

For the ordinary citizens, this environment breeds a sense of helplessness and a yearning for transformative change. Ngoye encapsulates this yearning in the dream of a Robin Hood figure, a mythical saviour of Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire who will rise to challenge the entrenched power structures and restore justice. The absence of such a figure on the horizon amplifies the sense of hopelessness, as people are left waiting for a hero who may never come. This narrative of waiting for a saviour reflects a

broader commentary on the human condition in situations of systemic oppression and stagnation. It speaks to the inherent desire for justice and the belief in the possibility of a better future, even in the face of overwhelming adversity. The dream of a Robin Hood figure symbolises the hope for a leader who embodies the values of fairness, bravery, and resistance against tyranny.

Ngoye's work, therefore, is more than just a description of a country's moribund state; it is a powerful call to awareness and action. By highlighting the extent of the corruption and the resultant despair, he urges his readers to recognise the urgency of the need for change. It is a reminder that while the situation may seem dire, the collective will of the people can be a formidable force for transformation.

In examining the enduring struggle against corrupt regimes, a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted impacts of corruption and mismanagement in African contexts is crucial. Through literary narratives, the readers can gain insight into the socio-political turmoil experienced by societies under repressive governance. Central to these narratives is the persistent resistance against tyrannical leaders and the quest for justice and reform. A significant literary work *Le sang pour l'alternance* by Alimou Sinta captures the essence of this struggle through the character of Bamba, a young political activist whose impassioned call for resistance embodies the broader fight against anti-democratic practices.

In this novel, Bamba's call to action reflects the pervasive discontent and the unyielding spirit of rebellion that characterises the struggle against corrupt regimes. He asserts,

Ce qu'on peut faire c'est de continuer la lutte, on ne peut pas permettre que ce tyran continue à diriger notre pays jusqu'à la fin de sa vie. Le pays est dans l'agonie malgré toutes ses belles promesses... (Sang, p.28).

[What we can do is continue the struggle, as we cannot allow this tyrant to keep ruling our country for life. The country is in agony despite all his fine promises...]

This direct quote is emblematic of the broader sentiment expressed in various literary works that depict the dire consequences of unchecked corruption and the persistence of revolutionary fervour. Bamba's words resonate with the universal theme of resistance against oppression, illustrating how the promise of progress and justice drives individuals to challenge repressive leadership.

In conclusion, the themes explored in literary works such as Sinta's novel are reflective of the broader socio-economic issues faced in different African contexts.

Corruption and mismanagement have far-reaching impacts, affecting land management, economic stability, and societal well-being. Diarisso's work provides an example of how land disputes and misappropriation can lead to severe socioeconomic consequences. These issues often manifest as widespread hunger and disease, illustrating the direct impact of corrupt practices on the basic needs of the population. The misallocation of land and resources exacerbates poverty and inequality, contributing to a cycle of disenfranchisement and unrest.

Similarly, Ngoye's exploration of economic policies underscores the importance of careful planning and inclusivity in governance. Economic instability, illicit trade, and exploitation are frequently consequences of poorly implemented or exclusionary economic policies. Ngoye's work highlights how such policies can entrench corruption by creating opportunities for exploitation and undermining the rule of law. This instability fuels further discontent and frustration among the populace, who are left grappling with stagnant development and manipulated legal frameworks. The longing for revolutionary change, as vividly portrayed by Ngoye, becomes a natural response to the systemic failures and injustices perpetuated by corrupt regimes.

The character of Bamba in *Le sang pour l'alternance* epitomises the resilience and determination of those who seek justice and progress despite the oppressive conditions imposed by corrupt leaders. His call to action is not just a personal plea but a reflection of a collective desire for transformative change. Bamba's insistence on continuing the struggle against the tyrant, despite the

dire situation, highlights the enduring spirit of rebellion that drives the quest for democracy and good governance. This narrative reinforces the importance of holding leaders accountable and advocating for a political system that prioritizes the welfare of the entire population.

Collectively, these literary works emphasise the urgent need for accountable governance and inclusive economic policies. Corruption's impact on land management, economic stability, and societal well-being is profound and far-reaching. Effective reforms must address these issues through strategic planning and a commitment to democratic principles. By prioritising transparency, inclusivity, and equitable distribution of resources, societies can work towards sustainable development and ensure that the benefits of natural and economic resources are shared fairly among all citizens.

Francophone African literature serves not only as a critique of current systems in Africa but also as a call to action for change. It urges readers to recognise the profound effects of corruption and mismanagement and to advocate for reforms that can transform the lives of those affected. Through the stories of characters like Bamba and the analysis of socio-economic impacts in works by Diarisso and Ngoye, readers gain a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in the struggle for justice and progress.

4.4. Disintegration of economic and socio-political infrastructures

The disintegration of economic and socio-political infrastructures in Francophone Africa is a theme extensively explored in various literary works, revealing a deeply critical perspective on post-colonial trajectories. The optimism of the 1960s, a period marked by newfound independence and the belief that Africa's future lay in African hands, was quickly marred by the entrenched interests of former colonial powers, particularly France. Dominique M'Fouillou's *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* encapsulates this trajectory:

En 1960, le Congo devint indépendant dans le cadre de la Communauté Franco-Africaine. Cette situation créa des

accords de défense et d'assistance économique entre la France et le Congo, ce qui permit à l'armée française (1) de maintenir sa base militaire à Brazzaville. L'armée congolaise (2) qui commençait à se former était sous les ordres de deux officiers blancs de l'armée française (Vent, p.9).

[In 1960, Congo became independent within the framework of the Franco-African Community. This situation led to the creation of defence and economic assistance agreements between France and Congo, which allowed the French army (1) to maintain its military base in Brazzaville. The Congolese army (2) in its basic stage of formation was under the command of two white officers from the French army]

Critics argue that these agreements signalled a continuity of control under the guise of cooperation, hindering genuine independence and fostering dependency. The literature emerging from this era exposes the nuanced and often insidious mechanisms through which former colonial powers retained influence over newly independent African states. M'Fouillou's narrative highlights that independence, a term loaded with promise, was frequently subverted by economic and military pacts that favoured the interests of the colonisers. The presence of the French military base in Brazzaville and the dominance of French officers in the Congolese army underscore a superficial transfer of power. The promise of self-determination was eclipsed by a reality wherein the Congolese army was under the command of two white officers from the French army, illustrating a puppet-like sovereignty.

This lingering dominance of colonial powers is also eloquently critiqued in the works of other Francophone African writers, who portray the economic and political instability that followed independence as direct consequences of neo-colonial arrangements. The rhetoric of mutual assistance and partnership, as M'Fouillou implies, masked the perpetuation of dependency. The defence and economic assistance agreements often translated to a form of modern

imperialism, where African nations were ostensibly free but economically tethered to their former colonisers.

M'Fouillou's exploration in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* serves as a microcosm for the broader African experience, where the promise of the 1960s devolved into a struggle against neo-colonial forces. His portrayal of Brazzaville, with its French military presence and economic ties to France, reflects the broader continental issue of compromised sovereignty. The depiction of defence and economic assistance agreements highlights the irony and betrayal felt by many Africans, whose hopes for genuine independence were dashed by these strategic ties that kept them economically and militarily subservient.

Moreover, the critical perspectives offered by Francophone African literature extend beyond the immediate post-independence period, tracing the long-term impacts of these early neo-colonial structures.

The persistent economic struggles, political instability, and social unrest can be seen as continuations of the initial failures of the post-colonial state to break free from the colonial matrix. As M'Fouillou poignantly illustrates, the *Vent d'espoir*, or "wind of hope," was but a fleeting breeze in the face of a storm of neo-colonial manipulation and control. The persistence of French military bases across Africa, justified by the supposed inadequacy of young African armies, reinforced political dictatorial regimes. Numerous studies (Decouty, 2008; Munyangayo, 2010; Bouanchaud, 2011; Chanda, 2019; Chafer, 2014; Taylor, 2019; Ndiaye, 2022; Faye, 2023; Haski, 2023; Valdiguié, 2023) have documented how these bases became tools for maintaining personal networks of interests between African leaders and their French counterparts, promoting political dependency and stifling democratisation.

Economic cooperation reflected significant imbalances that originated from colonial times. The initial economic structures in post-colonial African nations were designed in a way that did not emphasise African economic independence. Instead, they perpetuated a reliance on Western economic paradigms. M'Fouillou highlights this inherited struggle, stating,

Malgré la stabilité du régime d'un gouvernement d'union nationale (3) et une économie relativement viable, les maux

hérités de la colonisation demeuraient les mêmes : misère, chômage, injustice sociale, la vie chère (Vent, p.10).

[Despite the stability of a national unity government and a relatively viable economy, the ills inherited from colonisation remained the same: poverty, unemployment, social injustice, high cost of living]

This quote encapsulates the persistent economic hardships rooted in colonial policies, which entrenched systemic poverty and social inequalities. The impact of these colonial economic policies is further elaborated in Alimou Sinta's *Le sang pour l'alternance*. Through the character Faba's revolutionary rhetoric against a despotic regime, the author reveals,

Nous avons eu le malheur d'avoir un chef d'État qui n'éprouve aucune pitié pour son peuple. Plusieurs calamités ont marqué sa gouvernance, c'est la recrudescence de la criminalité, l'institutionnalisation de l'ethnocentrisme, la discrimination, les ordures qui font des victimes... (Sang, p.33).

[Our misfortune has been having a pitiless head of state towards his people. Several calamities have marked his governance: the resurgence of crime, the institutionalisation of ethnocentrism, discrimination, and garbage that claim victims...]

These words portray the multifaceted crises that plagued the governance of post-colonial nations, exacerbating the socio-economic challenges inherited from their colonial past. This worsening socio-economic landscape inevitably led to pervasive social unrest. *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* depicts the palpable discontent, stating,

L'aggravation générale des conditions de vie provoquait, jour après jour, dans l'ordre national aussi bien que dans l'ordre privé, un perpétuel désappointement. La misère était là, sans masque (Vent, p.14).

[The general worsening of daily living conditions in both public and private sectors led to a perpetual disappointment. Poverty was clearly noticeable everywhere]

The imagery in this quote underscores the relentless decline in living standards, highlighting the disillusionment and frustration that permeated society. The dire circumstances forced individuals into compromising their integrity in a relentless struggle for survival. M'Fouillou,

in *Le Quidam*, illustrates this degradation of societal values:

Nous vivons aujourd'hui dans une société dominée par la corruption, la concussion, la gabegie et autres maux encore, qui ne laissent, guère de chance au développement économique et social. Au développement de l'individu tout court (Quidam, p.25).

[Today we live in a society dominated by corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement, and other ills, which leave little chance for economic and social development. Little chance for the development of the individual in general]

This quote captures the moral decay and systemic corruption that became prevalent as individuals resorted to unethical means to navigate their harsh realities. The economic cooperation between African nations and Western countries mirrored these imbalances, further complicating the path to economic independence. Rather than fostering self-sufficiency, the economic frameworks established during the colonial period were maintained, reinforcing a dependency on Western models and support. The critique by M'Fouillou in *Le Quidam* and Sinta in *Le sang pour l'alternance* highlights the deep-rooted challenges that post-colonial African nations faced in breaking free from the economic chains of their colonial past.

The stark realities of post-independence governance are marked by institutional inadequacies, a far cry from the early expectations that independence would bring about significant improvements in

socio-economic conditions. Instead, disillusionment set in as governance structures failed to meet the needs of the populace. M'Fouillou captures this sentiment in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, noting that

Après trois ans d'indépendance, constataient les syndicalistes, nul progrès, nulle amélioration des conditions sociales des travailleurs n'avaient été amorcés. Ils tenaient le régime pour responsable. L'équipe gouvernementale était devenue le symbole de la carence. Le pouvoir d'achat était en chute continue et spectaculaire depuis la proclamation de l'indépendance, accompagné d'une augmentation du chômage à un niveau assez élevé (Vent, p.14).

[After three years of independence, noted the unionists, no progress, no improvement in the social conditions of workers had been initiated. They held the regime responsible. The government had become a symbol of deficiency. Spending power had been steadily and dramatically declining since independence was declared, accompanied by a significant rise in unemployment]

This pitiful observation underscores the widespread frustration and disappointment felt by many in the early post-independence period. Urbanisation only exacerbated these governance issues, leading to demographic imbalances and overwhelming the already fragile infrastructure. François Mbiyangandu Tshibila, in his work *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha*, describes the dire state of urban areas:

Ce que j'ai vu, c'est une cité qui se meurt. Une population sans cesse croissante assiste indifférente à la mort de sa cité. Les bâtiments officiels s'écroulent et les autorités ont l'air de ne rien voir. Le petit commerce omniprésent a pris la place des magasins où l'on achetait autrefois tous les articles qu'on voulait. Des enfants quittent l'école et remplissent les rues, et personne ne s'en inquiète (Destin, p.139).

[What I have seen is a city in a deadly decline. A continually growing population witnessing indifferently the slow-motion

death of their city. Official buildings are crumbling, and the authorities seem to turn a blind eye. Widespread corner-shops have replaced the supermarkets where one could once buy anything they needed. Children leave school and roam the streets, and no one seems to care]

Tshibila's portrayal is a haunting reminder of the neglect and mismanagement that have plagued city and town centres, turning once-thriving urban areas into decaying landscapes where essential services and amenities are woefully inadequate. This pattern of neglect is not confined to urban areas but is a pervasive issue affecting the entire nation.

Over the decades, the scarcity of basic amenities such as electricity, roads, and clean water has become a hallmark of post-independence governance failures. The promises of a better future that independence was supposed to herald have remained unfulfilled for most of the population. Instead of progress and prosperity, many citizens have faced a continuous struggle for basic survival amidst deteriorating living conditions. M'Fouillou's and Tshibila's works collectively provide a critical lens through which to examine the broader failures of post-independence governance. M'Fouillou's focus on the initial years of Congolese independence highlights the immediate disillusionment and the symbolic representation of deficiency that the government came to embody. Meanwhile, Tshibila's detailed account of urban decay extends this critique to the long-term consequences of neglect and poor management.

The systemic issues described by these authors reflect a deeper crisis of governance that goes beyond mere administrative inefficiency. They point to a lack of political will and vision necessary to address the root causes of socio-economic disparities and to implement sustainable development strategies.

The narratives of M'Fouillou and Tshibila serve as powerful testimonies to the lived realities of many citizens and as calls to action for meaningful reform and accountability in governance.

A critical examination of the fictional discourse on the state of post-independence African nations allows to notice a profound disconnect exists between the infrastructure and the demographic

trends within these countries. Novels reveal that more than six decades after gaining independence, some nations still grapple with the absence of fundamental necessities such as electricity, roads, and potable water. This persistent lack of basic infrastructure fuels a critical examination of the value and significance of celebrating independence that, thus far, has yielded little to no tangible social, economic, or political progress.

In Alimou Sinta's novel *Le sang pour l'alternance*, the character of Bamba, a young political activist, epitomises the frustration and disillusionment felt by many citizens. Bamba's protest is a strong critique of the stagnant and corrupt environment that hampers any potential for national development. He vehemently argues,

Je ne vois en rien l'utilité de fêter cette indépendance, soixante et un ans d'indépendance, le pays n'a ni électricité, ni eau, ni routes, ni de bons hôpitaux, ni de bonnes écoles, le chômage qui bat son plein, les crises politiques incessantes, l'immigration exponentielle car les jeunes désorientés et sans espoir préfèrent mourir à la méditerranée que de rester dans cet enfer permanent. Aujourd'hui nous avons un président qui a lutté pendant quarante ans pour la démocratie et une fois qu'il y accède il fait pire que les dictateurs qu'il a dénoncés ; à quoi bon de fêter tout ça (Sang, p.58).

[There is no point to celebrate this independence. Sixty-one years of independence, the country has neither electricity, nor water, nor roads, nor good hospitals, nor good schools. It has a rampant unemployment, endless political crises, exponential emigration of a disoriented and hopeless youth preferring to die in the Mediterranean Sea than staying permanently in this hell. Today we have a president who fought for forty years for democracy and once he attained it, he does worse than the dictators he once denounced; what's the point of celebrating all this]

Bamba's statement expresses succinctly a broader discontent that pervades the national consciousness. His perspective highlights the irony of celebrating an independence that has failed to deliver the promised improvements in living standards. The lack of essential services and infrastructure not only impedes everyday life but also exacerbates issues such as unemployment and political instability. The desperation and disillusionment of the youth, who risk their lives to migrate across the Mediterranean Sea in search of better opportunities, further underscore the dire situation. Bamba's critique also points to the betrayal of democratic ideals by those in power, who, despite having fought for freedom, perpetuate the same, if not worse, authoritarian practices they once opposed.

The sentiments expressed by Bamba are echoed by unionists in the novel, who offer a broader critique of the socio-economic landscape. These unionists emphasise that beyond the crumbling infrastructure, there are pervasive issues such as urban insecurity, job precariousness, and the rampant embezzlement and mismanagement of public funds. They argue that despite being in the twentieth century, their nation remains engulfed in darkness, both literally and metaphorically.

Nous sommes au vingtième siècle jusqu'à présent mon peuple croupi dans l'obscurité, pas de courant, pas d'eau, pas de bonnes routes, pas de bons hôpitaux, pas de bonnes écoles, pas de sécurité, pas d'urbanisme, pas d'emplois, aucune perspective, les deniers publics sont dilapidés sans contrôle, chaque année on vote des milliers de milliards qui n'atteignent presque pas le peuple à cause d'une administration pléthorique, lourde et corrompue, tous ces milliards sont quasiment détournés ou mal utilisés. Jusqu'à quand cette misère va continuer (Sang, p.124).

[We are in the twentieth century, yet my people are still in darkness, no electricity, no water, no good roads, no good hospitals, no good schools, no security, no urban planning, no jobs, no prospects, public funds are squandered without control, every year billions are voted on that barely reach the people due to a bloated, cumbersome, and

corrupt administration, all these billions are almost entirely diverted or misused. How long will this misery continue?]

This critique from the unionists paints a grim picture of a country mired in systemic corruption and inefficiency. The absence of reliable electricity and water, coupled with the lack of adequate healthcare and education, paints a stark contrast to the aspirations of independence.

The unionists' lamentation of urban planning failures and job insecurity further highlights the multifaceted nature of the crisis. The squandering of public funds and the pervasive corruption within the administration exacerbate the already dire situation, leaving the population in a state of perpetual misery.

The collective frustration articulated by characters in Sinta's novel is reflective of a broader disillusionment with the post-independence state. The promises of freedom and prosperity have been replaced by a harsh reality of unfulfilled needs and continuous suffering. This critical perspective challenges the very notion of celebrating an independence that has not translated into tangible improvements for the populace. It raises important questions about the efficacy of current governance and the true meaning of independence when the basic needs of the citizens remain unmet.

In *Les fleurs des lantanas*, Tchivéla Tchichellé provides a vivid depiction of the severe infrastructural decay plaguing his country. Through narrative details, Tchichellé exposes the dire conditions within essential services, particularly in the healthcare sector. He describes a scenario where surgery is performed under incredibly substandard conditions:

La chirurgie était dirigée par un assistant qui, avant d'opérer, se lavait les mains dans un couloir séparé de l'extérieur par une natte en lambeaux, mais, étant donné les conditions de distribution de courant (de dix-huit heures à vingt-deux heures trente, chaque jour), on suspendait les interventions chirurgicales entre vingt-deux heures et le lever du soleil (Fleurs, p.149).

[The head of surgery was an assistant who, before operating, had to wash his hands in a corridor separated from the outside by a tattered mat, but given the conditions of power distribution arrangements (from six p.m. to ten-thirty p.m. every day), surgical operations were suspended between ten-thirty p.m. and sunrise]

This image clearly reveals the inadequacies and dangers of a healthcare system crippled by unreliable power supply and poor facilities. The assistant's need to wash hands in a makeshift corridor further underscores the critical lack of proper medical infrastructure.

Beyond highlighting the disintegration of physical and economic infrastructures, francophone African novelists like Tchichellé delve into the broader collapse of governance and institutional integrity. In the same novel, Tchichellé paints a grim picture of a corrupt and morally bankrupt political elite. The powerful figures in the government are portrayed as self-serving individuals who exploit their positions for personal gain, often at the expense of the public they are meant to serve. This is epitomised by the character of Mr. Ayi Nama:

A la gauche du ministre de la justice se dressait le ministre de l'intérieur, oui, monsieur Ayi Nama, un sexivore enragé, qui compte à son actif dix-huit foyers disloqués, trente fermes dans les environs de Mabaya, des champs à l'est du pays, et surtout des comptes bancaires qui étouffent de leur trop-plein aux États-Unis, en Angleterre et en Suisse (Fleurs, p.83).

[To the left of the Minister of Justice stood indeed the interior Minister, Mr. Ayi Nama, a raging sex addict, with eighteen broken families under his name, thirty farms around Mabaya, agrarian fields in the east of the country, and especially heavily loaded bank accounts in the United States, England, and Switzerland]

This depiction not only highlights the moral corruption of the political elite but also underscores the vast economic inequalities perpetuated by those in power.

The contrast between the dismal state of public infrastructure and the opulence of the political elite is stark. While ordinary citizens endure daily struggles due to inadequate facilities and services, those in power live lives of excess and luxury. This dichotomy is a damning commentary on the failures of governance and the betrayal of the public trust. The narrative of Mr. Ayi Nama's numerous properties and overflowing foreign bank accounts serves as an indictment of the kleptocratic tendencies of the ruling class.

Tchichellé's portrayal of these issues is not merely descriptive but carries a deeper critical undertone. By detailing the grotesque excesses of the political elite and the corresponding neglect of essential public services, Tchichellé implicitly questions the legitimacy of such governance. The moral decay and corruption among the leaders create a climate of impunity and exacerbate the suffering of the populace. This critique extends beyond individual characters to encompass a broader systemic failure, wherein the institutions meant to serve and protect the public interest have become tools of personal enrichment for the few. The suspension of surgeries due to power cuts, as described by Tchichellé, is emblematic of the broader infrastructural and systemic failures. It reflects a reality where life-saving medical procedures are compromised due to something as basic as electricity, a situation that is both avoidable and unacceptable. This scenario also serves as a metaphor for the halted progress and stunted development caused by systemic neglect and corruption. The image of the assistant washing hands in a corridor separated by a tattered mat symbolises the makeshift solutions and compromises that become the norm in a failing state.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the wealth and moral failures of individuals like Mr. Ayi Nama serves to highlight the broader issue of misplaced priorities within the governance structures.

Instead of focusing on developing the country's infrastructure and improving the quality of life for its citizens, the focus is on personal gain and the accumulation of wealth. This misallocation of resources and attention leads to a vicious cycle of poverty, underdevelopment, and disenfranchisement.

In examining the pervasive influence of poor governance on the multifaceted decline, particularly the economic and socio-political fragmentation within francophone African countries, it becomes evident that novelists from this region draw heavily from real-life narratives. These narratives reflect the lived experiences and historical events that have shaped their nations. Dominique M'Fouillou, a notable author, encapsulates the turbulent history of Congo-Brazzaville in his works such as *La Soumission*, *Le Quidam*, *La salve des innocents*, *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, and *Le mythe d'Ange*.

In *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, M'Fouillou delves into a critical historical moment, the events of 1963 in Congo-Brazzaville. He articulates the significance of these events:

Il s'agit des événements qui, pendant trois jours, secouèrent le Congo de l'année 1963. Ces événements revêtirent une chaleur et une importance peu communes. [...] Chacun parle des TROIS GLORIEUSES sans savoir comment elles se sont déroulées et les livres scolaires ne leur accordent pas encore la place qu'elles méritent, dans l'Histoire du pays (Vent, p.9).

[It is about the events that shook Congo for three days in 1963. These events were of unusual passion and importance. [...] Everyone talks about the THREE GLORIOUS DAYS without knowing exactly how they unfolded, and the textbooks have not yet given them the place they deserve in the country's History]

This passage highlights the disconnect between the historical importance of these events and the public's understanding of them. M'Fouillou points out that while these three days were pivotal, their appropriation by revolutionary groups has obscured their true nature and significance. This appropriation and subsequent misrepresentation have prevented a comprehensive historical account, leaving the younger generation uninformed and the older generation with only a vague recollection. The failure to properly

document and educate about these events in school curricula perpetuates a gap in historical knowledge, contributing to the ongoing socio-political instability.

Fouillou's critique extends to the aftermath of such revolutions, where people's aspirations are often betrayed. After revolutions, corruption tends to infiltrate the new leadership, leading to a continuation of the vicious cycle of misgovernance.

This is poignantly illustrated in *Le Quidam*, where M'Fouillou observes,

Ce ne sont plus des révolutionnaires qui sont, aujourd'hui, les responsables de l'appareil de l'État, mais des amuseurs, des jouisseurs, des parasites, des profiteurs du socialisme. En fin des imposteurs. Pour réaliser leurs buts, ils entretiennent l'ignorance par la terreur, la terreur par l'ignorance (Quidam, p.35).

[Today, it is no longer revolutionaries who are responsible for the state apparatus, but entertainers, pleasure-seekers, parasites, profiteers of socialism. Ultimately, impostors. To achieve their goals, they maintain ignorance through terror, terror through ignorance]

Here, M'Fouillou underscores the disillusionment that follows the initial revolutionary fervour. The revolutionaries, who once seemed to be the harbingers of change, are replaced by opportunists and impostors. These new leaders, driven by self-interest rather than the common good, perpetuate ignorance and fear to consolidate their power. This perpetuation of ignorance ensures that the populace remains unaware and powerless to challenge the corrupt status quo.

M'Fouillou's narratives are a critical reflection of the cyclical nature of bad governance in Francophone Africa. They reveal how revolutionary movements, initially rooted in genuine popular aspirations, can be co-opted by self-serving leaders who perpetuate the very issues they once opposed. This co-optation and resulting governance failures are not only a betrayal of revolutionary ideals

but also a significant barrier to progress. The impact of such governance is multifaceted, affecting the economic, social, and political fabrics of these nations. Economically, bad governance leads to mismanagement of resources, corruption, and a lack of sustainable development. Socio-politically, it creates an environment of instability, fear, and ignorance, preventing meaningful participation and progress.

The narratives that M'Fouillou presents are a microcosm of these broader issues, reflecting the lived realities of those in Congo-Brazzaville and, by extension, other francophone African countries. Through his works, M'Fouillou not only documents these historical and contemporary issues but also provides a critique of the ongoing governance failures. His novels serve as both a record of historical events and a commentary on the enduring challenges faced by these nations. By highlighting the manipulation of historical events and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, M'Fouillou calls for a more critical understanding and documentation of history, as well as a more accountable and transparent governance structure.

The turmoil experienced by francophone African countries has resulted in a pervasive call for change, often materializing as military coups. This persistent instability and cyclical pattern of coups are critical points that novelists have not overlooked in their works, providing a literary lens to examine these political upheavals. In the novel *L'épreuve des urines*, the character General Bamboté seizes power under the pretext of restoring peace and good governance. The text states,

Le général Bamboté avait justifié son putsch par son désir de ramener la paix et la bonne gouvernance se laissait entraîner dans les dérives (Epreuve, p.18).

[General Bamboté justified his military coup by his agenda of bring peace and good governance. However, he was rather drawn into the same deviations]

This scenario is emblematic of the disillusionment that frequently follows such military coups.

Bamboté's initial justifications echo a common narrative among military leaders who promise reform but eventually succumb to the same corrupt practices and authoritarian tendencies as their predecessors. The recurrent nature of these military coups in Francophone Africa is further illustrated in *Le sang pour l'alternance*. Here, the novelist traces a sequence of power transfers, each marked by military intervention:

Plus de neuf longues années sont passées depuis qu'il a succédé à un capitaine impétueux et loquace arrivé au pouvoir par un coup d'État suite au décès du général, deuxième président à vie, vingt-quatre ans de règne, arrivé aussi au pouvoir par un coup d'État suite au décès du premier président à vie, père de l'indépendance, vingt-six ans de règne (Sang, p.9).

[More than nine long years have passed since he succeeded an impetuous and eloquent captain who came to power through a military coup following the death of a general, the second president for life whose rule was ended by his death after twenty-four years, who also had come to power through a military coup after killing the first president for life, father of independence, and ending his rule of twenty-six years]

This depiction underlines the entrenched cycle of coups, where each new leader emerges from the shadow of a previous regime, often promising change but ultimately perpetuating the same autocratic rule. These novels offer a poignant critique of the political dynamics in Francophone Africa. The portrayal of General Bamboté's failure to bring genuine change highlights a broader theme of political betrayal and the cyclical nature of military rule. Despite the initial promise of peace and good governance, Bamboté's regime degenerates into the same patterns of misrule that he sought to eradicate. This narrative reflects the reality that military coups, while they are ostensibly portrayed as a means to disrupt entrenched power, often fail to deliver lasting improvements and instead, perpetuate instability and corruption.

The detailed account in *Le sang pour l'alternance* provides a broader historical context, illustrating how each successive regime arises from the ashes of the previous one, all through violent means. This continuous chain of coups demonstrates the deep-rooted challenges in achieving stable and democratic governance. The death of each president leads not to a peaceful transition but to another coup, reinforcing a culture of violence and instability. The repetition of such scenarios suggests a lack of institutional mechanisms for peaceful transitions of power, which are essential for sustainable governance.

Francophone novels serve as a critique of the political stagnation and the failure of military coups to bring about meaningful change. They shed light on the underlying issues that perpetuate this cycle, including the lack of democratic institutions, pervasive corruption, and the personal ambitions of military leaders. The narratives suggest that true change requires more than just a change of leadership; it demands systemic reforms that address the root causes of instability.

Furthermore, these literary works highlight the human cost of political instability. The coups and the resulting regimes often lead to significant suffering for the populace, including repression, economic hardship, and loss of life. The promises made by coup leaders like General Bamboté become hollow as their regimes resort to the same repressive tactics to maintain power. This highlights the futility of seeking change through violent means and the need for alternative approaches that prioritize the well-being and democratic rights of the people.

In Francophone African countries, leaders who ascend to power through military coups often exploit these very coups as justifications to eliminate political rivals. This tactic, which contributes significantly to the erosion of state institutions and governance structures, is a recurring theme in the literary exploration of the region's political dynamics. The novel *Les fleurs des lantanas* also delves into this phenomenon by depicting how leaders manipulate ethnic divisions within the military to consolidate their power. The narrative describes a situation where

ethnicity becomes a tool to weaken the army's cohesion by ensuring loyalty to the dictator. The text states:

Le gouvernement derechef annonça avoir déjoué une tentative de coup d'État préparée par des officiers supérieurs, qui avaient été tous arrêtés. Ces militaires n'avaient pas accepté la nomination à la tête de l'armée du général Mabaku, membre d'une ethnie minoritaire, et traître (Fleurs, p.205).

[The government immediately announced that it had foiled an attempted military coup prepared by senior officers, all of whom had been arrested. These soldiers had not accepted the appointment of General Mabaku as head of the army, a member of a minority ethnic group seen as a traitor]

This quote illustrates how ethnic manipulation serves not only to secure the dictator's control over the military but also to sideline and delegitimise opposition within the armed forces.

Moreover, Tchivéla Tchichellé, in the same novel, highlights the pervasive use of alleged military plots as a strategy to retain power. He writes,

Un communiqué de la Présidence de la République annonça la découverte d'un complot visant à assassiner le chef de l'État et à déstabiliser les institutions de notre pays. La Nation éberluée apprit l'arrestation de quelques 'syndicalistes félons', d'un « quarteron de pantins universitaires » et, surtout, du 'traître assoiffé de pouvoir' le maréchal Sokinga (Fleurs, p.204).

[A communiqué from the State House announced the discovery of a plot aimed at assassinating the Head of State and hence destabilising the country's institutions. The nation was stunned to learn of the arrest of a few 'felonious unionists,' a 'couple of academic puppets,' and above all the 'power-hungry traitor' Marshal Sokinga]

This excerpt emphasises how the government manufactures threats to justify crackdowns on perceived enemies, thereby maintaining a climate of fear and control. The utilisation of coup narratives to eliminate political adversaries reflects a broader strategy of governance through division and fear. Leaders like those depicted in *Les fleurs des lantanas* use accusations of treason and ethnic disloyalty to undermine potential rivals and maintain their grip on power.

This not only weakens the military as an institution but also erodes public trust in governmental and state institutions. By framing their actions as necessary to thwart treasonous plots, these leaders legitimise their authoritarian rule and stifle dissent.

This tactic of using coup narratives to purge rivals has far-reaching consequences for the political landscape. It perpetuates a cycle of mistrust and instability, as each new leader fears potential coups and thus resorts to similar repressive measures. The constant threat of coups and the frequent purges they justify create a volatile environment where genuine political development is stifled. Instead of fostering a stable and democratic governance structure, the state becomes an arena of continuous power struggles, with leaders more focused on securing their positions than on addressing the needs of their citizens.

The ethnic dimension of these political manoeuvres worsens the situation of institutional disintegration. By promoting officers from minority ethnic groups and labelling them as traitors when convenient, dictators can manipulate ethnic tensions to their advantage. This not only divides the military but also fragments national unity. Ethnic favouritism and the scapegoating of minority groups undermine the potential for a cohesive national identity and fuel further conflict and resentment among different ethnic communities.

The literary exploration in *Les fleurs des lantanas* serves as a critical reflection on the destructive nature of such governance practices. The portrayal of leaders exploiting coup narratives and ethnic divisions to maintain power highlights the deep-seated issues within the political systems of francophone African

countries. It highlights the need for systemic reforms that prioritise transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness to break the cycle of coups and authoritarian rule.

Furthermore, the novel sheds light on the personal and societal costs of these political strategies. The frequent purges and accusations lead to a culture of fear and suspicion, where loyalty to the leader trumps competence and integrity. This undermines the effectiveness of state institutions and hampers the country's development. The portrayal of arrested officers, unionists, and academics as traitors reflects the broader societal impact of these purges, where entire segments of the population are marginalised and silenced.

In the narrative of *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, author Dominique M'Fouillou paints a picture of an initial optimism surrounding the post-revolutionary state, yet underscores the precariousness of such hope. The novel portrays the sentiments of the populace as they emerge from a tumultuous period, envisioning a future brimming with economic opportunities and societal progress. M'Fouillou illustrates this through his observation that

Sur le plan économique, l'avenir était à l'optimisme. Les illusions s'accrurent. Les journaux le disaient, les orateurs, dans les meetings, le clamaient, cela se discutait dans les rues. La politique du gouvernement conduirait à ceci : donner à chacun du travail. Partout, le cœur des hommes et des femmes était rempli d'espoir. On croyait à une nouvelle ère d'unité, de travail, de progrès. Tout le monde, avec une particulière amitié, applaudissait le Congo, le Congo de l'indépendance. Mais cela ne devait, hélas!, durer qu'un temps (Vent, p.10).

[Economically, the future was optimistic. Dreams were on the rise. Newspapers confirmed it, speakers at meetings echoed it, and it was even discussed in the streets. The government's policy would provide everyone with employment. Everywhere, the men and women's hearts were filled with hope. People believed in a new era of unity, work, and progress. Everyone with a particular love to the country applauded Congolese independence. But unfortunately, this was not going to last]

This passage reflects the widespread belief in a transformative era where independence would herald unity and prosperity. However, M'Fouillou's critical stance becomes evident as he implies that such optimism, while necessary, is fragile and susceptible to the realities of governance and societal dynamics. The narrative suggests that revolutions, no matter how idealistic their origins, must be continually defended against the encroaching shadows of past chaos. The author seems to argue that the true challenge lies not in the act of revolution itself but in sustaining its principles and achievements in the face of inevitable adversity.

The novel serves as a reminder that the initial euphoria following a revolutionary success can often mask deeper, unresolved issues. The short-lived nature of independence's hopes and dreams signifies a forewarning, a critical reflection on the temporality of the newfound unity and progress. This fleeting optimism, M'Fouillou posits, is threatened by the complexities of post-revolutionary governance and the perennial human propensity towards disillusionment and division.

Through this lens, *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* can be seen as a commentary on the cyclical nature of hope and despair in the context of national liberation movements. The struggle to maintain revolutionary ideals is depicted as a relentless endeavour, one that requires unwavering commitment and vigilance. Any lapse in this daily struggle, the novel suggests, risks a regression into the disorder and disunity of the past.

In broader terms, M'Fouillou's work resonates with the historical and ongoing struggles of many nations that have undergone revolutions. It echoes the sentiment that the aftermath of a revolution is often more challenging than the revolution itself. The real work begins after the initial success, in the form of building and sustaining the institutions that can uphold the new ideals of unity, work, and progress. This narrative challenges the reader to consider the often overlooked, arduous process of nation-building that follows the celebratory moments of revolutionary triumph. The optimism depicted at the beginning of the post-revolutionary period in M'Fouillou's novel is a common theme in literature about

revolutions. It reflects the natural human tendency to hope for a better future when a significant change occurs. Yet, M'Fouillou does not allow the reader to become complacent in this hope. Instead, he critically examines the ease with which this optimism can dissolve, reminding us that the promises of revolution are not self-sustaining.

The critical undertone in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* is a call to action, a reminder that vigilance and continuous effort are essential in the preservation and advancement of revolutionary gains. M'Fouillou's portrayal of the Congo post-independence highlights the necessity for an active, engaged citizenry that participates in the ongoing process of state-building. The ephemeral nature of the hope described in the novel serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of political and social progress.

In essence, M'Fouillou's narrative goes beyond mere storytelling; it provides a critical analysis of the post-revolutionary experience. It challenges readers to reflect on the nature of political change and the responsibilities that come with it. The initial optimism that fills the hearts of men and women, as described in the novel, is a crucial element of any revolutionary movement. However, sustaining that optimism in the face of inevitable challenges is where the true test lies. *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* thus becomes a crucial text for understanding the complexities of post-revolutionary societies. It serves as a reminder that revolutions do not end with the overthrow of an old regime but continue through the arduous process of building and maintaining a new order. The novel encourages a critical examination of the narratives of progress and unity that often accompany revolutionary movements, urging readers to remain aware of the ongoing struggle to uphold these ideals.

The novels *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, *Le Quidam*, *La salve des innocents*, *Les fleurs des lantanas*, *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha*, *Le sang pour l'alternance*, and *A l'épreuve des urnes* collectively offer a profound critique of the post-independence period in African countries. Through their narratives, these works provide a critical lens through which readers can examine the initial hopes and dreams that

accompanied independence, envisioning the emergence of better institutions and an improved quality of life. Despite the revolutionary means through which some of these nations achieved independence, the outcomes have often been marked by the fleeting nature of these hopeful sentiments. The anticipated transformation of economic and socio-political structures frequently gave way to disintegration and decline.

These novels provide invaluable insights into the complexities of political and social change in the post-colonial era. They emphasise that defending revolutionary ideals is an ongoing struggle. The optimism that heralds the dawn of a new era is merely the beginning of a much longer journey. The true challenge lies in the persistent efforts required to sustain and strengthen the institutions that uphold these ideals. This perspective is essential for understanding the enduring impacts of revolutionary movements and underlines the necessity of continuous vigilance in safeguarding their achievements.

4.5. Dysfunctional education and generational disillusionment

Through the generational conflict and the relentless pursuit of self-realisation, francophone African novelists offer readers a window into the inner lives of young individuals navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world. From the frustrations of navigating dysfunctional education systems to the indignities of unemployment and underemployment, authors bring to life the myriad challenges faced by youth as they strive to carve out their place in society.

These narratives provide compelling insights into instabilities through the ways in which systemic injustices intersect with individual experiences, shaping the life trajectories of young people across Francophone Africa. From the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities to the perpetuation of discriminatory practices and attitudes, authors highlight the ways in which systemic barriers inhibit the full realisation of young people's potential, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage across generations.

Generational disillusionment manifests in various forms, from apathy and resignation to defiance and rebellion. Through their

portrayal of diverse characters and perspectives, novelists offer nuanced reflections on the complex interplay between agency and constraint, hope and despair, as young individuals confront the harsh realities of their social and economic contexts. These narratives serve as potent critiques of the structural inequalities that perpetuate intergenerational poverty and marginalisation, hindering social mobility and stifling individual growth.

Education has long been heralded as the key that unlocks the door to freedom, enabling individuals to achieve intellectual autonomy by fostering critical thinking, encouraging inquiry, and facilitating informed decision-making. Through education, individuals learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Education empowers them to actively participate in society and defend their freedoms. Moreover, education fosters personal development, opening avenues to better-paid jobs and more stable careers, thereby liberating individuals from poverty and economic dependence. Francophone African novels frequently depict education as a provider of equitable opportunities, a tool by which a society can reduce social inequalities and offer everyone an equal chance to succeed.

In François Mbiyangandu Tshibila's novel, *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha*, the author illustrates this ideal vividly. He writes,

Marco pérerait. Par la magie du rêve, il se découvrirait médecin au terme de ses études dans la capitale, comblé de toutes les joies permises. La réussite! Directeur d'un grand hôpital de la capitale, il roulait dans une grosse voiture américaine, habitait une villa somptueuse, était entouré d'une famille heureuse (Destin, p.77).

[Marco was boasting. By the dream's magic, he sees himself as a doctor at the end of his studies in the capital, filled with all the joys he could think of. Very successful! Director of a large hospital in the capital, driving an American Sports Utility Vehicle, living in a sumptuous villa, and surrounded by a happy family]

This passage encapsulates the aspirations tied to education, and to the vision of transforming one's life through academic and professional achievements.

Tshibila acknowledges the transformative power of education, portraying it as a crucial driver of social mobility. Marco's dream of becoming a successful doctor, living in luxury, and enjoying a happy family life underscores the conventional narrative that education is the pathway to a better life. The reference to an "American luxury car" and a "sumptuous villa" symbolises the ultimate success and the material rewards that are often associated with high educational attainment.

However, Tshibila also presents a more nuanced and critical view of education. Despite its idealised role, he suggests that education no longer guarantees the social mobility it once promised. The author's depiction of Marco's dream as a boast suggests a scepticism about the attainability of such success through education alone. This reflects a broader disillusionment with the education system, highlighting its failure to consistently deliver on its promise of upward mobility and equity.

In analysing the broader context of this depiction, it is evident that Tshibila's work reflects the socio-economic realities and the limitations of the education system in contemporary African societies. The portrayal of Marco's dream juxtaposed with the harsh realities faced by many individuals reveals a critical perspective on the gap between educational ideals and actual outcomes. It suggests that systemic issues, such as economic disparities and lack of opportunities, undermine the potential of education to serve as an effective tool for social change.

Furthermore, Tshibila's narrative can be seen as a critique of the persistent inequalities within the education system itself. While education is supposed to level the playing field, in practice, it often perpetuates existing social hierarchies. The dream of success is not equally accessible to all, as factors such as socio-economic background, access to quality education, and systemic barriers play a significant role in determining one's educational and professional outcomes.

The novel's critical stance on education resonates with the

broader discourse on the role of education in society. Scholars and educators have long debated the extent to which education can serve as a catalyst for social mobility and equity. While education undoubtedly provides individuals with essential skills and knowledge, the structural inequalities within the education system and the larger socio-economic context cannot be overlooked. The insufficiency of training institutions represents a significant barrier to accessing education, particularly in regions where such institutions are scarce. This issue is vividly illustrated by N'Kaloulou's examination of Congo-Brazzaville in *Le Pousse-Pousse de Makélékélé*, a country with only one university, Marien Ngouabi University. N'Kaloulou notes the pressing need for additional higher education facilities, suggesting that it would be an excellent idea to build another university in the north of Brazzaville to relieve the congestion at Marien Ngouabi University. Given the Congolese population of five million, the current single university cannot adequately meet the educational needs of the entire nation.

Expanding higher education opportunities by constructing new universities in major cities such as Pointe-Noire or Dolisie could significantly alleviate the overcrowding at Marien Ngouabi University. As N'Kaloulou points out, these cities currently lack any higher education institution. The establishment of universities in these regions would not only reduce the pressure on the existing university but also make higher education more accessible to a broader segment of the population. Without such initiatives, it should come as no surprise to see young Congolese increasingly tempted to go abroad as a viable and attractive alternative.

N'Kaloulou's novel suggests that the trend of Congolese students seeking education abroad is notable, with traditional higher education locations in France, Canada, and Cuba regularly receiving a number of Congolese students in their universities. This inclination towards studying abroad is further bolstered by the recognition of certain African universities for their educational excellence. N'Kaloulou lists Dakar and Saint-Louis in Senegal, Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, and Libreville in Gabon as new

destinations gaining popularity among Congolese students due to the quality of education they offer.

However, while studying abroad presents a potential solution, it is fraught with challenges, primarily related to the inequitable access to opportunities. N'Kaloulou highlights a significant issue in the allocation of state scholarships, describing the criteria as "artistically vague." This vagueness creates an impression that only "the children of the good society" can secure these scholarships and access the supposed educational "Grail." Consequently, for most Congolese students, the local university remains "the only lifeline."

This scenario underscores the critical need for more equitable access to both local and international educational opportunities. The current system, perceived as favouring the elite, exacerbates educational disparities and limits the potential for a more inclusive academic environment. N'Kaloulou's observations suggest that unless these inequities are addressed, the benefits of studying abroad will remain out of reach for the majority, thereby perpetuating the cycle of limited access to quality education.

To provide a comprehensive solution, the narratives conclude that it is imperative to invest in the expansion of local higher education infrastructure while simultaneously reforming the scholarship allocation process to ensure fairness and transparency. Building new universities in key cities would democratise access to higher education, enabling more students to pursue their academic goals within the country. In parallel, establishing clear and equitable criteria for state scholarships would allow a wider pool of students to benefit from international educational opportunities, thereby fostering a more diverse and inclusive academic community.

Nonetheless, the state of education in Congo-Brazzaville faces significant challenges beyond just access. One of the most critical issues is the dilapidated condition of schools, which have deteriorated due to chronic underfunding and poor management. This decay in educational infrastructure presents a significant obstacle to both institutional and individual development. As schools fall into ruin, the lack of funding within the education sector

becomes a significant factor of exclusion, contributing to academic failure that can be directly attributed to the State's negligence. N'Kaloulou vividly describes the predicament of students trapped in financial instability:

En raison de sa précarité financière, l'étudiant éprouve un sentiment d'échec. Socialement dévalué, il passe désormais pour un pique-assiette invétéré. Il n'incarne plus ni l'avenir ni l'espoir de la société. Au sein de sa propre famille, ses statut et rôle sociaux se sont dégradés. Il ne symbolise plus la fierté de la famille tant il a cessé d'incarner l'image d'enfant prodige : celui pour lequel on imaginait le plus beau destin et qui semblait s'attendre à un avenir tout tracé (Pousse-pousse, p.24).

[Due to his financial precariousness, students feel a sense of failure. Socially devalued, they now pass for chronic scroungers. They no longer embody the future or the hope of society. Within their own families, their social status and role have degraded. They no longer symbolize the family pride as they ceased to embody the image of the prodigious children: the ones for whom the most beautiful destiny was imagined and who seemed destined for a bright future]

This quote captures the profound impact of financial instability on students' self-perception and societal roles, highlighting a crisis that extends beyond the educational sphere. The sense of failure that N'Kaloulou describes does not reflect a personal struggle only, but it is also a reflection of a broader systemic issue. Financial precariousness forces students to juggle academic responsibilities with income generation endeavours, often leading to compromised academic performance and increased stress. The constant struggle to make ends meet erodes their confidence and diminishes their sense of self-worth.

Traditionally, students are viewed as the hope and future of society, embodying the dreams and aspirations of their families. They are expected to achieve academic and professional success, lifting their families out of poverty and securing a better future. However, financial instability disrupts this narrative. The social devaluation

extends beyond the students themselves, impacting their families and communities. The inability to meet societal and familial expectations leads to a sense of disappointment and failure, both in their eyes and in the eyes of their families. They are no longer seen as the "prodigious children" destined for greatness. Instead, they become a source of concern and, sometimes, shame. The dreams of a bright future that once surrounded them fade, replaced by a harsh reality where survival takes precedence over academic excellence.

This shift in perception can strain family relationships, as parents and siblings grapple with the gap between their expectations and the students' actual circumstances.

The diminished sense of worth and potential that arises from financial instability is not just an individual or familial issue; it reflects a broader societal failure to support and nurture its future leaders. N'Kaloulou's observation underscores the urgent need for systemic change. To restore the sense of worth and potential in financially precarious students, society must address the root causes of their struggles. This involves increasing funding for education to ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

Furthermore, the issue of favouritism compounds the problem, rendering the education system incapable of fulfilling its fundamental mission. This pervasive issue undermines the notion of fair competition, essential to any functional education system. As N'Kaloulou astutely observes,

L'école, qui jouait le principal rôle d'ascenseur social, s'est progressivement abîmée au cours de ces dernières décennies dans une crise sans précédent, rendant fatalement évanescence la méritocratie (Pousse-pousse, p.24).

[The school, which played the main role of social mobility, has gradually deteriorated over the past decades in an unprecedented crisis, making meritocracy fatally elusive]

This deterioration has severely impacted the role of education as a means of achieving social mobility. The concept of meritocracy, which ideally should reward individuals based on their abilities and achievements, becomes a hollow ideal when systemic biases and favouritism are rampant.

Historically, education has been perceived as the great leveller, a means through which individuals from all walks of life could achieve upward mobility. In an ideal meritocratic system, students are judged on their merits, such as academic performance, creativity, and critical thinking skills. However, the creeping influence of favouritism means that these qualities are increasingly sidelined in favour of less equitable considerations.

Favouritism manifests in various forms, from nepotism in admissions processes to biased grading and unequal access to resources. The novel argues that students from affluent backgrounds often have advantages. While these advantages may not be inherently unfair, they become problematic when they overshadow the genuine potential and hard work of less privileged students. This imbalance creates a system where meritocracy is no longer based on individual effort and capability but on pre-existing social and economic advantages. Moreover, favouritism is not limited to overt acts of nepotism but also includes subtle biases that pervade the educational environment. Educational systems may favour students who fit certain profiles or who come from particular backgrounds. This can lead to a reinforcing cycle where privileged students receive more encouragement, better opportunities, and more lenient assessments, further entrenching their advantages.

The deterioration N'Kaloulou describes is not merely a surface issue but an alarming crisis that affects the very fabric of educational institutions. Schools and universities, which once stood as bastions of equal opportunity, are now arenas where personal connections and socio-economic status often overshadow talent and hard work. This shift has far-reaching implications, as the promise of education as an equalizer is systematically eroded. N'Kaloulou's assertion that the education system has entered an

"unprecedented crisis" highlights the severity of this issue. This crisis is characterised by a loss of faith in the fairness and efficacy of educational institutions. When students perceive that their efforts will not be rewarded equitably, their motivation to strive for excellence diminishes. This disillusionment can lead to a decrease in overall academic standards and a less engaged student body.

The impact of this crisis extends beyond individual disillusionment. On a societal level, the erosion of meritocracy in education undermines social cohesion and exacerbates inequality. Education is supposed to be the great equalizer, providing opportunities for all individuals to succeed regardless of their background. When this promise is broken, the social contract is weakened, and the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged widens.

N'Kaloulou's argument is that fostering a culture of meritocracy within educational institutions is essential. This involves creating an environment where students are encouraged to excel based on their own merits and where their achievements are recognised and rewarded fairly. Encouraging diversity and inclusion within the student body can also help to break down the barriers of favouritism, as a diverse student body brings a variety of perspectives and talents to the table.

N'Kaloulou describes the students' precarious situation in his novel with a keen focus on the systemic challenges they face. One prominent issue he highlights is the access to civil service jobs, which should ideally be determined by competitive tests. These tests are supposed to ensure that objectivity and equality are upheld, allowing the most qualified individuals to secure positions based on merit alone. However, N'Kaloulou reveals a starkly different reality.

In his novel, N'Kaloulou elucidates this corruption by stating that

L'accès à la Fonction publique par voie de concours - gage d'objectivité et d'égalité - est fortement biaisé, étant entendu qu'il faut avoir systématiquement recours à l'entremise d'un tiers pour trouver du travail dans l'Administration (Pousse-pousse, p.24)

[Access to the civil service positions through competitive tests - a guarantee of objectivity and equality - is heavily biased, as it is systematically necessary to resort to the intervention of a third party to find a job in the Administration]

This quote highlights the pervasive nature of corruption within the hiring processes. The reliance on intermediaries to secure employment not only distorts the intended fairness of competitive exams but also highlights a deeper systemic flaw. Nepotism and corruption become the unwritten rules, overshadowing merit, and hard work.

The need to resort to third-party interventions reflects a bleak reality for students who, despite their qualifications and efforts, find themselves at the mercy of an unfair system. This situation creates a barrier to equal opportunity, where connections and influence overshadow competence. Students, therefore, face disillusionment and frustration as their aspirations are constantly thwarted by a corrupt system.

N'Kaloulou's novel does more than just highlighting this issue; it delves into the consequences of such a flawed system. When jobs in the civil service are not awarded based on merit, the very foundation of governance and administration is weakened. Individuals who secure positions through corruption may lack the necessary skills and dedication, leading to inefficiency and incompetence in the public sector. This, in turn, affects the overall functioning of government services, diminishing public trust and exacerbating societal inequalities.

Furthermore, the novel underscores the broader implications of this systemic corruption. When young, educated individuals see that their success is contingent on corrupt practices, it breeds a culture of cynicism and moral compromise. The ideals of hard work and meritocracy become hollow, leading to a demoralised youth population. This not only hampers personal growth but also stifles national development, as the potential of talented individuals is wasted.

N'Kaloulou's narrative serves as a strong critique of a society where corruption is deeply entrenched. It calls for urgent reforms to restore fairness and integrity in the recruitment processes. The emphasis on competitive tests to ensure objectivity and equality must be reinforced with stringent measures to curb corruption. Transparent and accountable systems need to be established to rebuild trust and offer genuine opportunities to deserving candidates.

Additionally, the dilapidated state of schools and the inherent biases in the educational and employment systems have also been presented as collectively contributing to a sense of disenchantment among students. The lack of government funding not only hampers the quality of education but also leads to a broader social devaluation of education. Educational intended outcomes are no longer reflecting the future aspirations of learners, their families or society. This erosion of pride and potential can have long-lasting effects, as students who once held the promise of bright futures are reduced to symbols of systemic failure.

The novel calls for tackling favouritism and corruption that undermine the education and employment sectors. Implementing transparent and merit-based systems for both academic progression and job placement can restore faith in the principle of meritocracy. Ensuring that competitive tests and other evaluative processes are free from bias and external influence is essential to providing equal opportunities for all students.

This dynamic is also eloquently illustrated in *Kin-la-joie*, *Kin-la-folie* through the character of Maky Shimatu. Ngoye's novel argues that in environments where competitive tests are compromised by corruption, academic achievements fail to translate into professional success. Maky is portrayed as a thirty-two-year-old man languishing in poverty. His unimpressive curriculum vitae is emblematic of the mediocrity experienced by his entire generation. As the text notes,

Un petit diplôme et six mois d'un boulot arraché au chômage généralisé l'avaient pourtant exclu du sort commun des jeunes. Il avait cru à l'époque que la vie allait lui sourire. Depuis treize longues années s'étaient écoulées, il s'accommodait à la fatalité (Kin, p.23).

[With just a diploma and six months of a job snatched from a widespread unemployment had yet saved him from the fate commonly shared among young people. He had believed at the time that his life would be better. Thirteen long years had passed, he had powerlessly accepted the fate]

This quote encapsulates the disillusionment faced by Maky, reflecting a broader societal issue where the promise of education does not align with professional realities. Ngoye captures the struggles faced by young students in a challenging socio-economic environment. Maky is introduced as a promising young graduate whose initial achievements paint a picture of hope and potential. At the age of nineteen, he successfully completed his studies at the Ndjili vocational training school, earning a diploma in mechanics. This significant milestone not only highlighted his academic achievement but also positioned him as a standout figure among his peers. His accomplishments made him a source of pride in his neighbourhood, symbolising the potential for success through education and perseverance.

In pursuit of further professional development and to enhance his prospects, Maky took the ambitious step of enrolling in a polytechnic institute. His goal was to become a mechanical engineer, a profession that would allow him to turn his dreams into reality and provide a stable and prosperous future. This decision reflected his commitment to personal growth and his belief in the transformative power of education.

However, the reality that awaited Maky after his educational journey was unfortunately different from the promising future he had envisioned. Despite his best efforts and the qualifications that he had painstakingly earned, Maky's transition from education to employment was fraught with challenges. The job market did not welcome him with open arms, and instead, he found himself plunged into a prolonged period of unemployment. The text captures this descent into disillusionment, stating,

Maky s'engagea dès lors dans un chômage durable. Sans se nourrir d'illusions, il vint renforcer les lignes arrières du parti, à savoir la jeunesse-espoir-de-demain à l'avenir compromise (Kin, p.24).

[Maky then embarked on prolonged unemployment. Without any illusions, he joined the party to support its pillars as one of the youth-hope-of-tomorrow section, whose future is rather compromised]

This quote is particularly powerful as it encapsulates the systemic failures that thwart the ambitions of young graduates like Maky. Despite their educational attainments and readiness to contribute to the workforce, they are often met with a stagnant job market that offers little opportunity for professional success. Maky and his peers, once seen as the hope for the future, are now relegated to a state of unfulfilled potential and diminished aspirations. Their dreams of professional success remain elusive, trapped in a cycle of systemic inadequacies and economic stagnation.

This narrative serves as a broader commentary on the exasperation of many young graduates who find themselves in similar predicaments. Despite the promises of education as a pathway to success, the reality often falls short due to structural and systemic barriers. The story of Maky is not an isolated case but rather a reflection of a widespread issue where the hopes and dreams of the youth are continually compromised by an unresponsive and inadequate socio-economic system. In examining Maky's journey, one can discern the deep sense of frustration and disillusionment that pervades the lives of many young graduates. The initial promise of a bright future, symbolised by academic success and professional aspirations, gradually fades into a harsh reality of unemployment and underemployment. This transition is not a simple personal setback for individuals like Maky, but it is also a representation of a significant loss of potential for the society. The talents and skills of these young graduates, which could have been harnessed for economic and social development, are instead left untapped, leading to a pervasive sense of stagnation, and wasted potential.

Maky's situation is further complicated by his refusal to engage in corrupt practices to secure employment. His adherence to integrity, while commendable, ultimately contributes to his prolonged unemployment:

Il opposa cependant son intégrité foncière au recours aux

magouilles pour subsister. Treize ans après, il campait solidement au point mort (Kin, pp.24-25).

[However, he opposed his fundamental integrity to resorting to unethical practices for survival. Thirteen years later, his integrity was still unwavering]

This steadfastness, while morally upright, leaves him trapped in a cycle of professional inertia. The quote emphasises the harsh reality that honesty and hard work do not always yield the expected rewards in a corrupt system.

Maky's story is emblematic of a larger societal problem where academic qualifications do not guarantee professional opportunities. The disconnect between education and employment is exacerbated by systemic corruption, rendering the competitive job opportunity selection process meaningless. In such a context, professional success becomes less about merit and more about navigating a flawed system. This misalignment not only undermines the value of education but also demoralises individuals who, like Maky, adhere to principles of integrity.

The broader implications of Maky's experience are significant. His prolonged unemployment and the accompanying social and economic stagnation reflect a failure of the system to provide viable pathways for young graduates. The narrative suggests that without addressing the root causes of corruption and ensuring a merit-based system, the cycle of disillusionment and mediocrity will persist. Maky's resignation to his fate after thirteen years of striving highlights a profound sense of hopelessness that is pervasive among his generation.

The novel argues that transparency and fairness in the competitive labour market processes is crucial to restoring faith in the educational and professional systems. This would involve mechanisms to hold accountable those who engage in favouritism and corrupt practices. Furthermore, fostering a culture that values integrity and hard work is essential. While Maky's adherence to his principles is commendable, it should not come at the cost of

professional stagnation. Society must create environments where ethical behaviour is rewarded and where individuals can achieve success through merit rather than manipulation.

Ngoye's novel presents indeed a harrowing depiction of the unemployment crisis facing young Congolese graduates, a narrative that resonates with a broader social issue affecting numerous African countries. The protagonist, Maky, is emblematic of this generation of educated and ambitious young graduates, yet thwarted by a stagnant job market that fails to accommodate their skills and aspirations. N'Kaloulou's novel, similarly, addresses the tribulations of educated youth through the lens of real-life experiences, emphasising the systemic failures that lead to widespread professional disenchantment.

N'Kaloulou provides a meaningful example of the employment challenges faced by young graduates in francophone African countries. An employer laments,

Des jeunes diplômés qui recherchent un emploi dans les secteurs de la manutention, du ménage, de la surveillance nocturne... Mais c'est ton cas qui m'a le plus bouleversé, je ne sais pourquoi. Voici un jeune, de surcroît une femme, qui a cravaché dur pour parvenir à ce niveau, mais qui se heurte à un marché de l'emploi quasi inexistant pour ses compétences acquises (Pousse-pousse, p.273).

[Young graduates seek employment in manual handling, cleaning, night watching... But it is your case that touched me the most, and I do not know why. But there is here a young person, moreover a woman, who has worked hard to reach this academic level but is confronted with an almost non-existent job market for her acquired skills]

This quote highlights the dissonance between educational attainment and job availability, underlining a grim reality where even the most qualified individuals struggle to find employment that matches their expertise. The statement sheds light on the broader systemic issues that plague many developing nations.

Despite the significant strides in education, where young individuals strive to attain higher education degrees with the hope of securing a better future, the job market fails to accommodate their skills and aspirations. The young woman in the narrative symbolises the broader struggles of a generation that has been promised much but is delivered little. Her story is particularly compelling because it underlines the gendered aspect of employment struggles, wherein women often face even greater barriers in the job market.

The narrative further explores the disillusionment experienced by these young professionals, particularly those who have complete very advanced studies, including those holding qualifications from the western educational institutions. Upon returning to their home countries, they find themselves ensnared in a system that prioritises connections over competence. N'Kaloulou recounts,

Je me rappelle bien ce qu'il écrivait à mon père pour dire sa déception, non pas qu'il ne trouvait pas de poste, mais parce que nombreux étaient les cadres qui n'étaient cadres que de nom. Ils étaient sous-employés et très mal payés. Dès lors, pour gagner vraiment leur vie ou bénéficier des moyens d'un cadre supérieur, ils n'avaient point d'autre choix que de rejoindre le parti unique (Pousse-pousse, p. 274).

[I remember well what he wrote to my father expressing his disappointment, not because he did not find a suitable position, but because many of those in executive positions were only executives by name. They were underemployed and very poorly paid. Thus, to truly make a living or enjoy the means of a senior executive, they had no choice but to join the single political party]

This sentiment captures the frustration of returning graduates who face the dual challenges of underemployment and the pervasive corruption that stifles genuine professional advancement. This disillusionment is deeply rooted in the systemic corruption that plagues many societies. Graduates, despite their qualifications and

potential, often find themselves at the mercy of a system that values nepotism and loyalty over merit. This creates a vicious cycle where the most talented and hardworking individuals are sidelined, while those with the right connections ascend to positions of power and influence, regardless of their competence. The narrative highlights the personal toll this takes on individuals who have invested time, money, and effort into their education, only to find that their qualifications are rendered almost meaningless in a corrupt job market system.

The reference to the single party underscores the political dimensions of this issue. In many countries, political affiliations can significantly impact one's career prospects. Joining the ruling party often becomes a necessity for those seeking to advance professionally, leading to a situation where political loyalty trumps professional merit. This not only stifles innovation and productivity but also perpetuates a cycle of mediocrity and inefficiency. The young professionals, who return with dreams of contributing to their nation's development, find themselves trapped in a system that demands political allegiance rather than professional excellence.

Furthermore, the narrative illustrates the emotional and psychological impact of this systemic failure on young graduates. The sense of betrayal and disappointment is palpable as they grapple with the harsh realities of the job market. Many find themselves questioning the value of their education and the sacrifices they have made, as they struggle to reconcile their expectations with the reality they face. This can lead to a sense of disillusionment and hopelessness, as the gap between their aspirations and the opportunities available to them becomes increasingly apparent.

The frustration of these young professionals also has broader societal implications. The underemployment and underutilisation of highly educated individuals represent a significant loss of potential for any nation. These young graduates, who could be driving innovation and development, are instead relegated to roles that do not use their skills and talents. This not

only hampers individual progress but also stifles the broader economic and social development of the country. The narrative of N'Kaloulou, therefore, serves as a powerful indictment of the systemic issues that prevent nations from fully harnessing the potential of their most educated and talented citizens.

In this context, the narrative of N'Kaloulou becomes a call to action. It underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms that prioritize merit and competence over connections and political loyalty. By highlighting the personal stories of those affected by these systemic failures, the narrative humanises the issue and underscores the profound impact it has on individuals and societies alike. The story of the young woman and the returning graduates serves as a powerful reminder of the need to create a more equitable and just society, where opportunities are based on merit and hard work rather than connections and political affiliations.

Moreover, the narrative sheds light on the gender-specific challenges faced by women in the job market. The young woman's struggle to find employment despite her qualifications highlights the additional barriers that women often face in many societies. These barriers can range from gender biases and stereotypes to a lack of support systems and opportunities for women in certain fields. The narrative thus calls for a more inclusive approach to employment, where gender does not become an additional hurdle for those seeking to fulfil their professional aspirations.

In Kin-la-joie, Kin-la-folie, Ngoye poignantly writes,

Les forces vives du pays, des jeunes pour la plupart, quittent leur univers parce qu'elles sont confrontées à une détresse entretenue, parce qu'on ne leur accorde aucune chance. Pour voyager, elles sont obligées de bazarder la parcelle ou des biens familiaux à l'insu des parents, traduisant ainsi le désespoir de leur acte. [...] Ces jeunes se butent indistinctement contre la même impasse : composer avec le système et s'avilir, rester à l'écart et pâtir. Avec la même fin précoce aux allures d'hécatombe (Kin, p.170).

[The vital developmental synergies of the country, mostly young people, leave their universe because they are faced with sustained distress, because they are not given any chance. Even to travel they are forced to sell off the family plots or assets without their parents' knowledge, which explains how desperate their actions are. [...] These young people invariably encounter the same impasse: losing their integrity by compromising with the corrupt system or staying ethically on their guards and pay a heavy price. With the same sudden end mirroring a massacre]

This passage starkly illustrates the desperation and disillusionment driving young people to make drastic decisions, highlighting the systemic neglect that sacrifices the nation's most vital human resources.

In this context, the novel does not simplistically tell the story of individual despair but rather paints a broader picture of a society on the brink. The imagery of young people selling family assets in secret to escape their predicament speaks volumes about the depth of their desperation.

They are willing to strip their families of their heritage and security for a chance at something better, a chance that the society they belong to has denied them.

The critical moment of selling family assets symbolises more than a financial transaction; it represents a break from the past and a rejection of the future that seems preordained by systemic failures. The family plots or assets are not just economic resources; they are symbols of stability, heritage, pride, and continuity. By selling them, the youth are, in essence, abandoning their roots, driven by the realisation that their society offers no viable path forward.

Ngoye's narrative does not stop at highlighting the life hurdles that these young individuals must overcome, but it also delves into the choices they face, none of which leading to a positive outcome. The duality of choices reflects a broader commentary on societal structure where integrity and self-respect must be sacrificed for survival, or one must endure a life of marginalisation and suffering. The inevitability of a "sudden end" with the appearance of a "massacre" signifies the brutal reality that awaits

them regardless of their choice, emphasising the fatalistic environment created by systemic neglect.

This portrayal resonates with the broader audience as it brings to light the devastating consequences of an educational system disconnected from the job market and a labour market that does not value the potential and skills of its young people. The systemic neglect described by Ngoye is not unique to one society but is a universal issue that many nations face. It speaks to the global issue of youth unemployment and underemployment, where young people, despite their education and potential, are left to wander in search of non-existent opportunities.

The existential wandering depicted in *Kin-la-joie*, *Kin-la-folie* is not just a physical journey but a psychological and emotional one. It is a search for identity, purpose, and belonging in a world that seems indifferent to their existence. The disillusionment and despair are palpable, as these young people navigate a society that offers them no hope or support. The narrative forces the reader to confront the harsh realities faced by the youth and compels a reflection on the broader societal structures that contribute to this crisis.

Ngoye's novel serves as a powerful critique of the existing social and economic systems that fail to harness the talents and potential of the younger generation. By providing a vivid depiction of the youth's concerns, he challenges the readers to think about the long-term consequences of such systemic failures. The narrative urges for a re-evaluation of how education, employment, and societal values are aligned, emphasising the need for a more inclusive and supportive framework that recognises and nurtures the potential of all individuals.

Both *Kin-la-joie*, *kin-la-folie* and *Le pousse-pousse de Makélékélé* novels underscore a critical theme: the betrayal of intellectual ideals and the consequent moral and social decay. Young graduates, faced with limited options, must either align with corrupt political entities or resign themselves to perpetual unemployment. This dichotomy is vividly captured in the narratives, where the protagonists' struggles reflect a broader societal malaise. The educational system, ostensibly a pathway to

better opportunities, becomes a cruel reminder of unfulfilled promises and shattered dreams.

The systemic corruption that underlies these narratives is a recurring motif, serving as both a cause and consequence of the employment crisis. It creates an environment where merit is sidelined, and professional success is contingent upon political allegiance. This corruption not only undermines individual aspirations but also erodes the collective potential of the society. As Ngoye's depiction suggests, the youth, who should be the driving force behind national development, are instead rendered powerless and marginalised.

Moreover, the novels highlight the emotional and psychological toll of this crisis. The characters' experiences of rejection and underemployment lead to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair. This emotional landscape is vividly portrayed through their struggles and the tough choices they are forced to make. The societal expectation that education will lead to better opportunities is clearly contrasted with the harsh reality of the job market, creating a profound sense of disillusionment.

N'Kaloulou and Ngoye's works collectively advocate for a re-evaluation of societal values and priorities. They call for a system that recognises and rewards merit, supports young professionals, and leverages their potential for national development. The current state of affairs, as depicted in these novels, not only squanders human capital but also perpetuates a cycle of poverty and stagnation.

Faced with a stark dichotomy, young people in Zaire are often confronted with a painful choice: to compromise their integrity by participating in a corrupt political system or to remain marginalised and endure the associated hardships. This dire situation has led many educated youths, who once had promising job prospects within their homeland, to emigrate. Despite their qualifications and the opportunities that should arise from the country's rich deposits of strategic minerals, the domestic job market fails to meet their expectations. As such, they seek a more promising future abroad.

Ngoye's work encapsulates this sentiment, asserting that,
*L'étranger constitue à ce titre un cadre d'apprentissage,
une pépinière. Ils y apprennent la dignité que confère le
travail, le respect des lois, de la vie communautaire (Kin,
pp.170-1971).*

[Studying abroad constitutes a nurturing learning framework.
There they learn the dignity that hard work confers, respect for the
laws, and community life]

This quotation highlights the transformative potential of migration, underlining how the experience of living and working abroad can instil values such as respect for the law and a sense of solidarity for collective actions that are often lacking at home. For young Zairians, the education and personal growth they experience abroad contrasts sharply with the opportunities available to them in Zaire, making emigration an attractive, albeit difficult, choice.

The narrative presented by Ngoye finds resonance in other literary works, which similarly depict the allure of foreign lands in the face of local adversities. N'Kaloulou's novel, for instance, articulates the pervasive uncertainties that besiege the lives of young people, compelling them to seek fulfilment elsewhere:

*A présent, mille incertitudes assaillent les jeunes et les
obligent à quitter le pays dans l'espoir de trouver l'endroit
idone pour s'épanouir au plus haut niveau (Pousse-
pousse, p.24).*

[Now, thousands of uncertainties assail young people and force
them to leave the country in the hope of finding the ideal place to
flourish at the highest level]

This passage reflects the pervasive sense of instability and the resultant exodus of youth seeking stability and growth beyond their national borders.

The phenomenon of brain-drain, where the most educated graduates leave their home countries is portrayed as one of the most significant challenges to Africa's development. The migration

of these young elites results in a depletion of human capital, leaving behind a void often filled by less qualified foreign workers. François Mbiyangandu Tshibila poignantly captures this issue in his novel, *Le destin de Laurent Tshiosha*, stating,

La fuite des cerveaux, de tous les diplômés d'université qui émigrent et s'en vont enrichir l'étranger sous prétexte de chercher des conditions de vie et de travail meilleures. Or, qui voyons-nous venir chez nous prendre la place qu'ils laissent vacante? Des Européens, des Américains ou des Asiatiques, vrais ou faux techniciens, prétendant tout savoir et nous apporter le développement conçu à leur manière et dans leur intérêt! (Destin, p. 125).

[The brain-drain relates to all the brightest university graduates who emigrate and go to develop foreign countries under the pretext of seeking better living and working conditions. But who do we see coming to take the vacant places they left? Europeans, Americans, or Asians, real or fake experts, claiming to know everything and bringing us development they designed in their way to serve their interest!]

This excerpt reveals the irony and frustration felt by many undermine local autonomy and self-determined progress.

The issue of brain-drain in Africa is multifaceted, involving both external and internal migration patterns. Tshibila not only addresses the exodus of educated elites to foreign countries but also examines the internal migration from rural areas to urban centres. He emphasises the broader implications of this dual migration trend:

Soyons sincères. Personne ne nous aidera mieux que nous-mêmes. Cela vaut autant pour nos pays que pour nos villages. Ici, la fuite des cerveaux se traduit par la fuite des bras. Nous assistons impuissants à l'exode des meilleurs et des plus vigoureux d'entre nous vers les cités et les villes. À ce qu'on entend dire, il semble qu'ils n'y réussissent pas toujours (Destin, pp. 125-126).

[Let's be honest. No one will help us better than ourselves. This applies as much to our countries as to our villages. Here, the brain-drain translates into the loss of our best human resources. We witness helplessly the exodus of the best and strongest among us to cities and towns. From what we hear, it seems their dreams do not even always come true there]

This reflection points to a critical issue: the depletion of human resources is not limited to international migration but also occurs within the country. As the most capable individuals are drawn to urban centres, rural areas are further drained of vital human resources, which exacerbates regional inequalities, and instability, impeding henceforth comprehensive national development.

The brain-drain, therefore, encompasses a complex interplay of socioeconomic factors, including the pursuit of better living conditions, educational opportunities, and professional growth. However, the underlying issues driving brain-drain are deeply rooted in systemic challenges such as political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to quality education and healthcare.

The novels suggest that addressing the brain-drain requires to consider the socio-political context that compels individuals to seek opportunities elsewhere. Since political instability and corruption often create environments where talented individuals find it difficult to thrive, and therefore seek stability and career prospects abroad, the lack of investment in education should be addressed.

Furthermore, the influx of foreign workers, as highlighted by Tshibila, raises questions about the efficacy and intentions of foreign aid and development initiatives. While these initiatives are often framed as altruistic efforts to foster development, they can sometimes perpetuate a cycle of dependency. The presence of "real or fake experts" who design development programmes to serve their interests undermines local capacities and stifle homegrown solutions.

The thematic convergence of these literary works illustrates a shared narrative across different contexts: the emigration of young, educated Africans in search of better opportunities is both a symptom and a cause of ongoing underdevelopment. While their education theoretically aligns with job market demands due to the country's rich resources, the practical reality of political corruption and economic instability drives them away.

Ngoye, N'Kaloulou and Tshibila's texts collectively argue that the promise of education as a tool for national development is undermined by systemic issues. The potential for convergence between education and the job market is thwarted by corruption and instability, pushing the youth to seek fulfilment abroad. This migration, while beneficial for individual growth and learning - as Ngoye suggests, with an emphasis on the dignity and community life learned abroad - ultimately deprives their home countries of the very talents needed for sustainable development.

In any case, African novelists writing about the state of education as a guarantor of youth aspirations unambiguously deplore the changing times that do not leave behind achievements to meet the youth's needs. Otherwise, it is up to the youth to initiate revolutionary actions to claim their rights to education, employment, and general well-being.

In his work *À l'épreuve des urnes*, Dianguina Diarisso addresses a critical issue facing modern Africa: the necessity of engaging with and addressing the aspirations of the continent's youth.

He states,

Au regard du changement d'époque, il apparaissait nécessaire d'écouter la jeunesse et de satisfaire ses aspirations puisqu'elle représente la majorité de la population en Afrique. [...] Alors il n'était pas étonnant que des jeunes nés avec leurs indépendances puissent éprouver le besoin de contester des survivances encore tenaces d'un monde irrémédiablement condamnés à brève ou longue échéance (Epreuve, p.23).

[In view of the changing times, it seemed imperative to listen to the youth and meet their aspirations since they represent the majority of the population in Africa. [...] So it was not surprising that young people born with their independences might feel the need to challenge the still tenacious remnants of a world that is inevitably condemned to short or long-term extinction]

Diarisso's commentary highlights the demographic reality that Africa has one of the youngest populations in the world. This demographic shift makes it crucial for political and social systems to adapt and respond to the needs and aspirations of the youth. The author emphasises that ignoring this segment of the population is not an option; instead, their voices must be heard, and their aspirations met. The quote underscores the sense of urgency and the imperative for leaders to engage constructively with young people. This is a generation that has grown up in post-colonial Africa, free from the direct rule of colonial powers but still grappling with the legacies of colonialism. These young Africans are coming of age in a period marked by globalisation, and significant socio-political changes. Their experiences and expectations differ vastly from those of previous generations, who lived through the struggles for independence and the early years of nation-building.

Diarisso acknowledges the frustrations of these young people, who often find themselves constrained by outdated systems and structures. These systems, described as "the still tenacious remnants of a world that is inevitably condemned to short or long-term extinction," are vestiges of colonial and post-colonial governance that no longer serve the needs of a dynamic and youthful population. The youth's desire to challenge these remnants is a necessary step toward progress and innovation. They are pushing against the inertia of the past, seeking to forge a future that aligns with their ideals and aspirations.

The text suggests that this generational shift is inevitable and necessary for Africa's progress. By failing to adapt, political leaders risk alienating most of the population and stifling potential

advancements. The call to “listen to the youth” is a call for inclusivity in governance and policy-making. It is an acknowledgment that the younger generation possesses unique insights and innovative ideas that can drive socio-economic development.

Furthermore, Diarisso's insight can be seen as a critique of the current political landscape. Where traditional power structures often resist change, the resistance can lead to political stagnation and disenfranchisement. By emphasising the need to listen to and empower the youth, Diarisso advocates for a more responsive and adaptive governance model that can keep pace with the rapidly changing world.

In this novel, Dianguina Diarisso describes how young people formed reflection groups to set up mechanisms for popular animation and education in neighbourhoods, streets, public places, and markets to attract people to join their cause for change in the country. This is what Dianguina Diarisso calls the popular school and popular education:

L'école populaire avait considérablement contribué à l'éveil de conscience nationale. Chaque rencontre avait son thème. Ces différentes rencontres contribuèrent à l'éveil de la conscience populaire [...]. L'enseignement populaire prenant une envergure nationale, chacune des paroles Dakan était une lumière fulgurante qui élargissait l'esprit des hommes, semblable à un voyageur assoiffé qui se désaltère à une source fraîche (Epreuve, pp.83-84).

[The people's education had considerably contributed to the awakening of national consciousness. Each meeting had its theme. These different meetings contributed to the awakening of people's consciousness [...]. Social education took on a national scale, each word from Dakan was enlightening and broadening people's minds, like a thirsty traveller quenching himself at a fresh water source]

African novelists, particularly those writing about the state of education, present a critical view of the times, lamenting the lack of progress in fulfilling the aspirations of the youth. They portray education as a crucial element in empowering the youth and addressing their needs. They share a common concern for the socio-economic and political disenfranchisement of the youth. They highlight the critical need for accessible and relevant education as a foundation for addressing broader issues of unemployment, inequality, and social justice.

In the context of persistent disintegration and dysfunctional education systems, coupled with generational disillusionment, many francophone African novelists are voicing a compelling need for the youth to take proactive and revolutionary actions to secure their rights to education, employment, and overall well-being. These authors, through their works, emphasise that the youth must not only recognize their disenfranchisement but also actively engage in transformative efforts to overcome these systemic barriers.

The revolutionary actions these novelists advocate for are not merely expressions of frustration or rebellion; rather, they are meaningful calls for immediate and significant change. The urgency in their writings reflects a deep understanding of the socio-economic challenges faced by the youth in Francophone Africa. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing inadequate educational facilities, high unemployment rates, and a general lack of opportunities for personal and professional growth. The authors argue that to address these issues effectively, the youth must be equipped with the tools and the mindset necessary to drive societal transformation.

However, for these revolutionary actions to be truly impactful, they must be grounded in a long-term vision. This vision should focus on empowering the youth to contribute to building a more democratic, equitable, and prosperous future. But this requires a strategic framework that guides these efforts. The novelists suggest that this framework should include comprehensive educational reforms, robust economic policies, and the establishment of institutions that promote justice and equality.

Nevertheless, the current state of education in many Francophone African countries is marred by underfunding, outdated curricula, and a lack of qualified teachers. Addressing these issues requires a commitment to investing in education at all levels. Improving the quality of education will not only equip young people with the skills they need to compete in the global economy but also foster a culture of critical thinking and innovation. Additionally, economic policies must also be re-evaluated to ensure that they create opportunities for the youth. High unemployment rates are a significant barrier to economic stability and personal fulfilment. Governments need to implement policies that stimulate job creation, and support entrepreneurship. By creating a diverse and dynamic economy, francophone African countries can offer their youth a future with greater opportunities and less reliance on external aid.

The establishment of institutions that promote justice and equality is another critical component of this long-term vision. These institutions should be designed to protect the rights of all citizens, ensure fair access to resources, and uphold the rule of law. This requires not only legislative changes but also a cultural shift towards transparency, accountability, and civic engagement.

Unfortunately, the political environment in Francophone Africa still lacks the democratic maturity required to support such transformative changes. The democratic landscape is often marred by issues of accessibility to the political space, where constitutional changes are frequently manipulated to maintain power. This poses a grave risk to the status quo and leads to institutional instability. Many leaders prioritise their personal or party interests over the common good, resulting in policies that entrench inequality and stifle progress.

The problem of accessibility to the political space is particularly concerning. In many francophone African countries, the political system is dominated by a small elite who have the resources and connections to maintain their grip on power. This makes it difficult for new voices to be heard. Electoral processes are often flawed, with accusations of rigging, voter intimidation, and

other forms of manipulation. This undermines the credibility of the democratic system and discourages young people from participating in politics.

Finally, constitutional changes that are designed to maintain power further exacerbate the problem of social justice. In some countries, leaders have amended constitutions on many occasions to extend their terms in office, effectively undermining the principles of democracy. These actions create a sense of hopelessness and frustration among the youth, who see their future being jeopardised by leaders who are unwilling to relinquish power. This not only leads to political instability but also erodes trust in public institutions.

4.6. Constitutional changes and institutional instability

Literary works serve as fertile ground for dissecting the complexities inherent in post-independence state-building endeavours across Francophone Africa. From Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Senegal, and Guinea Conakry, authors portray compelling narratives that illuminate the multifaceted challenges of governance and political transformation. This section examines the interplay between constitutional changes and the grievances they provoke within the novels under examination. These narratives provide a platform for exploring the myriad ways in which constitutional changes intersect with broader socio-political dynamics, including issues of power, legitimacy, political ethics, and representation.

The adoption of Western democratic principles in the African political arena was initially perceived as the dawn of a new era, marking the end of colonial abuses and the demise of dynastic and hereditary practices prevalent in pre-colonial kingdoms. There was a surge of optimism as the prospect of power transfer seemed imminent. However, the reality of francophone African independence soon painted a different picture, characterised by the emergence of single-party states. The dissolution of these states often necessitated military coups, signalling a tumultuous political landscape and trajectory.

The persistence of these political strategies can be traced back to the colonial legacy, where the structures of power were inherently exploitative and oppressive. Post-independence leaders, in many cases, inherited these structures and adapted them to serve their interests. The single-party state became a common feature across the continent, as leaders sought to consolidate power and eliminate political opposition. The suppression of dissent and the manipulation of electoral processes became standard practices, undermining the democratic principles that independence was supposed to herald.

The wave of multi-party systems that swept across Africa in the 1990s was hailed as a return to free and fair elections. However, this period was marred by rampant electoral manipulations.

If the 1990s brought a wave of democratisation across Africa, it was driven by internal demands for change and external pressures from international organisations and France as a former colonial power. The international community, often prioritising stability over democratic principles, frequently turned a blind eye to these abuses, further entrenching the power of authoritarian leaders. Some dictators who rose to power in the 1980s managed to cling to power, persisting into the present day. In this regard, Paul Biya of Cameroon (1982), Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo-Brazzaville (8 February 1979 - 31 August 1992 and since 25 October 1997), Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea (1979), and Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda (1986) reflect those trends. The recent resurgence of military coups, spanning from the Sahel to the Sub-Saharan region, starkly underscores the ongoing challenges faced by democracy in Africa.

Francophone novelists have keenly observed this climate of political tension and disillusionment, using their narratives to expose the strategies employed by leaders to maintain power in Africa. These strategies often include electoral fraud and constitutional changes aimed at extending presidential terms. Characters within these novels frequently revolt against the blatant disregard for democratic principles. They highlight various tactics, such as political personalisation through discursive manipulation,

fostering protective relationships with former colonial powers, effectively paying for the silence of the international community in the face of repression, and altering constitutions to secure prolonged tenures in office.

In *Le sang pour l'alternance*, Alimou Sinta poignantly exposes the manoeuvres and repercussions of disregarding constitutional mandates. The protagonists in Sinta's work perceive such actions as a grave insult to the nation. For instance, a passage captures their sentiments:

Nous pensons que c'est une insulte et une trahison de notre peuple que de traiter de chiffon la constitution sur la base de laquelle Décon a gouverné pendant ces dix ans. Maintenant qu'il a épuisé ses mandats conformément à la constitution de mai 2010, celle-ci n'est qu'un chiffon qui ne mérite que la poubelle. Pendant dix ans c'était la meilleure constitution du monde et maintenant que ces mandats sont finis, non c'est du caca. C'est l'occasion de remercier les constitutionnalistes de 2010 qui ont verrouillé toute révision sur la durée et le nombre de mandats présidentiels (Sang, p.37).

[We believe it is an insult and a betrayal of our people to treat like a rag the constitution, on which Décon himself has governed for these ten years. Now that he has exhausted his terms in accordance with the May 2010 constitution, the constitution is nothing but a rag that can only deserves the wastebin. For ten years it was the best constitution in the world, and now that his terms are over, it is just rubbish. It is time to thank the 2010 constitutionalists who locked any revision on the duration and number of presidential terms]

This excerpt encapsulates the anxiety of people who view the limitation of political terms as a crucial safeguard against dictatorial excesses. The novel intricately reveals the contagion of these political manoeuvres. Sinta introduces the character of Blase, likely a reference to Blaise Compaoré, who came to power in 1987 by overthrowing his former comrade and friend, Thomas Sankara,

only to lose power due to street pressure in 2014. Blase is depicted as the strategist for the fictional Republic of Guiny's president, Décon, regarding the indefinite extension of presidential terms in the region and beyond:

Il reçut la visite exceptionnelle d'un président de la sous-région, appelé Blase, qui était arrivé au pouvoir il y a plus de vingt-six ans. Il avait fait une escale pour saluer son poulain qui voulait devenir comme lui. C'était quelqu'un de non bavard, il ne riait presque pas. Des indiscrétions racontaient que c'était un grand sanguinaire, il aurait tué son meilleur copain pour avoir le pouvoir. Personne ne l'osait au pays. Il inspirait la crainte dans tout le continent et même en occident on lui vouait un grand respect (Sang, p.11).

[He received an exceptional visit from a sub-regional president named Blase, who had come to power more than twenty-six years ago. His stop was to greet his protégé who wanted to become like him. He was not talkative, and rarely laughed. Insiders said he was a great bloodthirsty man, who had killed his best friend to gain power. No one dared challenge him in his country. He inspired fear throughout the continent and even in the West; he was highly respected]

This passage vividly illustrates the contagious nature of constitutional changes in Africa. When one African president alters the constitution without facing international condemnation, he encourages others to follow suit, thereby avoiding isolation in these schemes. This dynamic is likely to foster a culture of impunity and perpetuate the cycle of authoritarianism.

The novel *Le sang pour l'alternance* highlights the disconnect between the rhetoric of democracy and the reality of governance in many African states. The protagonists' frustration with the manipulation of the constitution reflects a broader disillusionment with the political process. The character of Blase symbolises the enduring legacy of authoritarianism and the challenges of breaking free from its grip.

The resurgence of military coups in recent years is a stark reminder that the struggle for democracy in Africa is far from over. These coups often arise from a combination of factors, including economic hardship, corruption, and the perceived failure of civilian governments to address the needs of their populations. While some coups are driven by genuine desires for reform, others simply replace one form of authoritarianism with another.

The novels argue that the role of the international community is crucial in this context. The selective application of democratic principles, where strategic interests often overshadow commitments to human rights and good governance, has contributed to the persistence of authoritarian regimes. Countries that are deemed strategically important, whether for their natural resources or geopolitical significance, often receive more lenient treatment despite blatant abuses of power.

The character of Blase in Sinta's novel exemplifies this dynamic. His ability to inspire fear and command respect both within the continent and internationally underlines the complexity of international relations and the contradictory nature of foreign policy. The international community's silence in the face of constitutional manipulations and electoral fraud sends a wrong message that such actions are tolerable, if not acceptable.

In examining the strategies used to stay in power, novelists like Sinta reveal the complex political, economic, and social factors that sustain authoritarian regimes. Electoral fraud, constitutional changes, and the suppression of dissent are not isolated practices but are interconnected elements of a broader system of power. The personalisation of politics, where leaders become synonymous with the state, further hinders efforts to establish genuine democratic governance.

The novel *Le sang pour l'alternance* also argues that by controlling the narrative, leaders can justify their actions and delegitimise opposition. This manipulation of discourse is evident in the way constitutions are treated - as tools to be used when convenient and discarded when they no longer serve the interests of those in power. The protagonists' disdain for this practice

highlights the need for a political culture that respects the rule of law and values democratic principles.

In addition to political personalisation, the novel explores the relationships between African leaders and former colonial powers. These relationships often involve a complex interplay of dependency and manipulation. By maintaining close ties with former colonial powers, African leaders can secure economic and political support, which in turn helps them to maintain their grip on power. This dynamic creates a cycle where the international community, particularly former colonial powers, becomes complicit in the perpetuation of authoritarianism.

The silence of the international community in the face of repression is a recurring theme in all the fifteen novels under examination. This silence can be seen as a form of complicity, where the international community prioritises stability and strategic interests over democratic principles and human rights. The novels call into question the effectiveness of international mechanisms designed to promote democracy and protect human rights, highlighting the need for a more consistent and principled approach.

Constitutional changes, as depicted in the novel *Le sang pour l'alternance*, are a particularly pernicious form of political manipulation. By altering the fundamental rules of the political system, leaders can entrench their power and limit the possibility of genuine democratic change. The novel's depiction of Blase's influence on other leaders underscores the contagious nature of this practice. When one leader successfully changes the constitution without facing significant consequences, it often triggers perceptions of double-standard, and sets a precedent that others are likely to follow.

The impact of these constitutional changes extends beyond the immediate political landscape. They undermine public trust in the political system and erode the legitimacy of democratic institutions. When people see that constitutions can be easily manipulated to serve the interests of a few, it fosters cynicism and disengagement from the political process. This erosion of trust is

particularly damaging in countries where democratic traditions are still in the process of being established.

In the face of the international community's silence, patriots often take the risk of challenging dictatorships. This theme is vividly portrayed in the novel through the character of Faba, a political activist who stands resolutely against the autocratic rule of President Décon. Faba boldly confronts Décon's emissaries, demanding adherence to the 2010 constitution which limits the president to two terms. He asserts,

Nous voulons que Décon se limite à ses deux mandats présidentiels conformément à la constitution de 2010. Que cette assemblée nationale soit dissoute parce que nous savons tous qu'il n'y a pas de véritables élections législatives sans la véritable opposition qui a été exclue et plusieurs de ses militants assassinés (Sang, p.105).

[We want Décon to comply with his two presidential terms limit in accordance with the 2010 constitution. This national assembly must be dissolved because we all know there are no real legislative elections without the real opposition as it has been excluded and many of its militants assassinated]

This statement encapsulates the core grievances of the opposition: the unconstitutional extension of presidential terms and the systematic exclusion and elimination of genuine political opposition. Faba and his comrades' demand for the dissolution of the national assembly underscores the lack of legitimate representation and the pervasive corruption that has rendered legislative elections a mere facade. The assassination of opposition militants highlights the extreme measures taken by Décon's regime to maintain its grip on power, effectively silencing dissent through violence and intimidation.

Cornered and seeking to consolidate his power, President Décon turns to President Blase of the neighbouring country for advice. Décon's admiration for Blase is palpable as he expresses his respect and envy,

Tu sais je t'estime beaucoup, tu es un véritable modèle pour moi. Puisque te rencontrer est une opportunité rare, aujourd'hui tu vas me donner tous tes secrets qui font que tu as longtemps duré au pouvoir. Et le plus beau dans tout ça, c'est que ton pays est calme et tu pars dans le monde entier comme bon te semble. Tu es dans toutes les chancelleries avec tout le respect du monde ! (Sang, pp.11-12).

[I respect you a lot, you know; you are a real role model for me. Since meeting you is for me a rare opportunity, today you will share with me all your secrets for staying in power for so long.

And the best part is that your country is calm. Additionally, you travel the world as you please, and enjoy a warm welcome in all the chanceries in the world!]

Blase's response to Décon reveals a calculated and ruthless approach to maintaining power, rooted in Machiavellian principles. He advises Décon to embody both the cunning of a fox and the ferocity of a lion:

Pour être un président à vie, il faut suivre entre autres les conseils de Machiavel. Il faut être un renard et un lion ! [...] Il faut que tu aies plusieurs visages, il faut que tu sois comme un renard c'est-à-dire un vrai malin qui observe tout autour de toi pour détecter les ennemis et les menaces que tu vas dévorer avec ton visage de lion. Il faut que tu regardes avec attention chaque homme surtout celui qui rôde autour de toi ; il faut avoir un véritable œil pour connaître au peigne fin toutes les organisations qui sont sur ton territoire, qu'elles soient publiques ou privées, il faut les observer dans l'ensemble sans en négliger aucune ; il faut aussi observer et analyser toute situation qui se présente pour comprendre tous ses contours, ne néglige aucun détail... (Sang, p.12).

[To be a lifelong president, you must follow Machiavelli's advice among others. You must be both a fox and a lion! [...] You must display many faces. You must be like a fox, a real cunning observer who detects enemies and threats to devour with your lion face. You must carefully watch every person, especially those around you; you must have an eagle eye to know everything going on within all organisations operating on your territory, whether public or private; you must scan them all without neglecting any; you must also watch and analyse every situation to understand every aspect without missing any detail...]

Blase's advice emphasises the importance of surveillance, deceit, and brutality. By urging Décon to "display many faces", Blase is advocating for a duplicitous approach, one where the leader must present different personas to different audiences to manipulate and control them effectively. The metaphor of the fox and the lion is particularly telling. The fox symbolises strategic cunning and the ability to outwit adversaries, while the lion represents sheer power and the capacity to instil fear. This duality is crucial for a dictator who must navigate the complexities of internal and external threats to his rule.

Furthermore, Blase's recommendation to "carefully watch every person, especially those around you" highlights the pervasive paranoia that characterises autocratic regimes. Dictators often fear betrayal from within their inner circles, leading to a culture of mistrust and constant vigilance. The insistence on monitoring every organisation within the country, whether public or private, speaks to the totalitarian nature of such regimes, where control over information and activities is paramount. The comprehensive surveillance and analysis of every situation reflect a deep-seated need to pre-emptively identify and neutralise potential threats.

In critically extending this analysis, it is important to consider the broader implications of these strategies on the society and the international community. The use of Machiavellian tactics by dictators like Décon and Blase not only perpetuates their own

power but also entrenches a system of governance characterised by fear, repression, and violence. The exclusion and assassination of opposition members create a climate of terror, stifling any form of dissent and ensuring that the populace remains subjugated.

The international community's silence, as mentioned at the outset, plays a crucial role in enabling such regimes. The lack of external pressure or condemnation allows dictators to operate with impunity. This silence can stem from various factors, including geopolitical interests, economic dependencies, or simply a reluctance to intervene in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations. However, this non-interventionist stance often results in prolonged suffering for the people under these autocratic regimes.

On a societal level, the strategies advocated by Blase foster an environment of mistrust and division. When leaders rule through fear and deceit, it undermines the social fabric, eroding trust among people and between the governed and the government. The culture of surveillance and paranoia trickles down, affecting everyday interactions and relationships. People become wary of expressing their true opinions, fearing retribution, and this stifles the development of a vibrant civil society.

The manipulation and control of information play a critical role in maintaining autocratic power. By controlling the narrative and suppressing dissenting voices, dictators can shape public perception and maintain an illusion of stability and legitimacy. The international community's acceptance of this facade, as indicated by Blase's ability to travel freely and be welcomed with respect, further hinders efforts to challenge such regimes. It highlights the disconnection between the image projected to the outside world and the reality experienced by the citizens.

Although the advice given by Blase to Décon reveals the calculated and ruthless measures employed by dictators to maintain their power, Faba's courageous stand against Décon's unconstitutional rule nevertheless underscores the importance of domestic resistance, even in the face of dire consequences. The struggle for democratic change in Africa, despite the oppressive yoke of dictatorship, remains a poignant and urgent reality. The

quest for stability in economic, social, and political institutions is deeply intertwined with the desire for democratic governance. In today's interconnected world, people in the twenty-first century are armed with access to diverse information sources. They have hence a clear vision of what constitutes good leadership. Dianguina Diarisso, in his novel *A l'épreuve des urnes*, eloquently articulates this vision:

Pour être un chefléader, pour bâtir une nation forte et stable dans la voie quotidienne du progrès, il faut l'élaboration d'une politique fiable, honnête, cohérente et garantissant la croissance stable économique et gérant les libertés démocratiques en quelque sorte (Epreuve, pp.149-150).

[To be a leader and build a strong and stable nation within the daily expectations regarding progress, it requires a reliable honest, and coherent developmental policies guaranteeing a stable economic growth and, in some way, fostering democratic freedoms]

This ideal of leadership is not just a theoretical construct but a guiding principle that fuels the efforts of political activists and citizens alike. In the spirit of stabilising institutions through the defence of democracy, Alimou Sinta's novel *Le Sang pour l'alternance* eloquently portrays the struggle of political activists in the fictional republic of Guiny. These activists decide to establish a political platform in coalition to block President Décon's attempts to amend the constitution and extend his time in power. The novel serves as a profound commentary on the dynamics of political resistance and the power of collective action.

The character Faba, who is deeply invested in the fight against the constitutional terms change, travels to the headquarters of the CNDC, the National Coalition for the Defense of the Constitution. This coalition is portrayed as a diverse and inclusive movement, bringing together people from all walks of life. Sinta describes the scene of Faba making a trip to

au siège d'une plateforme, appelée CNDC, Coalition nationale pour la défense de la constitution, créée afin

d'empêcher Décon d'adopter une nouvelle constitution dans le seul but de s'éterniser au pouvoir. [...] La flamme de la résistance était détenue par des personnes de tous les âges, des deux sexes, de toutes les ethnies, de toutes les doctrines politiques, de toutes les confessions et de toutes les catégories professionnelles dont les leaders, fermes et engagés, s'étaient réunis autour d'une table ronde pour discuter de la situation qui prévalait et des stratégies à mettre en œuvre (Sang, p.37).

[the headquarters of CNDC, the National Coalition for the Defense of the Constitution platform, created to prevent Décon from adopting a new constitution solely to extend his time in power. [...] The flame of resistance was held by people of all ages, both sexes, all ethnicities, all political doctrines, all faiths, and all professional categories whose leaders, firmly committed, had gathered around a round table to discuss the prevailing situation and the strategies to be implemented]

This imagery reflects vividly the unity and determination of the CNDC's members, highlighting how inclusive and collective action can be effective in forcing positive changes against dictatorial resistance.

The CNDC's formation is a pivotal moment in the narrative, representing the convergence of various social factions against a common enemy. In a society fractured by political and ethnic divides, the coalition's inclusiveness is not only a strategic necessity but also a symbolic act of defiance against Décon's authoritarian rule. By uniting individuals across different backgrounds, the CNDC embodies the democratic ideals of equality and solidarity, standing in stark contrast to Décon's autocratic aspirations.

The coalition's actions are driven by a deep-seated belief in the sanctity of the constitution as a bulwark against tyranny. The constitution, in this context, is more than just a legal document; it is a symbol of the people's collective will and their commitment to democratic governance. Décon's attempt to alter the constitution

for personal gain is seen as a direct assault on the nation's democratic foundations. Therefore, the CNDC's mission to defend the constitution is portrayed as a righteous struggle to preserve the integrity of the state and the rights of its citizens.

The narrative arc of *Le Sang pour l'alternance* delves into the personal stories of the coalition's members, each bringing a unique perspective to the resistance. For instance, Faba's journey is depicted as a transformative experience. Witnessing the dedication and unity of the coalition members reinforces his commitment to the cause. This personal transformation is emblematic of the broader societal awakening that the CNDC aims to foster. By rallying individuals around a shared purpose, the coalition seeks to inspire a collective consciousness that transcends individual grievances and partisan loyalties.

Sinta's portrayal of the CNDC also emphasizes the strategic acumen of its leaders. The round table discussions mentioned in the excerpt are crucial for formulating a coherent and effective resistance strategy. These meetings are characterised by rigorous debates and careful planning, reflecting the coalition's commitment to democratic principles not only in their objectives but also in their methods. The leaders' ability to navigate the complex political landscape and mobilise support from diverse constituencies is a testament to their political savvy and dedication to the cause.

The novel does not shy away from depicting the challenges faced by the CNDC. Internal disagreements, resource constraints, and the ever-present threat of government crackdowns pose significant hurdles. Yet, these obstacles serve to underscore the resilience and tenacity of the coalition. The narrative highlights how the CNDC's inclusiveness, while a source of strength, also requires constant negotiation and compromise. The coalition's leaders must balance competing interests and maintain unity in the face of external and internal pressures.

In exploring these dynamics, *Le Sang pour l'alternance* offers a nuanced perspective on the nature of political resistance. It acknowledges that building a broad-based coalition is inherently challenging but ultimately essential for confronting entrenched

power structures. The CNDC's efforts to block Décon's constitutional amendments are depicted as a microcosm of the larger struggle for democratic governance in Guiny. Through their actions, the coalition members embody the principles of civic duty and political activism, demonstrating that meaningful change is possible through collective effort.

Sinta's work is a good reminder of the importance of vigilance in safeguarding democratic institutions. The CNDC's struggle against Décon's authoritarian ambitions resonates with real-world political movements that have fought against similar threats to democracy. By highlighting the efficacy of inclusive and collective action, *Le Sang pour l'alternance* inspires readers to recognise the value of unity and solidarity in the face of oppression. The novel also serves as a cautionary tale about the fragility of democratic institutions. Décon's attempts to extend his rule underscore how easily democratic norms can be undermined if left unchecked. The CNDC's vigilant defence of the constitution illustrates the proactive stance required to protect democratic principles. This theme is particularly relevant in contemporary political contexts where democratic backsliding is a growing concern.

In conclusion, Alimou Sinta's novel offers a rich and layered exploration of political resistance. Through the character of Faba and the broader narrative of the CNDC, the novel underscores how the coalition's struggle against Décon's constitutional manipulations is a compelling depiction of the challenges and triumphs of political activism. Sinta's work serves as both an inspiration and a warning, highlighting the enduring importance of unity and vigilance in the fight for democratic governance.

In contemporary African political landscapes, the extension of presidential terms remains a contentious issue. This is not because activists are on the frontline, vehemently opposing these extensions, but also due to their low expectations about the challenges ahead, despite their unwavering dedication. They recognise a pervasive international complicity, particularly from influential nations like France, which frequently maintain a

conspicuous silence to safeguard their geopolitical and economic interests. This complex interplay of local resistance and international indifference forms the crux of Alimou Sinta's narrative in *Le sang pour l'alternance*. Sinta's novel reflects the essence of this struggle through the character Nosah, who embodies the spirit of resistance against undemocratic practices. Nosah's assertion,

Le combat sera rude, mais nous ne devons à aucun moment reculer. Il faut toujours se rappeler que nous sommes la voix des sans voix. Nous avons la vérité de notre côté c'est pourquoi nous devons être persévérants. Si on échoue à empêcher Décon à faire d'autres mandats, notre pays est très mal parti pour les trente (30) prochaines années ; en 2050 on se retrouvera avec un autre dictateur qui fera la même chose (Sang, p.38).

[Our struggle will be tough, but at no moment shall we retreat. We must always remember that we are the voice of the voiceless. We have the right cause on our side, which is why we must be persistent. If we fail to prevent Décon from securing more presidential terms, our country is heading for a very bad place for the next thirty (30) years. In 2050, we may find ourselves with another dictator doing the same thing]

This determination underscores the resolute commitment, power and agency that drive activists. This quote highlights a pivotal theme: the moral and ethical obligation of activists to persist in their efforts despite the overwhelming odds. Nosah's declaration emphasises the moral high ground occupied by the activists. The conviction that activists are fighting for a noble cause is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a powerful motivator that underscores the legitimacy and righteousness of their actions. This ethical dimension is crucial because it frames the struggle not just as a political battle but as a fight for fundamental human rights and democratic principles.

The stakes of this struggle are high, as Nosah starkly warns that failure to protect the constitution would lead to the eventuality of having another dictator in 2050 with the same cunning political strategies. This prediction is not merely speculative; it is grounded in a historical pattern of power consolidation and authoritarianism. The reference to the year 2050 serves as a strong reminder of the long-term consequences of political complacency and the erosion of democratic norms. Nosah's foresight into the potential future highlights the cyclical nature of dictatorship and the enduring impact of undemocratic governance. The projection of a dire future if activists fail acts as a clarion call, urging immediate and sustained action. This sense of urgency is palpable in Nosah's words, reinforcing the notion that the fight against term extensions is not just about the present but about securing a democratic future for generations to come.

The complicity of the international community, particularly France, is again a recurring theme that adds another layer of complexity to the activists' struggle. The silence of powerful nations is not merely a passive stance but an active form of complicity that emboldens autocratic leaders. France's vested interests, often economic or geopolitical, result in a tacit endorsement of undemocratic practices. This silence serves to legitimise and perpetuate authoritarian regimes, undermining local efforts to uphold democratic principles.

The activists' awareness of this international dimension does not deter them; instead, it fuels their resilience. They understand that their fight is twofold: combating local autocracy while also navigating and countering international indifference. This dual struggle necessitates a multifaceted approach, combining grassroots activism with efforts to garner international solidarity and support.

Despite the formidable obstacles, the resilience of activists remains unshaken. The risk of violent confrontation looms large, yet it does not diminish their resolve. The prospect of resilience driving the resistance of the nation's active forces is a testament to the enduring spirit of these activists. Their resilience is rooted in a

deep-seated belief in their cause and a steadfast commitment to democratic ideals. This resilience is not merely about enduring hardship; it is about actively resisting and challenging oppressive systems. It involves strategic planning, coalition-building, and leveraging every available resource to sustain the movement. The resilience of activists is a dynamic force, constantly adapting and evolving in response to the changing political landscape and trajectory.

The struggle against the extension of presidential terms raises critical questions about the nature of power, the role of the international community, and the agency of civil society. Activists like Nosah represent the frontline of this battle, embodying the principles of accountability, transparency, and democratic participation. *Le sang pour l'alternance* serves as both a cautionary tale and a source of inspiration. It warns of the dangers of complacency and the insidious nature of authoritarianism while also celebrating the power of collective action and the resilience of the human spirit. Nosah's words resonate as a call to action, urging all who value democracy to remain vigilant and committed to the cause.

In conclusion, the fight against the extension of presidential terms is a multifaceted struggle that encompasses local resistance, international complicity, and the unwavering resilience of activists. Alimou Sinta's *Le sang pour l'alternance* captures well this dynamic, offering a profound analysis of the stakes involved and the moral imperative driving the activists. Through the characters of political activists and civil society members, the narrative underscores the importance of perseverance, the ethical dimension of activism, and the enduring hope for a democratic future. The text challenges readers to reflect on their role in this global struggle and to recognize the interconnectedness of local and international efforts in the pursuit of justice and democratic governance.

Overall, at the heart of the analysed narratives lies a probing examination of the tensions and conflicts that arise amidst efforts to reshape political structures through constitutional changes intended to extend a leader's hold on power. These narratives

highlight how vote-rigging practices and constitutional manipulations have long undermined democracy in Francophone Africa, preventing fair access to the political arena and contributing to institutional instability. Through richly textured storytelling and realistic characterisations, the authors navigate these constitutional changes, offering readers a window into the competing interests, ideologies, and aspirations that shape the trajectory of post-independence states.

Through a literary analysis, use of critical theory, historical contextualisation, postcolonial theory, Michel Foucault's theory of power, and socio-political theory of the novels reveal how the narratives depict constitutional changes as both catalysts for transformation and sources of contention within society. They offer critical reflections on the tensions between state power and individual freedoms, highlighting the challenges of balancing competing interests and values in the pursuit of democratic governance. The novels portray the strategies and tactics used by both the state and political activists to influence constitutional reform, from the obilisation of popular movements and civil society organisations to the manipulation of electoral processes and suppression of dissent. These works challenge simplistic narratives of progress and democratisation, emphasising the contingent and contested nature of political change in post-colonial Africa where resilience and resistance are always beacons of hope in the face of darkness.

4.7. Power and agency as beacons of hope in the face of darkness

The recurring image that resonates throughout the literary landscape of this study is the pervasive influence of clientelist power transactions in perpetuating political, social, and economic instability. Through the novels in the corpus, the authors enlighten readers on the insidious ways patronage networks and power dynamics shape social relationships, undermine meritocratic principles, and perpetuate entrenched inequalities across Francophone Africa. A critical reading of these narratives unveils the intricate and often destructive mechanisms of favouritism and

nepotism that permeate many aspects of society, from politics and governance to business and social life. Through vivid descriptions of patronage networks and exchanges of political favours for loyalty, the authors expose the ways in which personal or favoured group interests manipulate institutions and exploit resources for clientelism's benefit and to the detriment of the common good.

In examining the portrayal of clientelism in these novels, it becomes evident that the authors are not merely depicting the surface-level transactions of power but are delving into the deep-seated roots of systemic corruption. The narratives offer a lens through which readers can understand how political and economic power is consolidated and maintained through complex systems of loyalty and favours. This entrenchment of clientelism ensures that those within the networks continue to benefit disproportionately while the vast majority remain excluded and disenfranchised.

For instance, one recurring theme within clientelist power transactions is the manipulation of democratic processes to sustain patronage networks. Elections are depicted not as genuine expressions of the people's will but as orchestrated events where loyalty to the ruling elite is rewarded, and dissent is punished. In some novels, protagonists find themselves ensnared in corruption as they try to campaign on platforms of transparency and accountability. Their journeys highlight the futility of challenging entrenched systems of patronage without first dismantling the networks that sustain them.

These narratives offer striking insights into the human cost of clientelism, as individuals navigate a landscape where access to opportunities and resources is often determined not by merit or talent but by relationships and loyalty to those in power. As Munyangayo (2024a, 2024b) elucidates, this critical reading of the novels reveals how clientelism intersects with broader patterns of social stratification and exclusion, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalisation for those outside the circles of influence. Through their representation of social hierarchies and the reproduction of privileges, the authors challenge readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the systemic barriers that

hinder social mobility and perpetuate inequality across generations.

The human stories within these narratives are powerful in their portrayal of the struggles faced by individuals in politically clientelist societies. Characters often grapple with profound moral and ethical dilemmas, torn between the desire to act with integrity and the necessity of participating in corrupt systems to survive or protect their loved ones. The novels depict the personal toll of such compromises, illustrating how political clientelism not only corrodes public institutions but also erodes the societal moral fabric.

There are many examples of characters who aspire to a career in civil service. Despite their qualifications and dedication, they find that their path is blocked at every turn by individuals with connections to powerful patrons. Their frustration and eventual disillusionment underscore the broader societal implications of a system where merit is consistently undermined by favouritism. The narratives vividly capture their internal struggles and the gradual erosion of their ideals as they confront the harsh realities of societies dominated by clientelist practices.

Individuals who seek change and advocate for democratic principles often find themselves thwarted by closed networks and those deprived of basic services due to political patronage. The narrative structures bring to life the harsh realities of living in societies where access to power and privileges depends on proximity to the ruling elite. From the dilemmas faced by individuals torn between personal integrity and the pressure to conform to patronage norms to the moral compromises made by those seeking to protect their interests within a corrupt system, the authors explore the complexities of moral and ethical decision-making in the face of systemic injustice.

This section of the analysis focuses on how resilience and resistance emerge as underpinning factors for power and agency, serving as beacons of hope in the face of darkness. The authors do not merely portray a grim and unyielding reality; they also highlight moments of defiance and the potential for change.

Characters who resist the temptations of clientelism and strive to uphold principles of fairness and justice often face significant challenges, but their actions serve as a testament to the possibility of transformation.

In some novels, grassroots activists organise community efforts to hold local officials accountable. Despite facing intimidation and threats, they persist in their efforts to expose corruption and advocate for transparency. Their stories are a powerful illustration of how individual acts of courage and collective action can challenge entrenched systems of patronage. Furthermore, the novels explore the role of education and awareness in combating clientelism. Several characters are depicted as finding empowerment through education, which provides them with the tools to question and resist corrupt practices. Education is portrayed not just as a means of personal advancement but as a critical component of societal change. The authors suggest that by equipping individuals with knowledge and critical thinking skills, it is possible to challenge and ultimately dismantle the structures that sustain clientelism.

In the representation of clientelism within francophone African novels, there is a profound engagement with the concepts of favouritism and the resultant degradation stemming from systemic injustices. These narratives, rich in their portrayal of societal ills, act as beacons, rekindling the collective energies of struggle and advocacy for transformative change. They do not simplistically highlight the issues but serve as revolutionary catalysts, igniting hope amidst the prevailing darkness.

The depiction of such synergies within these novels often allows readers to form a bond of solidarity with characters who relentlessly fight for truth, justice, and dignity. The immersive narrative experiences urge readers to confront and appreciate uncomfortable truths about the complicity of both local and international actors in perpetuating human rights violations in Francophone Africa. By exposing the stark realities of repressive regimes - often supported by the silence and indifference of regional and global institutions - these authors challenge the

perceived inevitability of oppression. They present mass resistance as a formidable force capable of rewriting the national narrative through initiatives of resistance and resilience.

For instance, in *La promesse des fleurs* by Patrice Nganang, the character Meka symbolises the disenfranchised citizens of Cameroon. Meka's experience of burning the national emblem poignantly underscores a deep-seated alienation from a nation that has consistently marginalised its people. This sentiment is encapsulated in the poignant reflection:

Nous savions que ce Cameroun dont Meka brûlait l'emblème n'était pas le nôtre, ne nous avait jamais traités comme ses enfants, nous avait toujours mis hors-jeu du match de la vie, nous avait toujours parqués de l'autre côté d'une ligne de démarcation visible, trop visible qui limitait nos sous-quartiers (Promesse, p.175).

[We knew that this Cameroon whose emblem Meka was burning was not ours. It has never treated us as its children, always kept us out of the game of life, always corralled us on the other side of a visible, too visible demarcation line separating our sub-neighbourhoods]

This imagery captures the tangible neighbourhood divisions and symbolises systemic exclusions that people endure daily. The novel further delves into the notion of intergenerational responsibility and the implicit mission that comes with it. Gérard, another pivotal character, articulates this mission with clarity and urgency:

Chaque génération doit découvrir sa mission, la remplir ou la trahir. Et comme tu sais, notre mission, est de renverser l'oppresseur omniprésent qui est aussi noir que toi et moi, mais vit aux dépends de notre bien-être. L'oppresseur qui est notre élite cleptomane (Promesse, p.158).

[Each generation must be aware of its mission, either fulfil it or betray it. And as you know, our mission is to overthrow the omnipresent oppressor who is as black as you and me, and yet lives

at the expense of our well-being. The oppressor is our kleptocratic elite]

This quote highlights the necessity for the younger generation to engage in a crusade against entrenched corruption and kleptocracy. It underscores the critical role of youth in challenging and dismantling oppressive structures perpetuated by a self-serving elite.

The struggle against such regimes is depicted as fraught with complexity and peril. Bamba, a young activist, articulates this challenge to his mentor Faba:

C'est assez compliqué de faire la politique avec un régime qui ne se soucie pas des lois et qui n'accorde aucune importance à la vie humaine. Mais comme je dois rencontrer les jeunes du village, j'aurais l'occasion d'échanger avec eux sur ce sujet (Sang, p.30).

[It is quite complicated to engage with politics when the regime does not care about laws and gives no importance to human life. But since I must meet the young people of the village, I will have the opportunity to discuss this with them]

Bamba's resolve to engage with the youth despite the overwhelming odds highlights the resilience and determination required to effect change in a hostile political environment.

These novels often explore the dynamics of power and the relative efficacy of violence versus persuasion. In a telling dialogue from *La promesse des fleurs*, Minister Manzaka advises Sotchita, a customs' official, on the futility of using force as a governance tool:

Il valait mieux conduire les hommes par la persuasion que par la violence, et qu'en tout état de cause les dirigeants africains ne devraient pas imiter les colonisateurs qui ne cessaient pas de recourir à la chicotte. [...] Il faut se soucier d'éduquer avant de songer à réprimer. Car, à trop user de la force, on finit par la rendre inopérante en même temps qu'on s'expose à l'accusation de dictature (Fleurs, p.64).

[It was better to lead people by persuasion than by violence, and that in any case, African leaders should not imitate the colonisers who always relied on the whip to educate. [...]

Education must always precede any thoughts of repression. This is because using force too much can lead to making it ineffective, exposing oneself to accusations of dictatorship]

The minister's thoughts reflect a deep understanding of the corrosive impact of violence and the importance of fostering an informed and engaged citizenry.

Manzaka's assertion that qu'elle [force] est le bouclier des faibles, l'arme des fossoyeurs de la démocratie, le recours des gouvernants incertains de leur légitimité. [...] la force est impuissante devant une volonté inébranlable (Fleurs, p.65)

[force is the shield of the weak, the weapon of the gravediggers of democracy, the recourse of rulers whose legitimacy is uncertain. [...] force is powerless against people's unshakable will]

serves as a powerful indictment of authoritarianism. It highlights the inherent weakness in relying on coercion and the ultimate strength found in a planned, determined, and principled resistance.

These novels do not present a critique of current conditions only; they offer a blueprint for resistance and empowerment. They encourage readers to envision a different future, a future where solidarity, justice, and human dignity are paramount. By portraying the struggles and triumphs of their characters, these narratives inspire a collective awakening and a renewed commitment to the cause of freedom and equality.

In essence, francophone African novels serve as both a mirror and a catalyst. They reflect the harsh realities of life under repressive regimes while simultaneously galvanising readers to join the struggle for a better tomorrow. The depiction of clientelism, favouritism, and systemic injustice provides a stark reminder of the challenges that must be overcome. However, the stories of resilience and resistance offer hope and a roadmap for change.

These narratives affirm that despite the darkness, the light of hope and the flame of resistance can never be extinguished.

Through a sociological reading, readers are not only educated about the socio-political landscape of Francophone Africa but are also inspired to become active participants in the struggle for justice. The portrayal of characters who bravely confront oppression and advocate for change serves as a powerful reminder that the fight for a just society is a shared responsibility.

Through their compelling stories, these authors use the narratological representation as an invite to readers to stand in solidarity with those who are fighting for a future where human rights are respected, and dignity is upheld.

The undesirable effects of violence on the side of the oppressors are starkly illustrated through the character of Tom, a member of parliament. Initially a silent observer of summary executions, Tom's transformation reflects the profound impact of oppression on those who enforce it. His awakening occurs after the assassination of Djaminga and his own arbitrary arrest, catalysing his metamorphosis from a compliant former member of parliament into a fervent advocate for democratic practices. This is vividly depicted in the narrative:

Alors lui qui n'ouvrait jamais le bec à l'Assemblée nationale, qui approuvait en applaudissant comme ses collègues tous les projets gouvernementaux et leurs contraires, voilà qu'il se mit brusquement à tout dénoncer, à crier ces vérités que la prudence la plus élémentaire exige de murmurer, de garder au fond de sa gorge. C'est ainsi qu'un jour, lors d'un débat sur le budget, auquel le Président de la République assistait en personne, il déclara sans ambages que notre pays était mal gouverné, notre parlement ligoté, notre presse bâillonnée, notre peuple exploité, notre jeunesse terrorisée, et qu'il était insupportable de vivre dans un pays où l'on n'avait pas besoin de preuves pour emprisonner ni de procès pour condamner (Fleurs, pp.172-173).

[So, he who never opened his mouth in the National Assembly, who approved by applauding like his colleagues all government projects and their opposites, suddenly began to denounce everything, to openly criticise the truths that the most elementary prudence demands to whisper, to keep at the bottom of one's throat. Thus, one day, during a budget debate, which the President of the Republic attended in person, he bluntly asserted that our country was poorly governed, our parliament gagged, our press muzzled, our people exploited, our youth terrorised, and that it was unbearable to live in a country where proof was not needed to imprison or a trial to convict]

Tom's transformation underscores a crucial dynamic in oppressive regimes: the inherent instability and eventual backlash against sustained violence and injustice. When violence no longer serves as an effective deterrent, it often precipitates a counter-movement among those who were previously subdued by fear. Tom's outburst in the National Assembly is emblematic of this shift, where silence turns into vocal resistance. His denunciation of the government's misdeeds - describing the country as poorly governed, the parliament gagged, the press muzzled, and the youth terrorized - signifies a critical turning point where the oppressors' grip begins to loosen.

In a similar vein, Abdoulaye, a character from the novel *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* by Dianguina Diarisso, represents another voice rising against oppression. Abdoulaye's conviction in democratic principles leads him to confide in his friends:

Étant démocrate, ma conviction reste profonde que l'arbitraire ne peut conduire, dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, à une stabilité sociale durable garantissant notre sécurité et un avenir harmonieux pour nos enfants. Pour nous, notre génération âgée, la jeunesse constitue un grand espoir, car elle seule est capable de faire changer la donne (Oiseaux, pp.54-55).

[As a democrat, I still deeply believe that arbitrariness cannot inform leadership in today's world, cannot lead to lasting social stability guaranteeing our security and a harmonious future for our children. For us from the old generation, youths constitute a great hope, for they alone can be true agents of change]

Abdoulaye's statement reflects a broader sentiment among the oppressed: a belief that arbitrary rule cannot sustain social stability and that the future hinges on the active participation and mobilisation of the youths. The narrative emphasises that denunciation alone is insufficient for revolution; concrete actions are necessary to effect change. The characters' experiences of whimsical and arbitrary arrests, abusive detentions, and degrading tortures underscore the urgent need for coordinated efforts to dismantle the oppressive regime. Abdoulaye's perspective highlights the importance of moving beyond mere rhetoric to mobilise the country's youths effectively:

Une telle organisation doit alors posséder un instrument d'impulsion pour le mouvement des chômeurs. En effet, le chômage est un cauchemar pour les élèves et les étudiants. Chaque élève ou étudiant d'aujourd'hui est un chômeur de demain, l'avenir est encore compromis. C'est à ce prix, cher ami, que nous aurons franchi un grand pas dans le processus de réhabilitation de nos Martyrs, dans la solution de nos problèmes actuels opposés (Oiseaux, pp.43-44).

[Such an organisation must then have a catalyst for driving the movement of the unemployed people. Indeed, unemployment is a nightmare for students. Today, every student is a jobless of the future, a future which is already compromised. It is for this reason, dear friend, that by solving our current problems we will have taken a big step in the process of rehabilitating our Martyrs]

The characters' evolution from passive acceptance to active resistance demonstrates the transformative power of oppression on

the oppressed. Deputy Tom's journey from silence to vocal opposition, spurred by personal injustice, mirrors the broader societal shift where individuals collectively challenge the status quo. Abdoulaye's insights further illuminate the necessity of youth mobilization, recognizing that the younger generation holds the potential to drive significant societal change.

These narratives converge on the theme that enduring change requires a collective awakening and coordinated action. The depiction of Tom and Abdoulaye's struggles underscores the interconnectedness of individual experiences and broader societal movements. Tom's public denunciation in the National Assembly, witnessed by the President of the Republic, and Abdoulaye's call for youth mobilisation both serve as catalysts for broader societal change. Their actions illustrate how personal experiences of injustice can ignite a larger movement for democratic practices and social justice.

The transformation of Tom and Abdoulaye reflects the broader impact of oppressive regimes on individuals and society. Their journeys from compliance to resistance highlight the potential for personal experiences of injustice to catalyse broader social movements. This dynamic is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of collective action in the face of oppression. The narratives highlight that enduring change requires not only the denunciation of injustice but also the active engagement and mobilisation of individuals and communities.

Abdoulaye's engagement with resistance underscores the importance of strategic planning and organisation in revolutionary movements. The emphasis on youth mobilisation, as articulated by Abdoulaye, reflects the critical role of the younger generation in driving societal change.

By organising and addressing issues such as unemployment, the youth can play a pivotal role in dismantling oppressive structures and building a more just and equitable society.

In Dianguina Diarisso's works, the absence of a robust democratic organisation that resonates with the aspirations of the youth significantly hampers the fight against oppression. The

liquidation of isolated activists becomes a common fate in such a disjointed environment, making trade unions a critical force in defending collective aspirations. These unions are depicted as viable strike forces capable of organising management committees to reduce the risk of phantom organisations and folkloric demonstrations, which are often exploited by repressive regimes to stifle dissent. This strategy of unity as strength is a recurring theme in texts reflecting the struggle against political repression in Africa, emphasising that

L'action solitaire ne mène à rien. Il faut se grouper ou s'effacer (Fleurs, p.88)

[solitary action leads to nothing. Unite or perish]

Diarisso's novels underscore that breaking the vicious cycle of lifelong presidencies, which have long sown terror and relied on poverty as a strategy of domination, requires the unity of the oppressed to weaken the oppressors. The narrative poignantly captures the overwhelming power of a united crowd:

Mais que pouvait-il faire d'autre pour calmer cette foule qui débordait le vase de la raison, qui gonflait comme un fleuve en ébullition, comme une rivière en crue ? Que pouvait-il faire pour contenir cette foule qui devenait chien de chasse ? (Promesse, p.174).

[But what else could they do to calm this crowd that overflowed the vase of reason, that swelled like a boiling river, like a river in flood? What could they do to contain this crowd that became a hunting dog?]

This vivid imagery illustrates the unstoppable force of a collective uprising, emphasising that unity can turn the tide against oppressive regimes. The characters in Diarisso's novels illustrate that unity acquired through organization fosters awareness and action grounded in discipline, self-sacrifice, and courage to fight despite the risks. For these tools of combat to be effective, the novels

suggest organising into unions. In *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore*, Diarisso writes that the strength of union mass mobilisation is a formidable force:

Les gens étaient divers, mais tous étaient des manifestants. Ce mouvement des foules multicolores avait quelque chose de martial, de redoutable, peut-être parce que tous avançaient dans la même direction, comme unis par un accord tacite, par une même volonté et un but unique (Oiseaux, p.80).

[People were diverse but were all protesters. The movement of multi-coloured crowd had something martial, formidable, perhaps because they all moved in the same direction, as if united by a tacit agreement, by the same will and a single goal]

This passage underscores the power of collective will and coordinated action, highlighting that even a diverse group can become a formidable force when united by a common goal. The emphasis on unions as pivotal to the struggle against repression is central to Diarisso's critique of political systems in Africa. Trade unions provide a structured means of collective bargaining and protest, offering a counterbalance to the disorganised and often ineffective efforts of isolated activists. By organising into management committees, unions can strategically plan and execute actions that challenge the status quo while minimising the risks of infiltration and sabotage by the regime.

Diarisso's works reveal that unity and collective action are not just ideals but practical necessities in the struggle against oppression. The transformation of Tom and the strategic insights of Abdoulaye both highlight the potential for personal experiences and collective organisation to drive significant societal change. Their journeys from passive acceptance to active resistance illustrate the transformative power of collective action and the crucial role of unions and organised movements in achieving democratic reforms. The imagery of a diverse yet united crowd moving with a shared purpose underscores the formidable power

of collective will. This unity is depicted as not only a physical force but also a moral and psychological one, capable of challenging and overwhelming oppressive regimes. The multi-coloured crowd, moving as if by tacit agreement, symbolises the potential of a united populace to transcend individual differences and focus on a common goal.

Diarisso's narrative strategy effectively communicates the urgent need for unity and organised resistance. The characters' personal transformations and collective actions serve as a microcosm of broader societal dynamics, illustrating how individual experiences of injustice can fuel a larger movement for change. By emphasising the importance of trade unions and collective action, Diarisso highlights the practical steps necessary to challenge and ultimately dismantle oppressive regimes.

Furthermore, the people's revolt that unfolded over the historic days of 13-15 August 1963, marked a critical juncture in the history of workers' resistance against the political landscape established by the First Republic. This event, a vivid manifestation of pent-up anger and frustration, did not signify an ideological revolution for the Congolese people, as noted in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* by 'Fouillou, it was merely an outburst of long-held anger and frustration. This critical perspective underscores the nature of the revolt as a spontaneous and unstructured expression of discontent rather than a concerted effort to overhaul the political system fundamentally. In this work, M'Fouillou provides a depiction of the turmoil and fervour that gripped the capital during these days. His narrative captures the chaotic yet vibrant atmosphere of Brazzaville:

Dans la capitale, la vie grondait. Les ouvriers sortaient de leur travail. Les chômeurs défilaient, montant les rues, se rendant on ne sait où. On voyait des femmes qui traînaient leurs enfants après elles. Sur les côtés, des adolescents s'avançaient sous le nez des passants, tendaient les mains. Ils quêtaient sans dire un mot. Tous ces gens évoluaient en désordre dans les rues poudreuses. Leur démarche précipitée et parfois nonchalante, leurs regards qui se

croisaient, leurs voix nettes et sonores mêlées au bruit des moteurs de voitures et de vélomoteurs, créaient une atmosphère de fête (Vent, p.12).

[In the capital, life was rumbling. Workers were leaving their workplaces. The unemployed people were marching, going up the streets, heading who knows where. Women were seen dragging their children behind them. On the sides, teenagers approached passersby, extending their hands. They begged without saying a word. All these people were moving chaotically in the dusty streets. Their hurried and sometimes nonchalant steps, their glances meeting, their clear and loud voices mixed with the noise of cars and moped engines, created a festive atmosphere]

This description conveys the spontaneous and organic nature of the revolt, with different social strata converging in a collective expression of discontent. The depiction of women and children alongside workers and the unemployed highlights the broad base of the uprising, suggesting that the grievances were widespread and affected various segments of society. The atmosphere described by M'Fouillou blends urgency with a strange sense of festivity, illustrating the complex emotional landscape of the participants.

M'Fouillou also touches on the formation of a committee, a crucial development aimed at enhancing the struggle's efficiency. The creation of such a committee represents a strategic move towards organizing the revolt and channelling the people's energies into a more structured and potentially effective form of resistance. By establishing a formal body to negotiate with the authorities, the unionist committee symbolises a shift from spontaneous outbursts to organised demands for change.

In addition to union organisation, M'Fouillou's narrative underscores the importance of mass actions, particularly strikes, as a powerful means of demanding change. He argues that widespread violence, poor economic management, and social injustices set the stage for mass revolts:

A vrai dire, toutes les conditions pour déclencher une grève générale réussie sont réunies. Le comportement de l'équipe au pouvoir face à la pauvreté, ses mœurs éhontées ont créé un sentiment de révolte dans tout le pays. Cette grève du 13 août prouvera qu'il peut être opportun de profiter de cette situation, comme le font remarquer Grégoire et les autres du Groupe, pour changer les choses (Vent, pp.25-26).

[To tell the truth, all the conditions for triggering a successful general strike are met. The behaviour of the team in power in the face of poverty, and its shameful amorality have created a sense of revolt throughout the country. As noted by Grégoire and others in the Group, this strike of August 13 can provide an opportunity to take advantage of the situation to change things]

The conditions described by M'Fouillou reveal a society on the brink of explosion, with the strike serving as a catalyst for broader societal change. The systemic issues of poor governance and moral corruption are depicted as the root causes of the revolt, suggesting that the strike is not just a reaction to immediate grievances but a response to deeper structural problems.

The narrative continues to emphasise the unstoppable nature of a marching crowd, illustrating the power of collective action:

Ce mardi-là était le 13 août 1963. [...] Les groupes se transformèrent en une foule en marche. On la sentait piétinante, confuse, emportée d'une seule âme. Ces rivières humaines, confluant vers un seul point, atteignaient la place déjà encombrée depuis six heures par les vagues d'arrivants. Les rues se noircissaient (Vent, p.36).

[That Tuesday was 13 August 1963. [...] The groups turned into a marching crowd. You could feel it stomping, confused, carried away with a single soul. These human rivers, converging towards a single point, reached the square already crowded since six o'clock by the waves of arrivals. The streets were foggy]

This description portrays the crowd as a formidable force, united in its purpose and driven by a collective spirit. The imagery of "human rivers" converging towards a single point underscores the unstoppable momentum of the masses, suggesting that once mobilised, their movement becomes an overwhelming force that can effect significant change.

For unionists, the well-being of a country hinges on the harmony between its intelligence and feelings. Any harm to either aspect compromises peace and justice, which are essential for national development. As M'Fouillou points out, peace and justice do not come on their own; they are earned. This perspective highlights the intrinsic connection between social justice and national stability, suggesting that ignoring the grievances of the working class inevitably leads to unrest and turmoil.

The events of 13-15 August 1963, thus serve as a strong reminder of the power of collective action and the critical importance of addressing the underlying causes of discontent. The spontaneous uprising, though not an ideological revolution, reflects a profound sense of frustration and a desire for change that cannot be ignored. Through the lens of M'Fouillou's narrative, readers gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics at play and the critical role of organised resistance in shaping the course of history.

The people's revolt in Brazzaville, as depicted in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, is a testament to the enduring power of the masses to demand and effect change, even in the face of formidable challenges. The unity of strikers illustrates the evolving nature of resistance, from spontaneous outbursts to organised and purposeful actions. This evolution underscores the importance of structure and strategy in achieving meaningful and lasting change.

M'Fouillou's depiction of the organised revolt highlights the broad base of support for the uprising, encompassing various segments of society, from workers and the unemployed to women and children. This broad-based support underscores the widespread nature of the grievances and the collective desire for a better future. The vibrant and chaotic atmosphere of the revolt

captures the raw energy and determination of the masses, illustrating the potent force of collective action. The emphasis on the conditions that precipitate mass revolts, such as poor governance and social injustices, provides a critical insight into the root causes of unrest. By addressing these underlying issues, the narrative suggests that it is possible to prevent future revolts and build a more just and stable society.

It is clear the transformative power of collective action and the role of external influences can shape political outcomes. This novel vividly illustrates how the convergence of popular demands, labour union support, and strategic foreign intervention can culminate in significant political change. The president of the republic's decision to yield to popular demands by dismissing his corrupt ministerial team and agreeing to form a new government epitomises the triumph of street pressure. As he declares,

J'accepte de congédier tous mes ministres. J'ouvrirai des négociations avec vous pour former un nouveau gouvernement. Ainsi aurai-je fait de mon mieux pour éviter le pire, pour empêcher la catastrophe que vous rendez imminente et pour sauver le pays du chaos (Vent, pp. 98-99).

[I agree to dismiss all my ministers. I will open negotiations with you to form a new government. Thus, I will have done my best to avoid the worst, to prevent the catastrophe you have made imminent and to save the country from chaos]

It becomes clear that the momentum of the masses can indeed precipitate political breaks. The strikers' primary objective was to reach a definitive break with a political system that had deviated from the people's expectations and needs. This act of rebellion is emblematic of broader trends within Africa, where people's uprisings supported by labour unions often present a formidable challenge to entrenched political regimes. The narrative in *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville* reinforces this by depicting the strikers' determination to upend a corrupt and unresponsive political establishment, demonstrating the potent combination of mass

mobilisation and organised labour in confronting and dismantling authoritarian regimes.

Furthermore, the novel highlights the crucial role of Western powers in such scenarios. The intervention of a French general commanding the division of the Brazzaville military base signifies the complexities of international relations and foreign interests in domestic political struggles in Francophone Africa. The general's words to the demonstrators underscore the conditional nature of external support:

Je pense que vous désirez que cette grève aboutisse à une victoire des travailleurs. Nous aussi, nous le désirons pour la paix et l'ordre public au Congo. Votre pays a autant intérêt que la France, sinon plus, à ce que nous arrivions à un compromis. D'abord nous vous demandons des assurances. Le général de Gaulle, qui attend au bout du fil, insiste sur le fait que les Français vivant au Congo et leurs biens ne doivent être touchés sous aucun prétexte (Vent, p.146).

[I assume you want this strike to lead to a victory for the workers. We too desire this for peace and public order in Congo. Your country has as much interest as France, if not more, in reaching a compromise. First, we ask you for assurances. General de Gaulle, who is waiting on the telephone line, insists that the French citizens living in Congo and their properties must not be touched under any circumstances]

The strikers' assurance to protect French interests facilitates France's withdrawal of support for President Fulbert Youlou. This scenario is emblematic of the intricate correlations between local aspirations and international diplomacy. The narrative reveals how foreign powers, while ostensibly supporting democratic aspirations and human rights, often act out of self-interest, ensuring their nationals and assets are safeguarded. The French general's final declaration marks a pivotal moment where foreign intervention aligns with popular demands, precipitating the fall of a regime:

Le général de Gaulle vient de m'ordonner de ne plus soutenir le président Fulbert YOULOU. Il lui demandera de démissionner (Vent, p.147).

[General de Gaulle has just ordered me to no longer support President Fulbert YOULOU. He will ask him to resign]

The historical context of Congo-Brazzaville during this period mirrors the fictional events depicted in the novel. The actual downfall of President Fulbert Youlou, abandoned by his erstwhile protector, France, and the subsequent rise of Massamba-Débat to power, reflects a broader pattern of post-colonial African politics.

These transitions often involved a complex interplay of internal dissent and external influence, with former colonial powers playing a decisive role in the political fortunes of their former colonies.

The end of the strike and the ascendancy of Massamba-Débat as the head of a provisional government designated by unionists signify a critical juncture in Congo-Brazzaville's history. Tasked with ending the country's political lethargy, Massamba-Débat's government represented a break from the past and an attempt to chart a new course aligned with the people's aspirations. This transition underscores the potential for labour movements and people's uprisings to serve as catalysts for political renewal and reform.

In a broader sense, M'Fouillou's works serve as case studies in the dynamics of political change in post-colonial Africa. They illustrate how grassroots movements, when bolstered by organised labour and strategic foreign intervention, can dismantle entrenched regimes, and pave the way for new political orders. His novels' depiction of the interplay between local and international actors provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of political transformation and the complex legacies of colonialism in Africa.

M'Fouillou's narratives also highlight the critical role of communication and negotiation in revolutionary movements. In *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*, the dialogue between the French

general and the demonstrators underscores the importance of securing assurances and negotiating terms to gain external support. This aspect of the story reflects real-world scenarios where political movements must navigate complex negotiations with both domestic and international stakeholders to achieve their goals.

In conclusion, if union action and people's mobilisation represent the salvation of oppressed citizens, the novels show that executing the people's will is complex. Changing the regime is a good reference point, but if this is not followed by a shift in mindsets, the revolution may not yield results. There must be a double rupture avec les références idéologiques habituelles nous privera de tout modèle pour réfléchir à notre propre projet. La rupture doit aussi se faire au niveau de nos comportements, de notre mentalité pour créer un homme nouveau (Vent, p.198).

[twofold break with the usual ideological references that will provide us with the freedom to choose any framework that reflects our project goals. The rupture must also happen at the level of our behaviours, our mentality to create a new mindset]

Without the rupture of political practices, the ideological break, and the mentalities shift, the people will always be ready to take to the streets for a new cycle of revolution. It is the absence of rupture that keeps Francophone Africa in a spiral of instability.

The narratives argue that the complexity of executing the will of the people lies in the multifaceted nature of human societies. It is not enough to simply overthrow a corrupt regime and expect a utopian society to emerge spontaneously. Historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that revolutions often start with high hopes and ideals, only to falter when faced with the harsh realities of governance and human behaviour. As a matter of fact, the French Revolution, with its initial promise of "liberty, equality, fraternity," eventually led to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon Bonaparte is widely regarded as one of the greatest military commanders in history. He won numerous battles,

expanded French territories, and reformed military strategies. He reorganised the French administrative system, introducing efficient tax collection, and creating a centralized bureaucracy. The Napoleonic Code, which he established, standardised legal systems across France and he reformed the French education system, establishing lycées and ensuring a more meritocratic system. However, his leadership style was autocratic. He crowned himself Emperor, limiting political freedoms and ruling without much regard for democratic processes. He curtailed free speech and press, persecuted political opponents, and controlled information tightly. While he initially rose to power in the context of the French Revolution, which had democratic and republican aspirations, he was not a democrat by modern standards. His governance diverged significantly from democratic ideals. He concentrated power in his hands, ruling as a dictator rather than through democratic institutions. Similarly, in more recent times, the Arab Spring saw the toppling of long-standing dictatorships, yet many of the countries involved have struggled with political instability and conflicts in the aftermath.

The novels discussed provide a fictional yet insightful lens through which to understand these dynamics. They emphasise that a successful revolution requires more than just political change; it demands a fundamental transformation in the way people think and behave. This notion of a "double rupture" is crucial. It suggests that breaking away from old ideological frameworks is necessary but not sufficient. A corresponding shift in societal norms and individual mindsets is equally important. Without this, any new political order may simply replicate the injustices and inefficiencies of the old one. These novels often depict the personal sacrifices and struggles that accompany the characters' journeys. Characters are frequently faced with difficult choices that test their commitment to the revolutionary cause. These narratives underscore the complexity of achieving a double rupture. It is not merely about overthrowing a government or system but involves a profound personal and collective transformation.

In examining these literary works, it becomes evident that a successful revolution demands a holistic approach. Political change alone is insufficient if it does not accompany a corresponding shift in societal norms and individual mindsets. The authors argue that without this comprehensive transformation, new regimes may fall into the same patterns of injustice and inefficiency as their predecessors.

This concept of a "double rupture" is particularly relevant in the context of Francophone Africa. Many countries in this region have experienced cycles of political upheaval, often characterised by the ousting of one regime only to see another, equally flawed, take its place. These cycles can be attributed, in part, to the lack of a thorough ideological and behavioural transformation. After gaining independence from colonial powers, many African nations adopted the political and administrative structures of their former colonisers. However, without a corresponding shift in the mentalities and behaviours of both leaders and citizens, these structures often proved inadequate for addressing the unique challenges faced by these nations.

Furthermore, the persistence of certain ideologies and behaviours can undermine the effectiveness of revolutionary movements. If corruption is deeply ingrained in the societal fabric, simply changing the political leadership may not eradicate corrupt practices. It is this interplay between ideology and behaviour that makes the process of revolution so complex and challenging.

Finally, the absence of a "double rupture" can lead to a sense of disillusionment and frustration among excluded people. When people rise up against oppression, they do so with the hope of a better future. If this hope is dashed by the persistence of old problems in new guises, it can lead to a loss of faith in the possibility of meaningful change. This, in turn, can fuel further cycles of unrest and revolution, as people continue to seek solutions to their grievances. The novels suggest that without a comprehensive approach to revolution, one that addresses both ideological and behavioural dimensions, societies may remain trapped in a perpetual state of instability.

In Francophone Africa, the pressing need for a "double rupture" is particularly evident, given the complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors that have shaped the region. This "double rupture" refers to a profound and twofold break from the entrenched systems and mindsets that have perpetuated cycles of instability, inequality, and underdevelopment. Many countries within this region boast rich histories of resistance and revolution, showcasing the resilience and agency of their peoples. Yet, despite these proud histories, they continue to grapple with significant political instability, economic challenges, and social inequalities. These persistent issues necessitate a concerted effort to foster new ways of thinking and behaving across all sectors of society.

To break this cycle effectively, political reform must go beyond superficial changes in leadership or policy. It requires the establishment of truly democratic institutions that are transparent, accountable, and inclusive. This includes implementing robust legal frameworks to protect human rights, ensure the rule of law, and eradicate corruption. Economic reforms, on the other hand, should focus on creating sustainable growth through diversified economies, reducing dependency on a narrow range of export commodities, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Equitable economic policies are crucial to addressing the stark income disparities and widespread poverty that plague many francophone African countries.

The concept of a "double rupture" also extends to breaking free from the lingering effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism, which continue to influence the political and economic landscapes of Francophone African countries. This means not only addressing the direct legacies of colonial exploitation and oppression but also challenging the contemporary power dynamics that perpetuate inequality and dependence. Efforts to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, assert cultural autonomy, and pursue political alliances based on mutual respect and benefit are all crucial steps in this direction.

Nevertheless, political and economic reforms alone are insufficient. In the transformative process, the role of leadership is crucial. Ethical leadership involves making decisions that are not

only legally sound but also morally just, putting the welfare of the people above personal or political gain. Inclusive governance ensures that all segments of society, especially marginalised groups, have a voice in decision-making processes. Visionary thinking, meanwhile, is about looking beyond immediate challenges and planning for a sustainable and prosperous future. Unfortunately, Francophone Africa remains heavily associated with human rights abuses, often perpetrated through state-sponsored violence. The culture of impunity and extrajudicial practices has entrenched a sense of mistrust and fear among the people, further exacerbating political instability and social fragmentation.

4.8. Human rights and State-sponsored violence

The pervasive violation of human rights through extrajudicial practices is one of the most pressing themes explored in Francophone African literature. This issue, often intertwined with systemic injustice and a culture of impunity, emerges as a central focus in the narratives of many authors from the region. Through their works, these writers confront the harsh realities of their societies, shedding light on the often-hidden atrocities perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. In doing so, they offer a searing indictment of the abuse of power and the erosion of democratic values that have plagued many post-independence Francophone African nations.

Francophone African literature frequently addresses state-sponsored violence as a means of controlling and oppressing the population. This violence, often justified under the guise of maintaining national security or combating internal threats, has become a tool for governments to stifle opposition and instil fear among citizens. Many novelists have portrayed the brutal reality of such violence, illustrating how it is used not only to eliminate political rivals but also to suppress any form of dissent. In their works, the state is often depicted as a malevolent force, wielding unchecked power to crush the very freedoms it is supposed to protect.

The theme of enforced disappearances is another critical element in the examination of human rights abuses in Francophone African literature. Enforced disappearances, where individuals are secretly abducted or imprisoned by the state or its agents, are a method of silencing voices of opposition and instilling a climate of fear. These disappearances leave families and communities in a state of perpetual uncertainty, unsure whether their loved ones are dead or alive. The psychological trauma inflicted by such practices is profound, creating a culture of fear and suspicion that permeates all levels of society. Writers who tackle this subject often highlight the deep emotional and social scars left by these disappearances, emphasising the devastating impact on both individuals and the broader community.

Extrajudicial killings represent perhaps the most extreme form of human rights violations depicted in Francophone African literature.

These acts, carried out without any legal process or judicial oversight, reflect the ultimate breakdown of law and order in a society. The impunity with which these killings are conducted underscores the erosion of democratic values and the rule of law. In many literary works, extrajudicial killings are portrayed as the tragic culmination of a system where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, and where violence is normalised as a means of resolving political conflicts. The depiction of these killings serves as a stark reminder of the lengths to which those in power will go to maintain their dominance, often at the cost of innocent lives.

Furthermore, the representation of these themes in Francophone African literature is not merely an act of documentation or protest; it is also a call to action. By bringing these issues to the forefront, authors challenge readers to confront the uncomfortable realities of their societies and to question the legitimacy of the structures that perpetuate such abuses. The literary portrayal of extrajudicial practices forces a reckoning with the moral and ethical implications of living under regimes where human rights are routinely violated. It also serves as a form of resistance, using the power of the written word to expose injustice and advocate for change.

At the heart of these narratives lies the multifaceted and deeply troubling wilderness of human rights violations. Francophone African literature delves into the brutal realities of forced disappearances, imprisonments, torture, rape, arson attacks, and murders. These atrocities, often perpetrated by state and non-state actors, are depicted as deliberate strategies to instill fear and silence democratic voices.

Emprisonnement après classification des personnes en fonction de leur origine et de leur activité, meurtres d'innocents, viols de femmes, incendies de maisons (Epreuve, p.18).

[Classifying people according to their origin and daily activities led to imprisonment, murders of innocent persons, raping women, burning houses...]

Francophone African novelists are particularly attuned to how these violations serve as tools of oppression. Cases of forced disappearances are portrayed to erase dissent, leaving families in agonising uncertainty and communities in a state of perpetual fear. Imprisonment without trial and torture are similarly depicted as instruments of terror, used to break the spirit of resistance, and maintain authoritarian control.

The use of sexual violence, such as rape, is also a recurring theme, highlighting the systematic degradation and dehumanisation of individuals, particularly women, in a bid to assert power and dominance. Arson attacks and murders are shown as the ultimate expressions of brutality, aimed at obliterating any trace of opposition and creating an atmosphere of terror that stifles any potential for democratic engagement. Through their exploration of these violations, Francophone African writers offer a searing critique of the abuse of power and the erosion of human rights in their societies. Their works not only unveil the horrific methods used to silence opposition but also serve as a powerful call to confront these injustices. By bringing these issues to light, the narratives invite the victims of human right abuses to resist the

mechanisms of fear and control that undermine the very foundations of democracy and human dignity.

In these stories, characters grapple with the devastating consequences of state repression and political violence, offering readers a profound window into the suffering inflicted on individuals and communities in the name of power and security. The anguish of families searching for missing loved ones, the trauma endured by survivors of torture and imprisonment, and the pervasive fear that grips societies under repressive regimes are vividly portrayed in these narratives.

These stories capture the harrowing experiences of families torn apart by enforced disappearances, where the absence of a loved one leaves a void filled with uncertainty, grief, and a relentless search for truth. The pain of not knowing whether a missing person is alive or dead haunts the characters, reflecting the cruel psychological warfare used by authoritarian regimes. This anguish is compounded by the knowledge that justice may never be served, as the perpetrators of these crimes often operate with impunity.

Survivors of torture and imprisonment, central to many of these narratives, embody the physical and emotional scars left by brutal regimes. Through their stories, readers gain insight into the relentless pain and trauma that follow these survivors, long after their release. The lasting effects of such violence manifest not only in the individuals but also ripple through entire communities, fostering a climate of fear and suspicion.

The pervasive fear under repressive regimes, as depicted in these stories, stifles any sense of security or normalcy in everyday life. The constant threat of surveillance, arbitrary arrest, and violence creates an environment where dissent is dangerous, and silence becomes a means of survival. This atmosphere of fear permeates every aspect of society, trapping characters in a cycle of oppression that seems inescapable.

Through their storytelling, authors bear witness to these cycles of violence and injustice that have persisted across generations. They challenge readers to consider the broader implications of such human rights abuses, not only on those directly

affected but on the very fabric of society. These narratives compel readers to reflect on the cost of silence and the importance of confronting and resisting the structures that perpetuate such suffering.

Francophone African literature serves as a powerful medium for exploring the complex dynamics of human rights violations, particularly the unfortunate reality of how law enforcement services and security services are manipulated by repressive regimes to perpetuate these abuses. This body of literature acts as a mirror, reflecting the harsh realities faced by many societies across Francophone Africa, where state-sponsored violence is not just a byproduct of authoritarianism but has been institutionalised within the very structures meant to protect citizens.

In many of these literary works, law enforcement and security forces are depicted as tools of oppression, rather than protectors of public safety. These institutions, instead of upholding justice and safeguarding the rights of citizens, are often portrayed as enforcers of the ruling regime's will, using brutality and coercion to silence dissent and maintain the status quo. The police, military, and other security agencies are shown to engage in practices such as arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings, all under the guise of maintaining order and national security.

Through vivid and often harrowing depictions, novelists illustrate the stark contrast between the democratic aspirations of the youth and civil society and the oppressive ruling powers that rely on law enforcement to crush these aspirations. Young people and activists, who represent the hope and desire for a more just and democratic future, often find themselves targeted by these repressive forces. Their efforts to advocate for change are met with violent crackdowns, highlighting the regime's reliance on fear to maintain control.

Moreover, these literary works underscore the insidious ways in which law enforcement agencies are co-opted into the service of authoritarianism. Officers and soldiers, who might have initially joined these forces to serve their communities, are shown to

be corrupted by the system, becoming instruments of terror rather than guardians of peace. This corruption not only erodes public trust in these institutions but also deepens the cycle of violence and repression that plagues these societies.

By reading critically these narratives, readers are invited to explore the broader implications of such state-sponsored violence. Francophone African literature challenges readers to consider how the perversion of law enforcement services under repressive regimes not only violates individual rights but also undermines the very foundations of justice and democracy.

In his novel *A l'épreuve des urnes*, Dianguina Diarisso presents a powerful critique of authoritarianism and the suppression of fundamental rights, particularly in the context of post-colonial African societies. He articulates a vision where respect for human rights, a rejuvenated ambition among the youth, and the safeguarding of freedom of expression and press freedom serve as the bedrock for a renewed social and political order:

Respecter les droits de l'homme, ambition nouvelle pour la jeunesse, la liberté d'expression et celle de la presse devait constituer les chantiers de la rénovation sociale et politique (Epreuve, p.23).

[Respecting human rights, a new ambition for the youth, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press should constitute the foundations of social and political renewal]

Diarisso's work transcends the boundaries of mere storytelling, evolving into a compelling call to action by asserting that the human rights advocacy is the bedrock of the political renewal. The novel's deeper purpose seems to be prompting readers to acknowledge and uphold the essential role these rights play in building a just and democratic society. By emphasising the need for these fundamental freedoms, Diarisso encourages a broader understanding of their significance in shaping a fairer world. The novel challenges readers not only to appreciate these principles intellectually but also to actively participate in their promotion and defence.

The narrative becomes a vehicle for advocating change, inspiring individuals to engage in the ongoing struggle for human rights and democratic values. In doing so, Diarisso's work serves as a strong reminder of the responsibilities that come with these freedoms, urging society to embrace them as cornerstones of progress. The novel's message resonates beyond its pages, calling on the audience to recognise that true social and political renewal can only be achieved when these rights are respected and protected for all. Through this lens, Diarisso's narrative becomes not just a story but a blueprint for action, advocating for a future where human rights, youth ambition, and freedom of expression are upheld as vital pillars of a thriving democracy.

One of the central characters, Karamoko, underscores the multidimensional nature of freedom of expression, a concept that goes beyond mere speech. He tells Kounady, another key figure in the narrative, that freedom of expression must be recognised and exercised in various forms, including the formation of political parties, the establishment of trade unions, and the organisation of public meetings. Additionally, Karamoko emphasises the importance of peaceful protests and strikes as legitimate expressions of dissent and democratic engagement.

La liberté d'expression doit être envisagée dans toutes ses modalités par la création des parties politiques, d'organisations syndicales, tenue des réunions publiques, marches pacifiques de protestation, grèves (Epreuve, p.29).

[Freedom of expression must be considered in all its forms through the creation of political parties, trade unions, holding public meetings, peaceful protests, and strikes]

By advocating for these forms of expression, Karamoko highlights the necessity of a pluralistic society where different voices and perspectives can coexist and contribute to the political discourse.

This perspective on freedom of expression is particularly significant in the context of African countries where, historically, political repression has often silenced dissenting voices. Diarisso's

portrayal of Karamoko's views reflects a broader concern about the state of democracy in such societies. The creation and operation of political parties, for instance, are fundamental to a functioning democracy, allowing citizens to choose their leaders and hold them accountable. Trade unions, on the other hand, represent the collective power of workers, enabling them to negotiate better working conditions and wages. Public meetings, protests, and strikes are crucial avenues through which citizens can express their grievances and demand change.

The character of Abdoulaye in *Et les oiseaux chantaient l'aurore* reflects a stark depiction of life under a military junta in Mali, offering a sobering account of the brutal realities faced by those who dared to express dissent. Abdoulaye's experience describes a society where workers and ordinary citizens are confronted daily with the harsh, uncompromising logic of authoritarian rule. Under such a regime, anyone who held views contrary to those of the ruling power was quickly branded as a dissident or subversive element. This labelling was not just a means of discrediting opposition; it was a prelude to severe and arbitrary punishment, often carried out without any possibility of recourse to justice.

Abdoulaye's experiences reveal the deeply entrenched culture of fear and repression that pervaded Malian society under military rule (Oiseaux, p.54). The regime's intolerance for differing opinions created an environment where freedom of expression was not only stifled but was also dangerous to exercise. Those who spoke out against the injustices and authoritarian practices were subjected to various forms of persecution, including imprisonment, torture, and even execution. The lack of a functioning judiciary or any independent oversight meant that these acts went unchallenged, leaving victims with no avenue for redress.

Diarisso's works offer a compelling examination of the crucial role that freedom of expression plays in building and sustaining democratic societies. Diarisso highlights the catastrophic consequences that arise when these freedoms are denied. Diarisso's vision of a society grounded in human rights, youth empowerment, and press freedom.

Ultimately, Diarisso's novels serve as a poignant reminder of the importance of protecting and promoting freedom of expression in all its forms. They challenge readers to consider the impact of authoritarianism on individual lives and the broader society and to reflect on the ways in which these freedoms can be reclaimed and safeguarded. Through the narratives, Diarisso contributes to the ongoing discourse on democracy and human rights in Africa, advocating for a future where these ideals are not just aspirational but are actively realised.

The literature highlights the ways in which state institutions, which are supposed to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens, instead become instruments of oppression, operating with impunity and without fear of accountability.

Furthermore, the debate over democracy's nature and its application in diverse cultural contexts is a complex and multifaceted issue, particularly in Africa. The question at the heart of this debate is whether democracy, as conceived in the Western paradigm, can or should be applied universally, or whether it must be adapted to fit the unique historical, cultural, and social contexts of non-Western societies. This tension is especially pronounced in Africa, where some leaders and intellectuals argue that the continent's distinctiveness requires a different approach to governance and democracy, one that deviates from Western norms and principles.

In the African context, the idea of distinctiveness is often invoked to challenge the applicability of universal democratic standards. Some African leaders assert that the continent's unique cultural heritage, historical experiences, and social structures necessitate a different model of democracy, one that reflects Africa's specific realities rather than conforming to Western expectations. This argument is not just a rejection of Western influence; it is also an assertion of Africa's right to self-determination and the recognition of its unique identity. However, this position raises critical questions about the universality of democratic principles and the potential risks of using cultural distinctiveness as a rationale to reject pluralistic democracy.

In the novel *Les fleurs des lantanas*, the character of Prefect Mutungisi ignites this debate. He argues,

Les droits de l'homme et la justice ne peuvent pas se concevoir ni s'appliquer de la même façon en Afrique et en Eurique [Europe-Amérique]. Nous autres, Africains, nous réclamons le droit à la différence (Fleurs, p.163).

[Human rights and justice cannot be conceived of or applied in the same way in Africa and in the West. We Africans demand the right to be different]

This statement encapsulates a broader sentiment among some African leaders who believe that Africa's governance should be grounded in its cultural and historical contexts rather than imposed Western models. Mutungisi's perspective reflects a deep-seated scepticism toward the universality of Western democratic principles, suggesting that Africa's path to democracy must be fundamentally different to be genuinely representative of its people.

This perspective has gained traction in various parts of Africa, where leaders often invoke cultural relativism to justify governance practices that diverge from Western democratic norms.

The argument for African distinctiveness is frequently used to defend political systems that prioritise communal values, social harmony, and consensus over the individualistic and competitive nature of Western democracies. Proponents of this view argue that African societies, with their emphasis on community and collective responsibility, are better served by governance models that reflect these values rather than by Western-style pluralistic democracy, which they claim is ill-suited to Africa's social fabric. There are some African leaders and thinkers who vividly advocate for a form of democracy that is more communal and consensus-based, reflecting the traditional African practices of governance that prioritise collective decision-making and the welfare of the community over individualism. They argue that Western-style democracy, with its emphasis on individual rights and adversarial politics, may not be suitable for societies that have different cultural orientations.

However, the invocation of African distinctiveness as a justification for rejecting Western democratic models is not without its criticisms. Critics argue that this perspective can be used as a convenient excuse by authoritarian leaders to entrench their power and avoid accountability. By framing Western democratic norms as incompatible with African values, these leaders can sidestep demands for political reform and human rights, effectively using cultural arguments to justify undemocratic practices. This raises concerns about the potential for cultural relativism to be manipulated as a tool for political repression, undermining the very principles of democracy and justice that it purports to protect.

Moreover, the argument for African distinctiveness in governance can lead to a form of exceptionalism that isolates the continent from broader global movements toward democracy and human rights. While it is essential to recognise and respect cultural differences, it is equally important to ensure that these differences are not exploited to deny basic democratic rights and freedoms. The challenge, therefore, lies in finding a balance between respecting Africa's unique cultural context and upholding universal principles of democracy and human rights.

The debate over African distinctiveness and democracy also touches on the broader issue of post-colonial identity and the legacy of colonialism in shaping contemporary African governance. Many African leaders who advocate for a distinct approach to democracy are also reacting against the legacy of colonialism, which imposed Western political systems on African societies without regard for their cultural and historical contexts. In this sense, the call for African distinctiveness can be seen as part of a broader effort to decolonise African governance and assert the continent's sovereignty over its political future.

However, this argument is not without its critics. While the idea of developing an "African" form of democracy is appealing to some, it also raises concerns about the potential misuse of this concept by authoritarian leaders. In practice, the notion that Africa needs a different form of democracy is sometimes used as a pretext by dictators and authoritarian regimes to justify their undemocratic

practices and suppress dissent. When accused of infringing on fundamental freedoms, these leaders often claim that such criticisms are based on Western standards that do not apply to their countries. They argue that their actions are in line with their own cultural and political realities, thus deflecting international criticism and avoiding accountability.

The rejection of Western democratic models in favour of an "African approach" to governance must be carefully scrutinised to ensure that it does not become a pretext for undemocratic practices. While it is true that African societies have unique cultural traditions and social structures that may require different approaches to governance, it is also true that democracy, in its broadest sense, is about empowering people to have a say in how they are governed. This principle is not inherently Western but is a fundamental human aspiration that transcends cultural boundaries.

This selective application of cultural relativism becomes particularly problematic when it is used to undermine basic human rights and freedoms. While it is essential to recognise and respect cultural differences, this should not come at the expense of fundamental human rights, which are universally recognised and protected under international law. The challenge, therefore, lies in finding a balance between respecting cultural specificities and upholding universal principles of human rights and democracy.

Literature has become a means of documenting and critiquing the ongoing struggle for human rights in Francophone Africa. Writers have taken on the role of social commentators, using their works to expose the injustices perpetrated by the state and to give voice to those who have been silenced. These narratives often centre on the experiences of the youth and democratic activists who find themselves at the forefront of the struggle against repressive regimes. Through their stories, readers gain insight into the various forms of state-sponsored violence, including the repression of freedom of opinion, arbitrary arrests, fabricated accusations, and convictions without trials.

Francophone African literature often paints a vivid and harrowing picture of state-sponsored violence, one of the most

unsettling aspects of which is the pervasive use of torture. Within these narratives, torture emerges not only as a brutal tool for extracting confessions or punishing those who dare to oppose the regime but also as a powerful mechanism for instilling fear in the wider population. This use of violence is both a method of physical and psychological destruction and a deliberate strategy to maintain the stranglehold of authoritarian regimes over society.

Torture in Francophone African literature is depicted in a variety of forms, each more horrifying than the last. It is not limited to physical beatings or whipping; it often includes psychological torture, such as prolonged isolation, threats to loved ones, or the constant fear of further violence. The brutality described in these works is not just an expression of the pain inflicted on the individual, but it is also a commentary on the larger system of oppression that seeks to dehumanise and degrade its citizens.

A poignant example of this is found in the experience of Abdoulaye, a character who recounts his own terrifying encounter with the state's machinery of repression:

Un jour, arrêté sans mandat pour une réunion que j'avais organisée, j'ai été séquestré pendant dix heures le lendemain, avec tortures au fouet et bastonnades à la plante des pieds dans les locaux de la Sécurité. " Un avertissement pour tous les intellectuels de votre espèce ", m'a-t-on lancé en me relâchant... (Oiseaux, p.50).

[One day I was arrested without a warrant for a meeting I had organised, I was harassed for ten hours until the next day, subjected to whipping and beatings on the soles of my feet in the offices of the Security. As they released me, they said that was 'a warning to all intellectuals of your kind'.]

This chilling anecdote reveals the extent to which torture is used not just as a punishment but as a warning, a means to silence intellectuals and activists, those who might otherwise inspire resistance or challenge the status quo.

The use of torture as a deterrent is a common thread in the literature of Francophone Africa, reflecting the harsh realities faced by those living under repressive regimes. The threat of torture looms large, serving to stifle dissent and dissuade individuals from engaging in any form of political activism or opposition. It creates an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, where people are constantly aware that any action or word deemed subversive could lead to their arrest, torture, or even death.

This culture of fear is not only intended to break the will of those who oppose the regime but also to send a clear message to the broader population: resistance is futile, and the consequences of defiance are severe. By making examples out of individuals like Abdoulaye, the regime ensures that others think twice before speaking out. This is a deliberate tactic to maintain control, to keep people in a state of submission and obedience.

The psychological impact of torture extends far beyond the physical pain endured by the victims. It is designed to break the spirit, to erode the very sense of self. Victims of torture often experience profound feelings of helplessness, shame, and humiliation. The literature portrays how these individuals are not only physically scarred but also emotionally and mentally devastated. Their experiences haunt them long after the physical wounds have healed, and the trauma can be so deep that it affects their ability to trust others, to feel safe, or to engage in any form of normal social interaction.

Moreover, the use of torture as a tool of state power highlights the broader issues of human rights abuses and the lack of accountability in many francophone African countries. In these narratives, the state is often depicted as an omnipresent, oppressive force that operates with impunity. The security forces and other agents of the regime are portrayed as ruthless and unaccountable, able to carry out acts of torture and violence without fear of reprisal. This creates a sense of hopelessness among the population, as the very institutions that are supposed to protect them instead become their greatest source of fear.

The perpetuation of terror through torture is a key element in the maintenance of authoritarian control. By systematically using torture, the regime reinforces its dominance and ensures that any potential challenges to its authority are swiftly and brutally crushed. This theme is recurrent in the literature, where the cyclical nature of violence and repression is depicted as an inescapable reality for those living under such regimes.

The literature also explores the broader social implications of torture and state-sponsored violence. It examines how these practices affect not only the individuals directly involved but also their families, communities, and society. The fear generated by the threat of torture permeates every aspect of life, leading to a culture of silence and conformity. People become afraid to express their opinions, to associate with those who are seen as dissidents, or to participate in any activities that could be perceived as subversive. This widespread fear and repression create a society in which true freedom of thought and expression is virtually impossible.

In many ways, the depiction of torture in Francophone African literature serves as a chilling indictment of the regimes that perpetuate such practices. It exposes the moral bankruptcy of those in power and the devastating effects of their actions on the population. The literature does not shy away from showing the brutal realities of life under authoritarian rule, but it also often highlights the resilience and courage of those who continue to resist, even in the face of such overwhelming odds. Some narratives focus on the solidarity among prisoners or the unbroken spirit of those who have endured torture but refuse to be silenced. These stories serve as a testament to the human capacity for resistance and the enduring hope for freedom and justice, even in the darkest of times. They remind readers that, despite the regime's efforts to crush dissent, the desire for liberty and dignity cannot be entirely extinguished.

Furthermore, the portrayal of torture in these literary works often carries a deeper symbolic meaning. It represents the violence and oppression inherent in colonial and postcolonial African states, where the legacy of colonialism has often been one of continued

exploitation, marginalisation, and brutality. The use of torture is a stark reminder of the ways in which power can be abused and how state violence can become entrenched in the fabric of society.

In addition to serving as a critique of authoritarian regimes, the depiction of torture in Francophone African literature also raises important questions about the role of memory and the need for justice. These works often explore the long-term effects of torture on individuals and societies, and the challenges of moving forward after such profound trauma. They suggest that true healing and reconciliation can only occur when the truth is acknowledged, and those responsible for such atrocities are held accountable.

This theme of justice is particularly important in the context of francophone African literature, where many countries continue to grapple with the legacies of dictatorship and human rights abuses. The literature calls for a reckoning with the past, for a recognition of the suffering endured by victims of torture, and for the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that such crimes are not repeated. It highlights the importance of truth-telling, of bearing witness to the atrocities committed, and of seeking justice for the victims.

The portrayal of torture in literature and other forms of media has often focused on politicians and political activists as primary targets. These individuals are frequently depicted as the ones most likely to be persecuted under oppressive regimes due to their opposition to those in power. However, some novelists have made it clear that in reality, no one is safe in dictatorial contexts. In such environments, anyone, regardless of their social status, profession, or lack of political involvement, can become a target of state-sponsored violence and repression.

Jean-Marie Mbailao, in his work *Le prostitué politique*, vividly illustrates this grim reality. He writes,

Des cadres, médecins, commissaires de police, responsables des industries, hauts cadres sportifs, mais aussi de simples paysans ont été arrêtés et ont disparu pour toujours. Ces gens-là sont tués, c'est ce qui s'est passé en réalité. Ils ont eu

pour seul péché d'avoir appartenu aux ethnies des deux premiers présidents qu'a connus le Tador. C'était une façon à ces nouveaux chefs de se venger pour, semble-t-il, les mauvais traitements appliqués pendant presque deux décennies aux ressortissants du nord (Prostitué, p.149).

[Executives, doctors, police commissioners, industry leaders, high-ranking sports officials, but also simple peasants were arrested and disappeared forever. These people were killed; this is what really happened. Their only crime was belonging to the ethnic groups of the first two presidents that Tador had known. It was a way for these new leaders to take revenge, apparently for the mistreatment inflicted on the northern people for nearly two decades]

Mbailao's words underscore a critical truth about life under dictatorship: the scope of state-sponsored violence extends far beyond those who are politically active or outspoken against the regime. The systemic and systematic repression is often indiscriminate, driven by motives that may be ethnic, regional, or purely vengeful. In Mbailao's novel, the victims included not only individuals holding significant power and influence, such as executives and doctors but also ordinary citizens who had no political ambitions or influence. Their fates were sealed not by their actions or beliefs, but simply by their ethnic background and their perceived association with previous political leaders.

This expansion of targets serves multiple purposes for a dictatorial regime. First, it instils a sense of fear and insecurity across all levels of society. When no one is safe, when even those who refrain from political involvement can be arrested, tortured, or killed, people are more likely to submit to the authority of the regime, too afraid to question or resist it. The randomness of the violence reinforces the idea that survival depends on absolute obedience and silence, as any action, or even inaction, could be construed as a threat.

Second, targeting a wide array of social strata helps to weaken any potential sources of resistance. By eliminating or

neutralising individuals with influence, such as community leaders or professionals, the regime ensures that there are fewer people capable of organising or leading an opposition movement. The systematic elimination of these figures not only decapitates any existing opposition but also discourages others from stepping into leadership roles, knowing that doing so could make them targets.

Lastly, in the specific context that Mbailao describes, the targeting of individuals from certain ethnic groups serves as a form of collective punishment and retribution. The new leaders sought to avenge the perceived injustices suffered by their own ethnic group by inflicting suffering on the groups associated with previous regimes. This creates deep societal divisions and perpetuates cycles of violence and revenge, making national reconciliation and unity more difficult.

Mbailao's depiction of torture and repression in a dictatorial State highlights the pervasive nature of fear and violence under such regimes. It serves as a stark reminder that in these contexts, the machinery of oppression can target anyone, regardless of their social or political standing.

In the novel *Le Quidam*, Dominique M'Fouillou provides a chilling insight into the nature of torture under a dictatorship, revealing that the decisions to subject innocent people to such brutality are not always made by those at the highest levels of power. Instead, M'Fouillou suggests that these heinous acts are often initiated by those who benefit from political favours.

These individuals, driven by excessive zeal or a desire to protect their personal interests, may take it upon themselves to carry out atrocities, independent of direct orders from the ruling authorities.

M'Fouillou describes this disturbing reality in the novel, stating,

On nous houspillait à coups de crosse de fusil comme des bêtes pour extorquer nos aveux. Qui dirigeait les opérations? Mystère. Parfois un officier, parfois un agent de la sécurité, parfois une autorité bicéphale. Le plus souvent, les civiles succédaient aux militaires, en ayant

l'air de les diriger. Nous ne savions jamais entre les mains de qui on nous plaçait. Pourquoi et pour combien de temps ? Nul ne le savait. On refusait même de nous considérer comme des prisonniers politiques (Quidam, p.29).

[We were harassed with rifle butts like animals to extract our confessions. Who was in charge of operations? It was a mystery. Sometimes an officer, sometimes a security agent, sometimes someone in both roles. Most often, civilians took over from the military, appearing to be in charge. We never knew whose hands we were in. Why and for how long? No one knew. They even refused to consider us as political prisoners]

This passage underscores the terrifying uncertainty faced by victims of state-sanctioned violence. The lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for the torture reflects the chaotic and arbitrary nature of power in a dictatorial regime. In such a system, authority is often diffuse, and the lines between military, security forces, and civilians become blurred. Those who carry out acts of torture may do so not out of duty, but out of personal motivations, such as the desire to curry favour with the regime or to settle personal scores.

M'Fouillou's portrayal highlights the dehumanisation that victims experience, as they are treated not as political prisoners with rights and identities, but as nameless, faceless objects subjected to the whims of their captors. The uncertainty about who holds power over them and for what reasons exacerbates their suffering, as it strips them of any sense of agency or hope for justice. In this environment, the machinery of torture operates not just as a tool of the State, but as a mechanism fuelled by the personal ambitions and fears of those who seek to maintain or enhance their standing within the regime.

In his novel *Le Quidam*, Dominique M'Fouillou exposes the horrific methods employed by torturers during interrogations, detailing how they inflict unimaginable pain to force false confessions. Among the brutal techniques described, victims are subjected to being burned with electric currents, while others

endure the agony of having their teeth broken. However, the purpose of these atrocities extends beyond merely extracting confessions; they are also designed to humiliate and dehumanise the victims, stripping them of their dignity and reducing them to a state of utter helplessness.

M'Fouillou vividly captures this torment in his writing:

Cette brutalité m'avait fait vraiment souffrir moralement, ainsi que la vulgarité de certains soldats. Ils n'avaient ni foi ni loi, ni instruction, ni éducation. A cause d'un petit galon jaune, ils se croyaient le droit de nous insulter, de nous humilier, de nous considérer non comme des hommes ayant une intelligence et un cœur, mais comme des bêtes sauvages à malmenier (Quidam, p.31).

[This brutality made me suffer greatly, morally, as did the vulgarity of some soldiers. They had neither faith nor respect for law, nor instruction, nor education. Because of a small yellow stripe on their uniform, they believed they had the right to insult us, humiliate us, and consider us not as humans with intelligence and a heart, but as wild animals to be mistreated]

This passage emphasises the profound psychological suffering inflicted upon the victims, which in many cases, surpasses the physical pain. The level of brutality and vulgarity of the soldiers, who lack any moral compass or respect for human life, add another layer of torment.

M'Fouillou illustrates how these soldiers, empowered by their small signs of authority, such as a yellow stripe on their uniform, feel entitled to degrade and dehumanise those in their custody. The victims are no longer seen as fellow human beings with intellect and emotions, but rather as mere objects to be abused and violated.

This systematic dehumanisation serves multiple purposes in a dictatorial regime. It not only breaks the spirit of the individual, making them more likely to submit to the torturers' demands, but also reinforces the power dynamics at play. By reducing their

victims to the status of "wild animals," the torturers affirm their own superiority and control, creating a psychological barrier that allows them to commit such atrocities without remorse. M'Fouillou's portrayal of torture sheds light on the pervasive cruelty within these regimes, where the goal is not just to extract information, but to annihilate the very essence of the individual, leaving them broken in body and spirit.

In the novel *Le sang pour l'alternance* by Alimou Sinta, the narrative is steeped in tragedy and the brutal loss of innocent lives. The story vividly captures the horrors faced by the youth in a society where violence and oppression reign unchecked. Among the novel's poignant moments is when Bamba, one of the main characters, reflects on the senseless killing of young people, highlighting the deep scars left on the community. His sombre reflection, shared with Faba in front of a cemetery, serves as a chilling reminder of the human cost of tyranny.

Standing amidst the graves, Bamba recounts the tragic fate of the young villagers of his age whose lives were cut short by unprovoked violence.

Ici repose un autre jeune très apprécié aussi de notre communauté, il s'appelait Bailo, les policiers ont tiré sur lui à bout portant. Il avait reçu une balle en plein visage... Juste à côté de lui vous avez la belle Fatoumata, elle était d'une grande beauté et d'une gentillesse qui avait fait sa réputation dans tout le village, elle était parvenue à arriver au lycée; ça c'est pas donné à beaucoup de filles chez nous ici ! La pauvre avait eu le malheur de s'arrêter quelques instants sur le bord de la route quand elle a reçu une balle au ventre. Elle mourut quelques heures après (Sang, p.30).

[Here lies another young man who was also highly regarded by our community; his name was Bailo. The police shot him at point-blank range. He took a bullet right in the face... Right next to him is the beautiful Fatoumata; she was known throughout the village for her graceful beauty and kindness. She had managed to reach high school; not many girls from around here do! The poor girl had the

misfortune to stop for a few moments by the roadside when she was shot in the stomach. She died a few hours later]

These senseless killings illustrate the extent of the brutality that Bamba and his peers face daily. The young lives lost - Bailo, who was respected and had potential, and Fatoumata, who represented hope and progress - are emblematic of a society where the powerful trample on the weak without consequence. These acts of barbarity, which violate all principles of human rights, reveal a stark reality: in this world, innocence is no shield against violence, and potential is often snuffed out before it can be realised.

Yet, it is precisely this unrelenting cruelty that fuels the youth's determination to resist. Bamba's reflections underscore a painful truth: the resilience of the youth is born out of their suffering. They are driven by the memories of those they have lost, like Bailo and Fatoumata, to stand against the forces that seek to oppress them. In a society where justice seems out of reach, the youth find strength in their shared grief and anger, transforming their pain into a powerful force for change. Despite the overwhelming odds, their resilience becomes an act of defiance, a refusal to let the lives lost be in vain.

In societies where freedom of expression is not tolerated, communication channels play a crucial role in resisting authoritarianism. The repression of freedom of opinion and speech is not just a denial of individual rights but a systemic barrier that hinders the growth and sustainability of democratic culture. This repression stifles the exchange of ideas and open debate, which are essential for the functioning of any healthy democracy. When people live in fear of speaking out, the flow of information is severely restricted, creating a society where critical thinking and innovation are discouraged, and conformity is enforced.

The arbitrary nature of arrests and convictions in such societies further exacerbates the situation, as it undermines the rule of law. When the legal system is used as a tool of repression rather than as a means of ensuring justice, it erodes trust between the State and its citizens. The law, which is supposed to be a safeguard for

individual rights and a means of maintaining order, becomes an instrument of fear and control. This leads to a breakdown in the social contract, as people lose faith in the institutions that are supposed to protect them. In such an environment, the relationship between the State and the people becomes one of mistrust and antagonism, rather than cooperation and mutual respect.

However, even in the most repressive societies, communication channels can serve as powerful tools for resistance. The character of Abdoulaye illustrates this dynamic vividly. Despite the oppressive environment, where his freedom of expression was severely curtailed, Abdoulaye's experiences demonstrate how local, national, and international pressure can sometimes force repressive regimes to back down. Abdoulaye recounts,

"Puis je fus libéré en catimini et 'prié de me taire', de ne pas faire la grande gueule. Mais en fait, ma remise en liberté n'était due qu'à l'heureuse pression d'une partie de l'opinion démocratique alertée de ma longue disparition. Quatre autres années plus tard, pour un 'tract' politique paru à propos du Congrès constitutif du parti militaire, 'tract' auquel je n'avais pas contribué, je fus agressé et enlevé manu militari de chez moi, après minuit par des agents qui n'ont pas hésité à fracasser ma porte pour s'introduire dans mon domicile, prétextant que j'avais tardé à leur ouvrir! (Oiseaux, p.51).

[Then I was quietly released and 'asked to keep quiet,' to not make a fuss. But in reality, my release was fortunately only due to the pressure from democratic forces alarmed by my long disappearance. Four years later, for a political 'pamphlet' anonymously published about the founding of a congress of a military party, a pamphlet to which I had not contributed. I was assaulted and forcibly abducted from my home after midnight by security agents who did not hesitate to smash my door to enter my house, claiming that I had been slow to open for them!]

The fact that Abdoulaye was released "secretly" and "asked to keep quiet" reflects the delicate balance that repressive regimes try to maintain. They seek to avoid the appearance of weakness while also mitigating the potential backlash from international or domestic outrage. The international community plays a significant role in amplifying these voices of resistance. When information about human rights abuses and repression is shared globally, it can lead to international pressure on the offending government. This pressure can take various forms, including diplomatic actions, economic sanctions, or public condemnation by foreign governments and international organisations. Such actions can, at times, force authoritarian regimes to alter their behaviour, if only to avoid further isolation or economic hardship. This shows that authoritarian governments are not impervious to external influences; they are aware of the power of public opinion and the potential consequences of widespread condemnation. In this sense, communication becomes a form of power, enabling activists, dissidents, and ordinary citizens to challenge the status quo.

Furthermore, Abdoulaye's recounting of being assaulted and forcibly abducted from his home for a political "anonymous note" further emphasises the risks that individuals face when they dare to challenge authoritarian regimes. The brutality of his treatment - the midnight abduction, the breaking down of his door - illustrates the lengths to which repressive governments will go to silence dissent. Yet, it also underscores the impact that even seemingly small acts of resistance can have. The "anonymous note," though it may have been a minor act of defiance, was enough to provoke a severe reaction from the regime. This indicates that in environments where freedom of expression is heavily restricted, even the smallest acts of resistance can be perceived as significant threats by those in power.

This brings to light the critical role of communication in authoritarian societies. In the absence of free speech and open debate, alternative forms of communication, such as underground publications, anonymous notes, and clandestine meetings, become vital for the dissemination of information and ideas. These

alternative channels not only keep the spirit of resistance alive but also serve as a means of building solidarity among those who oppose the regime. They help to create a sense of shared purpose and collective identity among dissidents, which is crucial for sustaining long-term resistance movements.

The youth and democratic activists portrayed in these works are often depicted as resilient and determined, despite the immense challenges they face. They represent the hope for a better future, one in which human rights are respected, and the rule of law is upheld. The literature thus serves as both a critique of the present and a call to action for the future. It challenges readers to consider what kind of society they want to live in and to envision the possibility of change.

It is important to note that the themes of human rights violations and state-sponsored violence in Francophone African literature are not limited to any one region or country. While these issues are pervasive across the continent, affecting a wide range of societies with different historical and cultural contexts, there are certain patterns and commonalities that emerge in the literature, reflecting the shared experiences of many African nations in their post-colonial histories.

One of the most striking aspects of this literature is the way in which it portrays the intersection of local and global forces in the perpetuation of human rights abuses. While the immediate perpetrators of violence are often local state actors, the literature also highlights the role of international actors, including foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions, in supporting or enabling these abuses. This global dimension adds another layer of complexity to the analysis of human rights violations in Francophone Africa, as it raises questions about the broader systems of power and inequality that contribute to the perpetuation of violence and impunity.

The complicity of international actors in human rights abuses is a theme that recurs in many works of francophone African literature. These works often depict the ways in which foreign powers and corporations collude with local elites to exploit the

continent's resources, with little regard for the human cost. The pursuit of profit and geopolitical interests often takes precedence over the protection of human rights, leading to the perpetuation of violence and instability. This critique of global capitalism and imperialism is a central element of the literature from the region, reflecting the broader struggle for justice and self-determination in Francophone Africa.

Another important perspective in the representation of political repression in francophone African literature is the role of memory and history in the struggle for human rights. Many writers emphasise the importance of remembering past injustices as a way of resisting the erasure of history by those in power. This act of remembrance is not just about honouring the victims of violence; it is also about reclaiming a sense of agency in the face of oppression. By documenting and narrating the experiences of those who have suffered under repressive regimes, literature becomes a means of bearing witness to the past and of challenging the official narratives that seek to justify or obscure human rights abuses.

The literature of Francophone Africa is deeply concerned with the question of how to preserve and transmit the memory of past struggles and atrocities. In societies where the official history is often manipulated or suppressed by those in power, literature serves as an alternative archive, preserving the stories of those who have been marginalized or silenced. This emphasis on memory and history is particularly important in the context of human rights violations, as it underscores the need to acknowledge and reckon with the past to build a more just and equitable future.

In this regard, francophone African literature can be seen as part of a broader tradition of testimonial literature that has emerged in response to the atrocities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Like other forms of testimonial literature, it seeks to give voice to those who have been silenced and to challenge the impunity of those who commit acts of violence. However, it also has its own distinctive features, shaped by the specific historical and cultural contexts of Francophone Africa.

The study of human rights violations in francophone African literature is not just an academic exercise; it is also a way of engaging with the ongoing struggles for justice and accountability on the continent. By bringing these issues to light, literature can play a crucial role in raising awareness and in mobilising support for human rights movements. It can also serve as a tool for education, helping to foster a culture of human rights and to promote the values of democracy and the rule of law.

In this sense, Francophone African literature is a form of activism, challenging readers to confront the realities of human rights abuses and to consider their role in the struggle for justice. Through their work, writers from the region can bear witness to the suffering of their people, to challenge the narratives of power that seek to justify or obscure violence, and to imagine a future in which human rights are respected and upheld.

Ultimately, the study of Francophone African literature offers a unique window into the complex dynamics of human rights violations, particularly those carried out through extrajudicial practices and the accompanying culture of impunity. By engaging with this literature, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the human cost of state repression and political violence, as well as the broader social, political, and historical contexts in which these abuses occur. Through their vivid portrayals of state-sponsored violence, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, authors from Francophone Africa challenge readers to confront the realities of human rights violations and to consider what can be done to address these injustices. In doing so, they offer a powerful reminder of the importance of literature as a tool for social critique, resistance, and change.



Chapter

Conclusions, contribution, and further research avenues

This study has embarked on a comprehensive examination of the complex and intertwined narratives that have shaped and continue to reflect on the socio-political landscape of Francophone Africa. Through a critical reading of fifteen novels, the research has sought to unearth the multifaceted layers of historical, cultural, and political constructs that perpetuate instability across the continent. By engaging with literary texts, the study has not only illuminated the role of literature in reflecting and challenging prevailing perceptions of Africa but also underscored its potential as a catalyst for social and political change.

One of the central findings of this study is the critical role that literature plays in shaping public discourse and influencing policy debates related to Africa's socio-political challenges. The novels examined reveal a deep engagement with historical events, particularly the colonial legacies that continue to cast a long shadow over the continent. These legacies, as portrayed in the literature, are not merely remnants of the past but are active forces that shape contemporary governance, societal norms, and the everyday lives of Africans. The authors in the corpus highlight how these colonial influences, coupled with inadequate governance, have led to a crisis of nation-building. This crisis is further exacerbated by ethnic affiliations, the political weaponisation of identity-based rhetoric, corruption, nepotism, and the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities.

The disintegration of economic and socio-political infrastructures is a recurring theme in the novels, reflecting the broader instability that plagues many francophone African nations. Dysfunctional education systems, generational disillusionment, and institutional instability are depicted as both causes and effects

of this instability. The literature paints a grim picture of constitutional changes that serve the interests of the ruling elite rather than the broader population, contributing to a cycle of human rights abuses, state-sponsored violence, and a culture of impunity. These narratives underscore the pervasive impact of poor leadership and political repression on the continent's development and stability.

Yet, despite the heavy burden of these challenges, the study has also uncovered a sense of resilience and hope within African literature. While the novels acknowledge the deep-seated issues stemming from colonialism and poor governance, they also reflect a burgeoning spirit of resistance and a desire for change, particularly among the younger generations. This is most evident in the rejection of France's influence in African affairs and the growing determination to dismantle the remnants of colonialism that manifest in the form of leaders perceived as puppets of foreign powers.

The literature suggests that young Africans are increasingly willing to sacrifice to secure a future that is free from external interference and marked by stability and self-determination. This emerging consciousness, which resonates throughout the novels, aligns with broader pan-African aspirations for an African renaissance. The dreams and hopes of a free, stable, and prosperous Africa, as articulated by these novelists, are not merely utopian ideals but are grounded in a realistic assessment of the continent's potential. Africa, being the continent of the young, is portrayed as being on the cusp of a transformative period, driven by a new generation that is eager to take control of its destiny.

By situating literary analysis within historical, social, and political contexts, this study has enriched ongoing debates on achieving lasting stability, social justice, and effective governance across Francophone Africa. The insights gained from the novels analysed offer a deeper understanding of the epistemological foundations of social and political instability in the region. The narratives challenge the simplistic view of Africa as a continent perpetually trapped in a cycle of chaos and instead present a more

nuanced picture that acknowledges the challenges while also recognizing the potential for change.

Through their engagement with historical events, colonial legacies, and global power dynamics, the authors not only highlight Africa's multifaceted struggle for stability and progress but also propose pathways towards achieving these goals. The literary narratives examined in this study suggest that the path to stability in Francophone Africa lies in addressing the root causes of instability, such as colonial legacies, poor governance, and social inequality, while also fostering a sense of collective identity, agency, and purpose among the continent's young population.

Moreover, the study's focus on the role of literature in shaping public discourse underscores the importance of cultural constructs in the broader socio-political landscape. Literature, as this research has shown, is not just a reflection of society but an active participant in the ongoing dialogue about Africa's future. The analysed novels offer critical perspectives on the challenges facing the continent, but they also provide a space for imagining new possibilities. This dual role of literature, as both a critic of the present and a visionary for the future, is a testament to its enduring relevance in the socio-political realm.

In conclusion, the findings of this study call for a re-evaluation of how we understand and address the socio-political challenges facing Francophone Africa. They suggest that any meaningful effort to promote stability and development must consider the historical and cultural contexts in which these challenges are rooted. At the same time, the study underscores the importance of empowering Africa's young population, who are increasingly taking the lead in the fight for a more just and equitable society. As the continent continues to grapple with the legacies of its past, the literature that was analysed in this study offers a beacon of hope, reminding readers that the future of Africa lies in the hands of those who are willing to challenge the status quo and envision a new path forward.

In the end, the study has not only deepened our understanding of the complex interplay of forces that contribute to

instability in Francophone Africa but has also highlighted the critical role of literature in shaping the continent's future. Through the lens of African novelists, readers are reminded that the struggle for stability, justice, and progress is ongoing, and that the power to change the course of history lies within the stories that need to be told and the actions to be taken in response to them.

One of the most significant contributions of this study is its exploration of how literary narratives both reflect and challenge prevailing perceptions of Africa. The selected novels serve as a mirror to the continent's socio-political realities, but they also go beyond mere reflection. By engaging with themes of colonialism, governance, and identity, the authors challenge the dominant narratives that have long shaped external and internal perceptions of Africa.

These narratives not only reflect the continent's challenges but also challenge prevailing perceptions and offer alternative visions for the future. The study points to a growing sense of agency among African authors, particularly the younger generation, who are rejecting France's influence and advocating for a new, self-determined African future. The narratives highlight how the manipulation of political structures and the erosion of democratic institutions have contributed to the disintegration of socio-political infrastructures and the rise of authoritarianism. By exposing the extrajudicial practices and the repression of dissent, these narratives underscore the urgent need for accountability and the rule of law. The study's contribution in this regard is crucial for understanding the systemic issues that perpetuate instability and hinder progress in Francophone Africa.

While the study has made significant contributions to the understanding of literature's role in shaping socio-political narratives in Francophone Africa, it also opens several avenues for future research. One potential area of exploration is the comparative analysis of francophone African literature with literature from other regions of Africa. By examining how similar themes are addressed in Anglophone, Lusophone, and other African literary traditions, researchers can gain a more

comprehensive understanding of the continent's socio-political dynamics through holistic perspectives.

The exploration of the role of digital and social media in shaping and disseminating African literary narratives is also another promising avenue for future research. The intersection of literature and activism in the digital age presents a rich area for exploration, particularly in understanding how literature can mobilise social movements and inspire political change. As more African writers embrace digital platforms to share their work, it is essential to investigate how these new mediums influence the reach and impact of literary narratives.

Finally, the study's findings on the rejection of neocolonial influence and the rise of a new African consciousness among young people point to the need for further research on the role of youth in shaping Africa's future. As the continent of young people, Africa's future will be largely determined by its younger generations. Exploring how young African writers and intellectuals are redefining African identity, governance, and socio-political paradigms could provide valuable insights into the continent's path toward stability and progress.

Bibliography

- Barthes, R. (1977). *The death of the author*. London: Fontana.
- Barthes, R. (2009) *S/Z*. John Wiley & Sons
- Bazenguissa-Ganga, R. (1996). *Milices politiques et bandes armées à Brazzaville*. Paris : Fondation nationale des sciences politiques (FNSP).
- Bernault, F. (1996). *Démocraties ambiguës en Afrique centrale*. Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon : 1940-1965. Paris : Karthala.
- Beti, M. (1956). *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*. Editions Robert Laffont.
- Beti, M. (1957). *Mission terminée*. Paris: Buchet/Chastel.
- Beti, M. (1972). *Main basse sur le Cameroun*. Paris: Éditions François Maspero.
- Boisvert, M.A. et al. (2022). *Coups d'État en Afrique : le retour de l'uniforme en politique*. *Bulletin Franco Paix*, 7(1-2), 1-21.
- Bouanchaud, C. (2011). " Valises à l'Élysée: la justice bientôt saisie? ". *Europe 1* (11 septembre 2011). Available online via the URL : <https://www.europe1.fr/politique/Valises-a-l-Elysee-la-justice-bientot-saisie-333414> [accessed 17/03/2024].
- Bourdieu, P. (1976). " La production de l'idéologie dominante ", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2 (2 & 3), 4-73.
- Bugul, K. (2010). *Le baobab fou*. Paris : Présence Africaine.
- Burney, S. (2012). *Pedagogy of the Other: Edward Said, Postcolonial Theory, and Strategies for Critique*. Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Chabal, P. & Daloz, J. (1999). *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chafer, T. (2005). "Chirac and 'La Françafrique': No Longer a Family Affair", *Modern and Contemporary France*, 13.
- Chafer, T. (2014). "Hollande and Africa Policy". *Modern & Contemporary France*. 22 (4), 513-531.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09639489.2014.957966>
 [accessed 17/03/2024].

Chafer, T. (2014). "Hollande and Africa Policy". *Modern and Contemporary France*. 22 (4), 513-531. Available online at the URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09639489.2014.957966> [accessed 20/12/2023].

Chanda, T. (2019). "Comment Omar Bongo est devenu un acteur majeur de la Francafrique " *RFI*, 13/06/2019. Available online at the URL: <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20190608-omar-bongo-gabon-france-francafrique-foccart-houphouet-boigny-cote-ivoire> [Accessed 17/03/2024].

Chipman, J. (1984). *Les problèmes de sécurité en Afrique francophone*. *Politique étrangère*, 49 (2), 331-353.

Chipman, J. (1984). *Security Issues in Francophone Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clapham, C. (1996). *Africa and the international system: The politics of State survival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cobalt Institute (2024). *Cobalt Industry Risk Assessment Framework (CIRAF)*. Available online via the URL: <https://www.cobaltinstitute.org/cobalt-sourcing-responsability/> [accessed 26/06/2024].

Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2004). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. *Oxford Economic Papers*. 56 (4), 563-595.

Cooper, F. (2005). *Colonialism in Question: theory, knowledge history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dabira, G.N. (1997). *Brazzaville à feu et à sang*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Decouty, E. (2008) " L'Élysée restaure les réseaux de la Francafrique". *Marianne* (0 5 / 0 4 / 2 0 0 8) Available online at the URL: <https://www.marianne.net/societe/lelysee-restaure-les-reseaux-de-la-francafrique> [accessed 17/03/2024].

Degnbol-Martinussen, J. and Engberg-Pedersen, P. (2003). *Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation*. Zed Books: London.

Diarisso, D. (2021). *À l'épreuve des urnes*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Diome, F. (2003). *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*. Éditions LGF.

Dorier-Apprill, E. (1997). " Guerres des milices et fragmentation urbaine à Brazzaville", *Hérodote*, 86/87, 182-221.

Faye, O. (2023). "The repeated farewells of French presidents to 'Francafrique'" *Le Monde* (13/03.2023). Available online at the URL: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/m-le-mag/article/2023/03/13/the-repeated-farewells-of-french-presidents-to-francafrique_6019213_117.html [accessed 17/03/2024].

- Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*. Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2nd Edit.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Genette, G. (1983). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell University Press
- Gluhbegovic, A. (2016). *Conflict Dynamics in Francophone Africa: A Comparative Analysis*. Routledge.
- Gluhbegovic, R. (2016). *Les types de conflits en Afrique*. Johannesburg: Grant Masterson
- Haddour, A. (2019). *Frantz Fanon, Postcolonialism and the ethics of difference*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Haski, P. (2023). " La dynastie Bongo au Gabon, une histoire française ". *Le Nouvel Observateur* (7 septembre 2023). Available online at the URL: <https://www.nouvelobs.com/monde/20230907.OBS77841/la-dynastie-bongo-au-gabon-une-histoire-francais.html> [accessed 17/03/2024].
- Hintjens, H.M. (1999). Explaining the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(2), 241-286. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X99003018>.
- Human Rights Watch (2024). *World Report: Central African Republic*. Available online at the URL: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/central-african-republic#a8c4a5> [accessed 17/03/2024].
- Jensen, C. B., Kuenzi, M., & Mehanna, J.-G. (2022). Changing the Rules: Institutions, Party Systems, and the Frequency of Constitutional Amendments in Africa. *Africa Spectrum*, 57(2), 134-154. Available online at the URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00020397221082946> [accessed 17/03/2024].
- Kabunda, M. and Luque, T.J. (2009). *La République Démocratique du Congo : Les droits humains, les conflits et la construction/destruction de l'Etat*. Barcelona: Édition Fundació Solidaritat, Universitat de Barcelona (UB) et Inrevés. Available online via the URL: https://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/68368/1/Republique_Democratique_Congo_droits_humains_fra.pdf [accessed 27/10/2023].
- Kamau Kuria, G. (1991). Human Rights and Democracy in Africa. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 15(1). 23-36.

- Kane, C.H. (1961). *L'Aventure ambiguë*. Paris: Julliard.
- Kourouma, A. (1968). *Les soleils des indépendances*. Paris: Editions du Seuil
- Kourouma, A. (1998). *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*. Paris : Editions du Seuil
- Laclau, E. (1977). *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*. London: New Left Books.
- Laclau, E. (2001). Democracy and the question of power. *Constellations* 8 (1): 3-14.
- Laclau, E. (2015). *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*. London: Verso.
- Laye, C. (1953). *L'Enfant noir*. Paris : Éditions Plon.
- Mabanckou, A. (2005). *Verre Cassé*. Paris: Seuil.
- Mbailao, J.M. (2021). *Le Prostitué Politique*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- Mbaku, J. M. (2020) "Threats to democracy in Africa: The rise of the constitutional coup. Available online via the URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/threats-to-democracy-in-africa-the-rise-of-the-constitutional-coup/> [accessed 27/10/2023].
- Mbembe, A. (2005). *De la postcolonie : essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*. Paris : Karthala.
- M'Fouillou, D. (1977). *La Soumission*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- M'Fouillou, D. (1995). *Le Quidam*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- M'Fouillou, D. (2000). *La salve des innocents*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- M'Fouillou, D. (2000). *Ondongo*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- M'Fouillou, D. (2000). *Vent d'espoir sur Brazzaville*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- M'Fouillou, D. (2006). *Le mythe d'Ange*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- Moura, J. M. (1999). *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Munyangayo, T. (2022). Intersecting and Contiguous Identities in African Narratives: Ontological and Anthropological Perspectives, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 8(3), 15-31.
- Munyangayo, T. (2024a). Sociological reading of the impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Africa, *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 12(2), 1-26.
- Munyangayo, T. (2024b). Examining alterity dynamics through the conceptualisation and (re)construction of social and political enemy in post-independent francophone African literature, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 12(4), 67-89. doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol12n46789>.
- Ndiaye, B. (2022). *La France à fric*. Publishroom.
- Ndulo, M. (2019). *Constitutions and Constitutional Reforms in African*

Politics. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available online at the URL:

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1324> [accessed 27/10/2023].

N'Kaloulou, B. (2021). *Le pousse-pousse de Makélékélé : Une jeunesse au Congo*. Paris : L'Harmattan

Nsegiyumva, C. (2019). *Rwandan conflict: Have we reached the dead end?* Paris: Editions Scribe.

Nsegiyumva, C. (2021). *African Great Lakes Countries: from independence to deception and instability*. Paris: Editions La Pagaie.

Ousmane, S. (1956). *Le Docker noir*. Paris : Nouvelles Éditions Debrasse.

Oyono, F. (1956). *Une vie de boy*. Paris: Poche.

Pabanel, J.P. (1985). *Les coups d'état militaires en Afrique noire*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Passinri, P. P. (2023). *Coup d'État du 30: Non au coup d'État en Afrique*
Peace and Security Council (2019). *Tampering with national constitutions is a threat to stability in Africa*. Available online via the URL: https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/tampering-with-national-constitutions-is-a-threat-to-stability-in-africa?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=PSC_Report&utm_medium=email. [accessed 27/10/2023].

Radio Canada (2019). "En Afrique, 200 coups d'État en 70 ans ". Available online via URL : <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1147040/coups-etat-putsch-afrique-amerique-sud> [accessed 26/10/2023].

Riffaterre, M. (1957). *Le style des Pléiades de Gobineau. Essai d'application d'une méthode stylistique*, Paris: Minard.

Riffaterre, M. (1970). *Essais de stylistique structurale*, Paris: Flammarion.

Riffaterre, M. (1983). *Sémiotique de la poésie*, Paris: Seuil.

Riffaterre, M. (1979). *La production du texte*, Paris: Seuil.

Rubayiza, F. (2000). *Guérir le Rwanda de la Violence*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Sembène, O. (1960). *Les bouts de bois de Dieu. Le Livre Contemporain*.

Sinta, A. (2021). *Le sang pour l'alternance*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Tadjo, V. (2002). *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda*. Heinemann.

Tarif, M. and Vircoulon, T. (2016). *Transitions politiques : Les déboires du modèle de sortie de crise en Afrique*. Paris : Institut français des relations internationales. Available online via the URL:

https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/transitions_politiques_vircoulon_tarif_2016_0.pdf [accessed 27/10/2023).

Taylor, I. (2019). "France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism", *Third World Quarterly*. 40 (6), 1064-1088. Available online at the URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1585183> [accessed 27/10/2023].

Thomson, A. (2010). *An Introduction to African Politics*, 3rd Edition. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Tshibambe, G.N. (2010). *La politique africaine de la RDC de l'indépendance à nos jours*. La Revues Nouvelle. Available online via the URL: <https://revuenouvelle.be/La-politique-africaine-de-la-RDC-de-l/> [accessed 20/11/2023].

UN (2024). *Group of Experts Makes Recommendation regarding Minerals Originating from Rubaya, North Kivu*. Available online at the URL: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15553.doc.htm> Accessed 26/06/2024 [accessed 27/10/2023].

US Department of State (2022) *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Rwanda*. Available online at the URL: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/rwanda/> [accessed 27/10/2023].

Valdiguié, L. (2023). "Les révélations du porteur de valises de l'Elysée ". *Le Journal du Dimanche* (25/01/2023). Available online at the URL: <https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/Les-revelations-du-porteur-de-valises-de-l-Elysee-387013-3114551> [accessed 17/03/2024].

Williams, G. (2007). *Why Structural Adjustment is necessary and why it doesn't work*. *Review of African Political Economy*. 21 (60), pp.214-225. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056249408704057>.

Ouologuem, Y. (2018). *Le Devoir de violence*. Paris : Editions du Seuil.

Yansané, Y. A. (1996). *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing.