

Leadership Failure and National Underdevelopment in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: A Postcolonial Reading

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ABSTRACT

Literature is often described as a mirror of society, reflecting social realities, portraying human experiences, criticising social problems, and influencing social change. After independence, African writers and scholars began to critique the problems of leadership and governance as major obstacles to national development. This study investigates the causes of national underdevelopment in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Using a postcolonial lens and close textual analysis, the researcher identifies the following findings: underdevelopment in post-independence Africa is due to problems of poor leadership and governance; political corruption and moral degeneration; the replication of colonial exploitative ideology by African elites; and the absence of visionary leadership. Armah, through his novel, argues that 'The Beautiful Ones Will Be Born' not through independence alone or a mere replacement of one group of leaders with another, but through the moral renewal and integrity of citizens and society, which will then bring about genuine transformation.

Key concepts: leadership failure, corruption, moral decay, underdevelopment, Postcolonial Africa

INTRODUCTION

African literature has long served as a medium through which writers represent and critique the political, social, and economic realities of African societies. Following independence from colonial rule, many African countries experienced high expectations for democratic governance, economic prosperity, social justice, and national development. However, these expectations were gradually undermined by political instability, corruption, weak institutions, and poor leadership. As Meredith (2013) states, poor political leadership has been a major factor contributing to the challenges faced by several post-independence African nations. Similarly, Fanon (1963) argues that the post-independence national bourgeoisie often prioritized personal interests and accumulation of wealth over genuine national transformation.

These post-independence challenges are particularly evident in Ghana, which gained independence from British colonial rule in 1957. Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) provides a critical representation of the political and moral conditions of post-independence Ghana. Written shortly after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, the novel portrays a society characterized by corruption, moral decay, political opportunism, and frustrated expectations of independence. Through its characters and events, Armah demonstrates how corrupt leadership and the misuse of public resources can undermine social and economic progress.

The main problem investigated in this study is how Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* depicts the failure of post-independence leadership to translate political independence into meaningful national development.

This study is guided by the following research question: How does Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* address and describe the issues of bad leadership and governance as major obstacles to genuine national development in postcolonial Africa?

The main objective is to read, understand, analyze, and interpret Armah's literary work in order to investigate how the author represents leadership failure as a major obstacle to national development in post-independence Ghana and Africa in general. Through a postcolonial perspective, the study analyses bad leadership, political corruption and moral decay, the persistence of colonial exploitative structures, and the lack of visionary leadership as factors contributing to national underdevelopment.

This paper is organized into the following main sections: introduction, review of related literature, theoretical framework, methodology and research design, textual analysis and interpretation, discussion of the findings, and conclusion.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) has attracted considerable scholarly attention because of its critical representation of post-independence Ghanaian society. Much of the scholarship on the novel focuses on corruption, moral decay, political leadership, disillusionment, colonial legacies, social inequality, and the misuse of national resources. These concerns are closely related because the novel presents political leadership, corruption, and the condition of the nation as interconnected rather than isolated problems.

Previous studies can therefore be organized around four major areas: post-independence disillusionment and leadership failure; colonial legacies and the responsibility of African leaders; corruption and political mismanagement; and leadership failure and national development. Examining the literature along these thematic lines provides a clearer basis for situating the present study.

Post-independence disillusionment and leadership failure

A major concern in studies of Armah's novel is the disillusionment that followed African independence. In *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993), Ngugi wa Thiong'o states that political independence did not bring fundamental changes for many African societies, describing it as an "independence with question mark." This contradiction between the expectations of independence and post-independence realities is central to *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Lindfors (1994) similarly notes the transformation of the African political leader from a symbol of liberation before independence into a figure associated with corruption, mismanagement, personal enrichment, and abuse of power after independence. Eli (2020) argues that Armah's novel reflects the harsh conditions and disillusionment of post-independence Ghana, while Latifa (2022) identifies political elites as important contributors to the deterioration of Ghanaian society.

Furthermore, Macheke (2014) provides a more direct examination of postcolonial leadership in Armah's novel. Her study argues that post-independence leaders depart from democratic ideals and use political positions for personal enrichment, resulting in socio-economic disillusionment. In the same regard, Abdullahi (2020) identifies *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* as a text that represents leadership failure, particularly the betrayal of the hopes associated with independence and the emergence of corruption and hopelessness in postcolonial society.

These studies demonstrate that the failure of post-independence leadership is not a peripheral concern in Armah's novel. Rather, it is closely connected to the novel's portrayal of disappointed hopes and deteriorating social conditions. However, while previous scholars have established the relationship between failed leadership and disillusionment, the implications of this failure for national underdevelopment require further focused examination. This provides an important point of departure for the present study.

Colonial legacies and responsibility of African leaders

Previous scholars have also debated the relationship between colonial legacies and the failures of post-independence African leadership. Montle (2024) argues that *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* demonstrates the continuing influence of colonial legacies on postcolonial African political, social, and economic conditions. From this perspective, independence did not completely eliminate the structures and practices inherited from colonial rule. However, Mbembe (2000) cautions against attributing Africa's political failures entirely to

colonialism and emphasizes the responsibility of African political leadership. Likewise, Sheriff (2010) identifies the absence of visionary leadership as a major challenge facing Africa.

These perspectives suggest that post-independence underdevelopment should be understood through both the continuing effects of colonialism and the actions of African political elites.

Corruption and political mismanagement

Corruption is another prominent concern identified in prior scholarship on *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Armah represents bribery, political influence, personal enrichment, and the misuse of public resources as features of the post-independence political system. Montle (2024) argues that the character of Joseph Koomson represents corrupt political leadership and the use of political office for personal gain. In the same perspective, Macheka (2014) argues that the political leaders portrayed in the novel abandon democratic ideals and use their positions for personal enrichment. Wosu (2023) further connects corruption and moral decay in the novel with social disorder and impediments to development. Efe and Anyanwu (2024) extend this discussion by showing how corruption also influences social values and aspirations, particularly through Oyo's admiration for the lifestyle of Koomson and his wife.

These studies show that corruption in the novel extends beyond individual misconduct and affects the wider social and political environment.

Leadership failure and national development

The existing scholarship suggests a close relationship between leadership failure, corruption, and national development. Lindfors (1994) observes that the post-independence African political leader increasingly became associated with mismanagement, personal enrichment, and the abuse of political power, while Mbembe (2000) emphasizes the responsibility of African leaders for the political and socio-economic crises experienced in many African countries.

Similarly, Wosu (2023) links corruption and moral decay in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to social disorder and impediments to development. Montle (2024) also demonstrates how Armah uses characters such as Koomson to expose the corrupt practices of post-independence political elites and their failure to contribute to national transformation. These perspectives suggest that when political leaders prioritize personal interests over public responsibility and national resources are mismanaged, the conditions necessary for social and economic development are undermined. Armah's portrayal of Koomson and other beneficiaries of the corrupt political system therefore presents leadership failure not merely as a political or moral problem, but also as a condition that contributes to broader national underdevelopment.

Although previous studies have examined corruption, moral decay, post-independence disillusionment, colonial legacies, and political leadership in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, these concerns have often been treated separately. Less attention has been given to the interconnected relationship between leadership failure and national underdevelopment as represented in the novel. In particular, the contribution of corrupt leadership, political mismanagement, and the misuse of national resources to the persistence of underdevelopment requires further examination from a postcolonial perspective. The present study addresses this gap by examining how *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* represents leadership failure and its consequences for national development within the broader context of postcolonial Ghana.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study employs postcolonial theory to examine leadership failure and its implications for national development in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). The theory is appropriate because the novel is situated within the political, social, and economic realities of post-independence Ghana and portrays a society in which political independence has not resulted in the expected social and economic transformation. Although colonial rule has formally ended, the novel depicts the persistence of corruption, inequality, political opportunism, and other conditions that undermine national development. Postcolonial theory

therefore provides a framework for examining both the continuing effects of colonialism and the responsibilities of post-independence African leaders.

Postcolonial theory is a method of interpreting, reading and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism, where it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of racially determined powers of representation. Furthermore, postcolonial literature is the type of literature which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship between the colonizer and colonized (Nayar, 2009 & Boehmer, 1995).

Similarly, postcolonial theory designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority, which back across the twentieth century and beyond. Studies of postcolonial cultures, texts, and politics are interested in responses to colonial oppression which were and are oppositional (Waugh, 2006).

Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for analysing the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of societies that have experienced colonial imperialist rule and its consequences. In post-independence period, African states continue to experience the aftermath of colonial powers, because the Africans who fought for the decolonization, once on power, substituted for the colonizers.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes that “Spoiled children of yesterday’s colonialism and today’s governing powers, they oversee the looting of the few national resources...because of obsessed immediate interests, the national bourgeoisie proves incapable of achieving simple national unity and incapable of building the nation on a solid, constructive foundation” (1965).

Scholars generally attribute the failure of national development in post-independence Africa to two main factors: external influences, such as the continued power and influence of former colonial powers, and internal factors, including the mismanagement of the continent after independence.

External roots of development crisis in Africa

In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Chinua Achebe clearly demonstrates that during the precolonial moment, Africa had organized politics, and its economies functioned properly. However, when European missionaries and administrators arrived in Africa, they established their colonial governance and leadership, that substantially weakened and disrupted indigenous political, socio-economic and cultural institutions, while the outstanding of African development should stem from the cultural aspects.

For Ngugi wa Thiongo, the failure of national development might be linked to cultural domination. In his essay, *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), he writes that colonialism controlled the psychological abilities of the colonial subject through the colonizer’s language and education. The imposition of European languages and education alienated the colonized from his history and identity, creating a disconnection from his local realities which are important elements for the sustainable development. In other words, Ngugi indirectly explains that Europeans came with their development models and imposed them on the colonial subject, while the later should also include the indigenous cultural aspects.

Fanon puts an emphasis on the economic exploitation and structural dependency. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he critically writes that colonialism was more beneficial for the colonizer than the colonized. The colonized territories were widely exploited to supply the raw materials for European industries rather than providing local industries and foster self-sustaining growth. In this regard, Fanon shows that imperial ideology was more exploitative than developing the colonized.

As for Walter Rodney (1972), in his influential book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, gives a foundational theoretical framework describing the effects of colonialism on the colonized territories. He writes that the African development crisis is linked to the slave trade, forced labour, and monocrop export systems... During this period, Africa lost many people who could also contribute to the development of the continent. Africa was forcibly involved in global capitalist system, which had more losses than gains for Africa.

Internal roots of national underdevelopment

Some scholars argue that Africa's underdevelopment can partly be attributed to the internal factors. African leaders have contributed to failures in governance, leadership, and the management of public and private institutions.

In his political essay, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Achebe (1983) famously notes that the trouble with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership. He rejects the assumptions about colonialism. Achebe clearly indicates that the development stagnation of the country is due to corruption, mediocrity, embezzlement of the public funds, and indiscipline among post-independence Nigerian leaders.

Similar information is given by the same scholar in his novel, *A Man of the People* (1966), describing that in Nigeria and Africa in general, political system is dominated by bribery, patronage, electoral fraud, and public funds embezzlement. The author uses the character such as Chief Nanga to represent and describe the attitude of African political leaders. Chief Nanga uses public position for personal enrichment, distributing government contracts and scholarships based on loyalty rather than merit.

Also, Ngugi wa Thiongo in his novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), describes that independence ideals were disillusioned by betrayal, opportunism, and personal ambition. Through the character Mugo, Ngugi demonstrates that African authorities have betrayed their freedom to colonial authorities. He implies that national unity was compromised by individual moral failure. The novel also critiques opportunism among African leaders represented by some characters, seeking after the independence, political recognition and personal advancement rather than collective reconstruction.

These two dimensions (external and internal) will be applied directly to the textual analysis of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The external dimension refers to the continuing effects of colonialism, including inherited political and economic structures, colonial values, and forms of cultural and ideological domination that persist after formal independence. The internal dimension focuses on the responsibility of post-independence African political elites, particularly their failure to provide effective governance, their involvement in corruption, their pursuit of personal interests, and their inability to formulate and implement a transformative vision for national development.

These two dimensions guide the interpretation of the four major themes identified in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: poor leadership and governance, political corruption and moral erosion, continuation of colonial ideology, and absence of visionary leadership. Poor leadership and governance and political corruption and moral erosion are primarily examined through the internal dimension because they concern the conduct and failures of post-independence political elites. The continuation of colonial ideology is examined mainly through the external dimension because it reveals the persistence of colonial modes of thought and values after political independence. The absence of visionary leadership is examined primarily as an internal failure, while also considering how such leadership fails to transform the political, economic, and ideological conditions inherited from colonialism.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a qualitative research design using close textual analysis as the primary method. The analysis focuses on selected extracts from Armah's novel that are representative of the themes of poor leadership and governance, political corruption and moral erosion, continuation of colonial ideology, and absence of visionary leadership. The extracts were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research question and their capacity to illustrate the novel's critique of postcolonial African leadership and governance. The analysis follows a thematic approach, identifying recurring themes and patterns in the text and interpreting them in relation to the two dimensions of postcolonial theoretical framework. The researcher also considers the historical context of the novel, including the political situation in Ghana during the 1960s, to understand the relationship between fiction and historical reality. This approach allows for a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the novel's engagement with issues of leadership and development.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* focuses on four interrelated themes: poor leadership and governance, political corruption and moral erosion, continuation of colonial ideology, and absence of visionary leadership. These themes are interpreted through the postcolonial framework adopted in this study, particularly the distinction between the external dimension and the internal dimension of post-independence underdevelopment. The external dimension concerns the continuing influence of colonial structures, values, and ideologies, whereas the internal dimension concerns the responsibility of post-independence political elites for corruption, moral decay, poor leadership and governance, and failure to promote national transformation.

Poor leadership and governance

Poor leadership and governance constitute a major concern in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Armah portrays post-independence Ghana as a society in which political authority has failed to produce the social and economic transformation expected after independence. Instead of serving the interests of the wider population, political leaders are presented as increasingly concerned with personal interests and political power.

Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, being a satirical novel, uses irony, ridicule, exaggeration, criticism, and symbolic images to portray the poor leadership and bad governance in post-independence Ghana and Africa in general. The writer alludes to Kwame Nkrumah's leadership and his government, which fails to provide citizens with standardized living conditions.

Poor leadership and governance result in social, political, economic, and cultural problems. Political leaders and other government officials live in luxurious conditions. They enrich themselves through bribery, corruption, manipulation, and other dishonest practices while the masses are ruined by poverty. Armah mocks these post-independence African leaders who betrayed the ideals of independence.

Koomson, among the main characters, a government minister, represents dishonest African political leaders. He uses his political position for personal interest and becomes involved in fraudulent business schemes, such as the fishing boat deal. Koomson possesses expensive cars, lives in a luxury house, and prefers imported goods. He is a manipulator, arrogant leader, and uses the ordinary people to serve his own interests.

Another corrupt character is Amankwa who stands for a visitor in the novel. He is a timber contractor who comes to the railway office where the unnamed protagonist works. The visitor is looking for wagon space to transport his timber. He attempts to bribe the man so that his timber can be given more priority. But, the upright man refuses to take bribery, showing his commitment to honesty in a society deeply affected by moral decay:

The man was left alone with thoughts of the easy slide and how everything said there was something miserable, something unspeakably dishonest about a man who refused to take and to give what everyone around was busy taking and giving: something unnatural, something very cruel, something that was criminal, for who but criminal could ever be left with such a feeling of loneliness? (AKA, 1968: 37).

Armah's novel shows that exceptionally upright individuals, such as the unnamed Man, are often misunderstood, mocked, and isolated by a society that has become morally corrupt and decayed. As suggested by the quotation, rather than being respected for his integrity, the Man is harshly criticized by both his family and the wider community. This hostility stems from the fact that his honesty prevents him from accumulating wealth and achieving social status. For instance, his wife, Oyo, and his mother-in-law regard him as weak and unambitious because he cannot provide the material luxuries that corrupt individuals enjoy.

The leaders portrayed in the novel fail to provide effective governance and do not demonstrate a commitment to improving the conditions of ordinary citizens. This represents the internal dimension of postcolonial underdevelopment, since the problem is located in the actions and failures of the post-independence political elite.

From a postcolonial perspective, the significance of this failure lies in the inability of the new political elite to transform the conditions inherited from colonial rule. Political independence was expected to initiate a new phase of national development, but poor governance prevents this transformation from taking place.

Political corruption and moral decay

Political corruption is another major theme through which Armah exposes the failures of the post-independence political system. The novel depicts bribery, political patronage, personal enrichment, and the misuse of public authority as practices that have become increasingly normalized.

The conduct of Koomson is particularly significant because he represents a political elite that benefits materially from political power. His accumulation of wealth demonstrates the transformation of public office into an avenue for private enrichment. This is primarily an internal dimension of postcolonial underdevelopment, since it concerns the choices and behaviour of the post-independence political elite.

Fanon's (1963) discussion of the national bourgeoisie provides a useful interpretation of this representation. Fanon argues that the national elite may assume political authority after independence without undertaking the economic and social transformation required for genuine national development. Koomson can therefore be interpreted as a representation of the type of political elite whose primary concern is personal accumulation rather than national transformation.

Armah employs vivid imagery such as graffiti, filth, rot, dirt, decay, and greed to illustrate how political corruption has distorted the nation. The overflowing rubbish, foul smells from dirty toilets, and general stench symbolize a country suffering under corrupt and ineffective leadership. Additionally, the old, rusty, dirty, and barely functioning bus carrying the passengers represents the state of Ghana itself, reflecting its poor leadership and governance.

The recurring images of decay create an atmosphere of hopelessness and frustration, allowing readers to grasp the depth of damage corruption has inflicted on the nation, as depicted in this passage:

In the weak light inside the bus he peered closely at the markings on the note. Then a vague but persistent odor forced itself on him and he rolled the cedi up and deliberately, deeply smelled it. He had to smell it again, this time standing up and away from the public leather of the bus seat. But the smell was not his mistake. Fascinated, he breathed it slowly into his lungs. It was a most unexpected smell for something so new to have: it was a very a very old smell, very strong, and so very rotten that the stretch itself of it came with a curious, satisfying pleasure (AKA, 1968: 3-4).

Armah also demonstrates that corruption produces moral erosion beyond the political class. Oyo's attitude toward Koomson's wealth further demonstrates how corrupt practices influence social values and aspirations.

From a developmental regard, corruption discourages productivity, destroys accountability, and diverts resources away from national progress.

Continuation of colonial exploitative ideology

The third theme concerns the continuation of colonial ideology after political independence. Unlike the preceding themes, which primarily demonstrate the internal dimension of underdevelopment, this theme allows the study to examine the external dimension of the postcolonial condition.

Although Ghana has achieved formal political independence, Armah presents a society in which the influence of the colonial past has not completely disappeared. Colonial values, structures, and modes of thought continue to shape aspects of post-independence social and political life, as illustrated in this passage:

The flatters with their new white Mercedes cars would have to find ways of burying old words. For those who had come directly against the old power, there would be much happiness. But for the nation itself there would be only a change of embezzlers and a change of the hunters and the hunted...A pitiful shrinking, to days when all the powerful could think of was to use the power of a whole people to fill their own paunches (AKA, 1968: 191).

The passage illustrates the internalization and reproduction of colonial values within post-independence society. Bhabha's (1994) concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence further illuminate this condition. The postcolonial elite may imitate aspects of the former colonial system while occupying an ambiguous position between colonial and indigenous identities. Thus, although political power has shifted to African leaders, some structures and values of the colonial order continue to be reproduced.

This continuation of colonial ideology contributes to the failure of national transformation. Armah therefore presents underdevelopment as resulting not only from the colonial legacy but also from the failure of post-independence leaders to challenge and transform inherited structures and values.

Absence of visionary leadership

The absence of visionary leadership represents primarily the internal dimension of the postcolonial crisis. Political leaders possess the authority to formulate policies and pursue national transformation, but the novel portrays them as more interested in power, privilege, and personal advancement than in building a productive and equitable society.

One of the major factors showing the absence of visionary leadership depicted in the novel is political corruption. Political leaders have abandoned the independence ideals and social transformation of the society. They are more interested in personal enrichment than public nation-building. Armah indicates that these leaders failed to provide good vision, direction, inspiration, innovation, and meaningful solutions to the nation's problems.

Joseph Koomson is a good example of African failed leaders. He is a government minister involves in dishonest practices which are detrimental to national development. He uses his political power to enrich himself at the expenses of the population. He symbolizes corrupt and greed of post-independence African elite. Another example of absence of visionary leaders is Estella Koomson. She is the wife of Joseph Koomson. Although not a political leader, Estella reflects poor leadership, since she is extremely obsessed with material, luxury, social status, and imported goods. This indicates that once she becomes a leader will not be difference from the current corrupt leaders. Her character highlights the moral decay surrounding the ruling class:

New men would take into their hands the power to steal the nation's riches and to use it for their satisfaction. That, of course, was to be expected. New people would use the country's power to get rid of men and women who talked a language that did not flatter them (AKA, 1968:190).

Oyo is another important character in the novel and the wife of the unnamed protagonist. Although her husband is an upright man, Oyo's desire for wealth, luxury, and comfort reflects her envy of those who enjoy material prosperity and her willingness to support corrupt opportunities. In the novel, she represents ordinary people who become more attracted to material success than to ethical conduct. The narrator illustrates this through Oyo's reaction to Estella, stating that "Oyo is looking at Estella with envy and self-pity" (p. 158). In addition, Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, is mentioned in the novel as a non-developed character. Following Ghana's independence, he was popularly referred to as "Osagyefo," meaning "redeemer" or "saviour." However, the novel presents his leadership critically, suggesting that it failed to bring about the social transformation and development that citizens had expected after independence. Armah portrays the period of Nkrumah's rule as one

in which Ghana was increasingly affected by corruption, political mismanagement, and moral degeneration. Through this representation, Armah questions the effectiveness of postcolonial leadership and its ability to fulfil the promises of independence. Readers are therefore presented with a critical portrayal of Nkrumah's leadership, as illustrated in the following quotation:

Osagyefo the President bla bla, Osagyefo the Present bla bla bla, Osagyefo the Present bla bla bla bla. Finally, the announcer gave the results of the day's football matches. The man waited until he heard the score that interested him most (AKA, 1968: 149).

The repetition of "Osagyefo" and related expressions in the above passage is ironic. It reflects the cult of personality that surrounded former Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah and exposes the contrast between his image as a national saviour and the reality of corruption and social decay. Through this repetition, Armah critiques a form of leadership that relies on political worship and propaganda rather than on genuine national development. The passage therefore highlights the gap between the idealized image of the postcolonial leader and the political realities experienced by ordinary citizens.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to previous scholarship on Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and the broader question of leadership and national development in post-independence Africa. Rather than merely restating the findings, the discussion compares them with existing interpretations, identifies areas of agreement and difference, and highlights the contribution of the present study. Four major findings emerged: poor leadership and governance, political corruption and moral decay, continuation of colonial ideology, and absence of visionary leadership.

Finding one: Poor leadership and governance as obstacles to national development

The study finds that poor leadership and governance constitute major obstacles to national development in the post-independence society represented in Armah's novel. Political elites are portrayed as using public authority for personal enrichment rather than promoting the welfare of ordinary citizens. This finding agrees with Macheka (2014), who identifies the failure of post-independence leadership as a central concern in Armah's novel. Similarly, Montle (2024) argues that characters such as Koomson represent the corrupt political elite whose behaviour contributes to social and economic stagnation. However, the present study extends these interpretations by examining poor leadership specifically in relation to national development. Rather than treating political corruption primarily as a moral or political problem, the study demonstrates that ineffective leadership has direct developmental consequences, including the mismanagement of public resources, persistent inequality, and the failure to improve citizens' living conditions. This provides a stronger connection between Armah's critique of political leadership and the broader problem of national underdevelopment.

Finding two: Corruption and moral decay are causes of national underdevelopment

The second finding shows that political corruption and moral decay significantly contribute to the stagnation of national development in the novel. Armah presents bribery, favouritism, nepotism, abuse of political power, and personal enrichment as normalized practices within post-independence society. This finding is consistent with studies such as Wosu (2023), which emphasize corruption and moral decay as central features of Armah's novel. The present study, however, places greater emphasis on the developmental consequences of corruption. While previous studies have frequently interpreted corruption as evidence of moral degeneration or political failure, this study demonstrates how corrupt practices also undermine the effective use of national resources. When public resources are diverted for private benefit, investment in education, infrastructure, employment, and social welfare is weakened. Corruption therefore becomes not only a moral problem but also a direct obstacle to national development.

Finding three: The continuation of colonial ideology by African leaders

The third finding indicates that the end of colonial rule did not completely eliminate colonial structures and values. Armah portrays post-independence political elites as reproducing certain patterns of privilege, inequality, and dependence associated with the colonial system. This finding agrees with Montle (2024), who emphasizes the continuing influence of colonial legacies in Armah's representation of post-independence Ghana. However, the present study adds a more specific postcolonial interpretation by examining this continuation through the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. Bhabha (1994) helps explain how postcolonial elites may adopt aspects of the former colonial culture while occupying an apparently independent political position. Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasizes the persistence of colonial influence through cultural and ideological domination. The study therefore moves beyond the argument that colonialism simply continued after independence. It demonstrates that colonial values can be internalized and reproduced by post-independence elites themselves. This is important because it places the responsibility for national underdevelopment at the intersection of external historical structures and internal political choices. In this respect, the present study complements rather than rejects interpretations that emphasize colonial legacies: it argues that inherited colonial conditions become particularly damaging when post-independence leaders reproduce rather than transform them.

Finding four: Absence of visionary leadership as root cause of underdevelopment

The fourth and last finding demonstrates that the absence of visionary leadership contributes significantly to national underdevelopment. Armah portrays political leaders such as Koomson as primarily concerned with personal wealth and political influence rather than long-term national transformation. This finding is consistent with broader scholarship that identifies leadership failure as a major problem in post-independence African states. It also corresponds with Fanon's (1963) criticism of the post-independence political elite for failing to develop a genuine national project. Nevertheless, the present study gives this argument a more specific developmental interpretation. The absence of visionary leadership is not presented merely as a lack of good political character. Rather, it is shown to have practical consequences for national development. Leaders who lack a commitment to long-term planning and public welfare fail to address essential areas such as education, infrastructure, employment, and social welfare. Consequently, political independence becomes disconnected from the material improvement expected by citizens.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Two charts are provided below to sum up the findings from Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

Chart 1: Country/Society and Top-down Political System

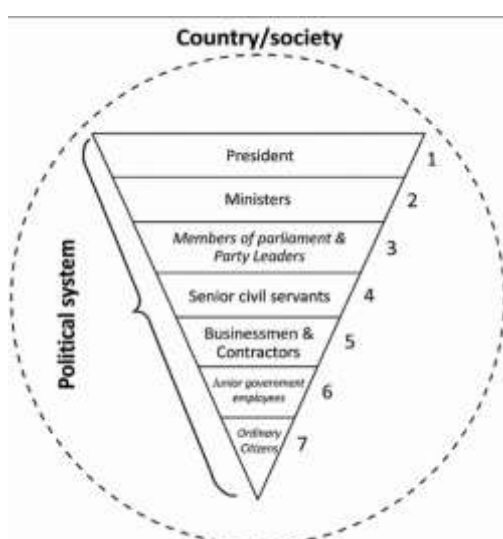
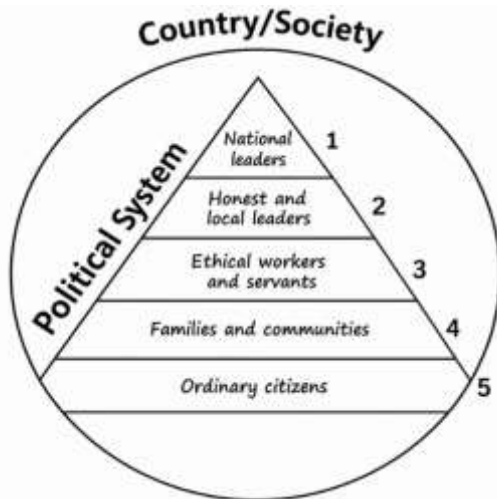


Chart 2. Country/Society and Bottom-up Political Approach



The contrast between the **Top-down** and **Bottom-up** political systems illustrated in Charts 1 and 2 captures the central tension in Armah's critique. The top-down system, with its pyramid structure, represents the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a small elite, mirroring the colonial system that preceded it. This structure facilitates corruption, patronage, and the exploitation of ordinary citizens. In contrast, the bottom-up system, with power flowing from the people upward, represents the ethical and accountable governance that Armah implies is necessary for genuine national transformation. The novel suggests that the 'Beautiful Ones' will be born not through a simple change of leadership, but through the moral renewal and integrity of citizens and society. This interpretation is supported by the character of the unnamed protagonist, whose refusal to participate in corrupt practices represents a form of resistance and a potential foundation for a transformed society.

CONCLUSION

Through a postcolonial perspective, this study has shown that Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is a satirical novel that portrays postcolonial African leaders as having abandoned the ideals of independence in favour of corruption, self-enrichment, and political patronage, thereby undermining genuine national development. In addition, the novel critiques the continuation of colonial exploitative ideologies within postcolonial societies, particularly through the actions of African elites. The absence of visionary leadership is also presented as a major obstacle to social, political, and economic progress. From this perspective, the writer suggests that "The Beautiful Ones will be born", not replacing foreign leaders with local ones, but rather reforming the political system and moral integrity and uprightness.

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