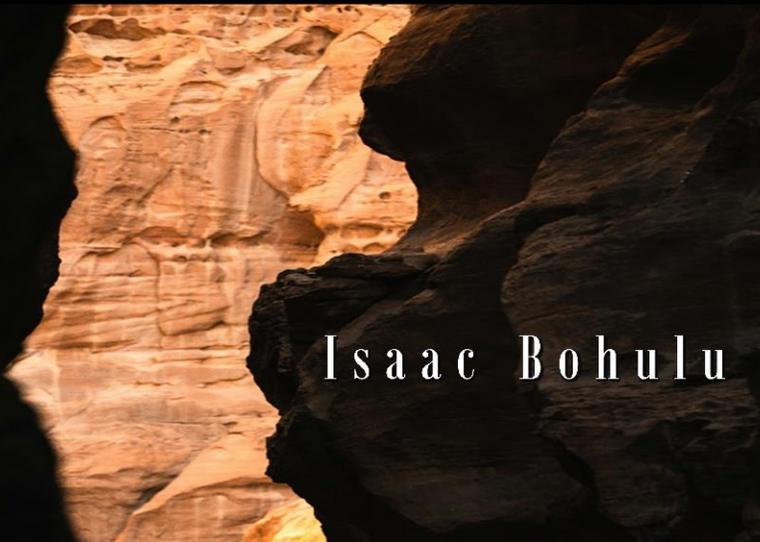




POROUS HANDS



Isaac Bohulu

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Dedication

To:

*Present and future
generations of people
whose livelihoods depend, largely,
on the output of the state*

POROUS HANDS

“I want us to discuss the role of political parties in our economy.”

“Ok; and what about them, Grandpa?”

“You have the constitution?”

“Yes Grandpa; do you want me to read anything?”

“There is a chapter on the directive principles of state policy; I want you to read the section on economic objectives.”

“Directive principles of state policy; economic objectives” I whispered repeatedly to myself as I flipped through the constitution to find the relevant section.

“Yes, it’s right here,” I said when I found it.

“Grandpa, it’s article 36 of the constitution.”

“Read it for us.”

“Article 36, clause 1,” I said, beginning to read that article: *“The State shall take all necessary action to ensure that the national economy is managed in such a manner as to maximize the rate of economic development and to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every person in Ghana and to provide adequate means of livelihood and suitable employment and public assistance to the needy.”*

“That’s ok, stop there. Now tell me; how many years has our democracy lasted under this constitution?”

“Thirty years, I think... Let’s see; 1992 to 2002 is 10 years, and 2002 to 2012 is another 10 years, making 20 years. 2012 to 2022 is another 10 years. 30 years, Grandpa.”

“Now, do you think that in those 30 years, our economy has been on the path to achieving the economic objectives you have just read out?”

“Hmmm Grandpa, I have serious doubts; I don’t think so at all. What I see is that the economic situation of many citizens has gone from bad to worse. Inflation is so high and real incomes have taken a nose dive.”

“So you cannot talk about a movement towards ‘happiness for every person’ as the constitution envisages, after 30 years?”

“Grandpa, where is the happiness? No. What the ordinary person experiences is continual economic hardship. That’s the lot of many of our fellow citizens.”

“And what about ‘adequate livelihood and suitable employment’ as envisaged in the constitution?”

“Grandpa, those are dreams; very distant ones. Unemployment is worsening, with university graduates finding it difficult to gain employment.”

“Ok, my son. And who, or what, do you think is responsible for this economic situation we find ourselves in?”

“Grandpa, that’s a difficult question. I don’t want to take a guess.”

“Are you sure you don’t know, or you are afraid to say it?” Grandpa quizzed

“Errmm Grandpa, I am tempted to say that our politicians are responsible, but I am not so sure.”

“But how can you say you are not sure? Who is responsible for managing the economy of this nation; is it not the politicians and their political parties?”

“Yes, it is.”

“So, if this nation had been doing extremely well economically, who do you think would take credit for that achievement; would it be me?”

“No, Grandpa, who knows you? It is the politicians who would take all the credit in that situation”

“Exactly; so, if the economy is not doing well, who should bear the responsibility; me?”

“It is the politicians, Grandpa, definitely not you.”

“My son, do you know how I see our political parties and politicians?”

“No, not exactly, Grandpa; how do you see them?”

“Do you see any sense of urgency in their attitude to the problems of our country; do you, my son?”

“Urgency? No grandpa, if there is any among our politicians and political parties, it is yet to be seen. Their attitudes and actions suggest that everything is ok with our economy.”

“Exactly, my son; their actions can be likened to the airplane pilot who follows cruising altitude procedures, while the plane he is flying is actually at take-off.”

“I like how you put it, Grandpa. You are right on point!”

“Let me tell you a story, my son. Once upon a time, a young woman was rushed to a certain hospital, in labour, needing emergency medical attention. She was carried to this particular hospital by relatives, because they were convinced that it was well-equipped, and had the right caliber of medical staff to care for their loved one.

Arriving at the hospital, the family learned that the medical staff was in a meeting, discussing issues of personal welfare with the hospital's administration. The front desk officer kept assuring the concerned relatives that the medical staff would be out in no time to attend to the patient but, despite her assurances, this young woman did not receive attention, a full hour after arriving at the hospital.”

“What! You mean the pregnant lady, who needed emergency care, had to wait a full hour to receive attention, grandpa?”

“You heard right, my son, a full one hour. Eventually, the medical staff emerged from their meeting, yet the young woman still did not receive attention for another 30 minutes. This is because an argument arose among the medical staff as to which team was to handle her case. Unfortunately, before this argument could be resolved, this young woman, who was expecting her first baby, passed out and never recovered.”

“What! That is a very tragic story, Grandpa; it's a betrayal of trust. Did the family sue for damages?”

“I don’t know if they did, but that is entirely their business.”

“You say it’s their business, Grandpa. Why did you tell this story then; what are you saying?”

“Because the story is similar to the happenings in this nation”

“How, Grandpa, are our hospitals that bad?”

“Wake up, my son. I am not talking about hospitals; I am talking about how the economy of this nation is managed.”

“Ok; then please explain yourself, Grandpa. You are speaking in parables.”

“Ok, let me explain. The young woman in the story represents our nation.

“Our nation; the young woman was pregnant; how do you liken her to this nation?”

“Like that young woman, our nation is pregnant with promise; the constitutional promise of ‘*maximum*

welfare, freedom and happiness, adequate means of livelihood, suitable employment for every citizen, and public assistance to the needy.”

“That is what I just read, isn’t it?”

“Exactly; and our nation is pregnant with that promise. But just as that young woman had a medical emergency, this nation has a serious economic emergency, requiring immediate and urgent attention.”

“I agree, Grandpa; the economy of this nation needs intensive care.”

“Can I continue? I will appreciate it if I can finish without any interruptions.”

“Ok, Grandpa, go ahead.”

“Now, the young woman’s relatives represent the citizens of this nation, and the hospital to which she was sent, represents our political parties.”

“Hmmm”, I said rather involuntarily, but Grandpa didn’t say anything.

“Just as the relatives of the young woman had faith in that hospital, the citizens of this nation have high hopes in our political parties.

“Grandpa, you are right. Our people....”

“I thought I said you should not interrupt, huh?”

“Sorry Grandpa; please continue, I will not interrupt again.”

“As I was saying, we, the people of this nation, have so much hope in our political parties, that we have granted them the power to run the economy of the state. Our people look on with great expectation and hope, that our political parties will hatch development plans and drive those plans to save this nation from sinking further into economic death.”

I wanted to agree with him, but I remembered that I was not to interrupt. So, I nodded my agreement, while Grandpa continued with his explanation:

“Now, the medical staff of that hospital represents our politicians. Just as the medical staff was focused on their welfare matters and did not attend to the

young woman an hour and a half after she arrived at the hospital, so our politicians are focused on their own interests to the neglect of the nation. Our politicians are so consumed with how they will contest the next election, who will become party chairman, who will contest the presidential slot, or who will be in the election campaign team.”

“And grandpa,” I jumped in, not able to hold back any longer, “when they have won political power, our politicians are more concerned with protecting their party’s position in every situation. They argue, for example, over whose fault it was that the Akosombo dam nearly dried out, or who is responsible for the frequent power cuts, or who is worse at mismanaging the national economy.”

“You are still very stubborn, my son. Clearly, I cannot shut you up. I give in; you are free to come in as and when you want” Grandpa said smiling.

“Thanks, Grandpa. I couldn’t help but jump in. But please continue; it’s a very interesting analogy.”

“Ok. The front desk officer in the story represents the propaganda and communication teams of our political parties. Just as this front desk officer kept assuring the anxious relatives that help would soon arrive, the communication and propaganda machines of our political parties spew out messages of great hope. Sadly, much of what they expound turns out to be fables and half-truths.”

“Say that again, Grandpa. Only God knows the extent of the lies and half-truths the unsuspecting public is fed with. Our politicians spend precious hours, days without end, on propaganda designed to win over public opinion, rather than on thinking about the development of the nation. It’s like a circus” I said in exasperation.

“Indeed, my son, perhaps more than that; but let me continue and finish. So, as the young woman passed out and did not recover,” Grandpa moved to conclude his analogy, “this nation stands the risk of sinking deeper and deeper into an economic mess from which it may never recover.”

“True, Grandpa; I think the risk is very real so long as our politicians and political parties continue with their needless bickering and brinkmanship, instead of focusing on rescuing the very economically-sick nation. Excellent story, and an apt analogy Grandpa; a very sad commentary on the politics of this nation”

“Some people may not like to hear this, but the truth of the matter is that our political parties and politicians are principally responsible for the precarious economic situation this nation finds itself in. They are the main cause of the perpetuating economic hardship that many of our fellow citizens face on a daily basis.”

Our political parties and politicians are principally responsible for the precarious economic situation this nation finds itself in.

“Hmmm Grandpa, I don’t even know what to say.”

“And the sad aspect of it all is that our political parties and politicians don’t seem to care very much.”

“Huh Grandpa; but how can you say that they don’t care? They must care to a certain extent. Our political parties cannot be that uncaring.” I said, trying to tease him to explain himself.

“You think they care? A while ago, you agreed that our economy is on life support, did you not?” Grandpa quizzed.

“Yes, I did; but, Grandpa, I cannot say that our politicians do not care at all.” I insisted.

“Ok, you tell me how much they care. Now, when a patient is on life support, how do the doctors attending to him behave?”

“I guess they focus maximum attention on the sick person?”

“Exactly; doctors giving emergency care do not engage in frivolous arguments. When it’s an emergency, doctors don’t joke. Now tell me, my son;

can you say that about our political parties and politicians?”

I began to see the point Grandpa was making. With hindsight, it is obvious that our politicians do behave as though everything is okay with the national economy. I said that to Grandpa, to which he responded:

“My son, if you consider the precarious state of the national economy, you will easily perceive that our political parties and politicians are too much at ease. Indeed, I dare say that, while our economy is on life-support, our ruling politicians have loved to feel at ease in the ‘common room’ sipping tea or quaffing beer.”

While our economy is on life-support, our ruling politicians have loved to feel at ease in the ‘common room’ sipping tea or quaffing beer

“You surely paint a gloomy picture of the danger the economy of this nation faces in the hands of politicians, Grandpa.”

“Not pleasant to hear; but the truth is that, left in the hands of our politicians and political parties, our national economy may never see the best of days.”

In the hands of our politicians and political parties, our national economy may never see the best of days

“Grandpa that is a very harsh charge; our politicians and political parties will surely dispute that.”

“Yes I know that, but let’s consider something, and you will see that what I am telling you is the truth.”

“Go ahead Grandpa, I am listening.”

“Now tell me; when political parties want to win power, what do they tell the people?”

“Oh; only sweet things. They promise the electorate to the highest heavens. Politicians love to promise, Grandpa.”

“And tell me are those promises ever fulfilled?”

“Yes Grandpa, some get fulfilled; but the majority of promises are never fulfilled. In fact, in many cases, politicians and political parties promise heaven, but end up delivering economic hell to the citizens. And what amazes me, Grandpa, is the boldness with which politicians make those promises; they don’t seem to fear any backlash whatsoever from the people.”

“It’s almost as if our politicians have hypnotized the people.”

“Exactly, Grandpa; see how they make fools out of all of us with their unfulfilled promises.”

“You are right my son; but sadly, they manage to get our people to see them as redeemers. And you know how they do that?”

“Not exactly, Grandpa.”

“It’s simple. Our politicians deprive the people of the needed amenities for such long periods of time that they create a desperate situation. Then, when the desperation of the people is at its peak, they move in

to do something small and, pronto, they become heroes and redeemers. It's a simple trick." Grandpa said with a mocking smile. "The trick is the same whether it concerns roads, schools, or clinics, you name it; the trick is the same, and they use it to great effect. You think these are people who care about this nation?" Grandpa quizzed.

Grandpa struck a chord with what he just said. That phenomenon can be observed all over this country. Our governments always drag their feet concerning the provision of infrastructural facilities during much of their tenure. However, when the elections draw near, roads are rehabilitated, bore-holes are constructed, and school projects are initiated, all in an attempt to win votes.

Our political parties feed the people with empty promises all the time, yet our people always believe those promises as though they were gospel. Many times, when politicians have messed everybody up, they turn around to blame the people for causing the mess.

There was a time in our country when taxi drivers were blamed for causing shortages in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supply. And what was their crime? They had opted to fuel their vehicles with LPG, instead of petrol. In reality, however, those shortages had been caused by government inefficiencies. Grandpa must be right; our politicians do not care very much about this nation, and I affirmed that to him:

“I agree, Grandpa. Our politicians and political parties do not care very much about our economy. Sadly, we consider them indispensable in national development”

“But are they; are they really indispensable? As far as I am concerned, our politicians and political parties have seriously betrayed the trust of the people. They

Our politicians and political parties have seriously betrayed the trust of the people

do not deserve the importance we have accorded to them in national development” Grandpa said beating the mattress he was sitting on with his right fist.

“But Grandpa; as sad as the situation is, I don’t see what we can do about it.”

“You disappoint me, my son; I disagree. There is a lot that we can do.”

“Really Grandpa; you think something can be done?”

“Yes, we can refuse to condone this betrayal by our politicians and political parties; we, the citizens of this country, need to wake up from our deep slumber.”

“You say we must refuse to condone the betrayal by politicians; how are we to do that?”

“We must realize that political parties and politicians are not the solution to our economic problems.”

We must realise that political parties and politicians are not the solution to our economic problems

“But Grandpa; surely, we cannot completely do without politicians; can we?”

“We may not, I agree; but I think the time has come to question the roles we have given to politicians in the development of our national economy. Our political parties and politicians do not deserve the importance we have accorded them in the development of our nation.”

Our political parties and politicians do not deserve the importance we have accorded them in the development of our nation

“Grandpa, that was a vicious punch you just delivered; are you being fair to our political parties and politicians?”

“You talk about fairness; do you, my son? Where is the fairness when our politicians and political parties mismanage the economy and get away with it? Is it fair to the millions of our people who have always looked to political parties to improve their livelihoods, but have always been disappointed? Tell me my son, tell me.”

“Ok, you have a point, Grandpa.”

“Yes, and I will say more; It’s time to question the exclusive power we have given to political parties and politicians to act as an all-in-one coach, player, and referee in our national economy. They have shown by their performance that they do not deserve to be in that role. My son, this may not be pleasant to hear but, that is the truth”

“Ok, Grandpa; granted that our politicians do not deserve the important role we’ve given to them in the development of this nation’s economy, what can we do about it in practical terms?”

“That’s not difficult at all, my son; if you give someone a job to do and he fails to do it to your satisfaction, what do you do, huh?”

“Well, you may give him training to improve his performance, give him a different job, one that he can do well, or sack him”

“Excellent; so you have answered your own question”

“Have I, grandpa? We just agreed that we may not be able to completely do without politicians.”

“Well, if you can’t sack them, you give them a different job, one they can do well. Isn’t that what you said?”

“Ok, I am beginning to see your point; you are suggesting that we change the roles political Parties play in the development of our nation”

“Exactly that, my son; why keep them in the same roles, when they have shown that they cannot improve our economy?”

“Ok Grandpa; your point is well-made. But which new roles do you envisage for politicians?”

“My son, tell me; what roles do they play in our nation’s development”

“They are in charge of everything, Grandpa”

“Yes, but be specific. We need to isolate the different roles politicians play”

“OK, I understand. Political parties and politicians are supposed to devise development plans, implement those plans, and monitor performance. I think that’s what they are expected to do in a nutshell.”

“Great, that is exactly so. Now tell me; which of these functions have they played very well?”

“Let me reason this out, Grandpa. If they planned and executed well, then we should have seen great improvement in our economy. And if they monitored well, then all the shoddy work we see around would be greatly minimized. Grandpa, I don’t think politicians play any of the three major roles well enough.”

“Great; in that case, we can decide which role to assign them, can’t we?”

“I guess so, Grandpa; so which roles do you suggest we give to them?”

“I think we should take the planning of our economy away from political Parties and politicians.”

“That leaves two roles, Grandpa.”

“We should also not allow them to monitor our development.”

“I am surprised about that one, Grandpa. I thought you were going to suggest that we take away the implementation”

“No, we should allow them to implement because, then, we can tell them what we want them to do, and monitor their performance.

“So Grandpa, if I understand you clearly, you are suggesting that political parties and politicians should only be allowed to implement the development plans of this nation, right?”

“Exactly so, my son”

“And who would do the planning and monitoring? Obviously, you and I do not have the capacity.”

“The state must take charge of those two roles. Remember the constitution expressly charges the management of our economy to the state.”

“The state; that amounts to leaving things in nobody’s hands; the state is us.”

“No, you misunderstand me. We need to give those roles to a state institution that has the capacity to plan and monitor the nation’s development.”

“And which institution do you have in mind, Grandpa?”

“My son, surely you know about NDPC? What is its full name... errrrm, I think it is the National Development...”

“National Development Planning Commission”

“Yes, that is it. We should give them those roles to play.”

“Hahaha Grandpa, that is a non-starter; what has the NDPC done over the years? And that institution is as old as the constitution”

“You are right, but let’s not rush to pass judgment. Let’s go step by step, my son.”

“Ok, Grandpa; so why do you think the NDPC must be made to plan and monitor our economy?”

“My son, did you know that this nation has a law that spells out how the development of the nation should be planned? It’s called the National Development Planning (System) Act, Act 480. This law has been in existence since 1994”.

“Eeii grandpa, you are now a lawyer; you are full of surprises.”

“I am serious, my son. That law prescribes a decentralized system for planning the development of this nation.”

“But Grandpa, we were talking about the NDPC, and you suddenly jump onto this law; where does the NDPC come in?”

“That law makes the NDPC the national coordinating body for the decentralized planning system.”

“Oh I see; but if the NDPC is the coordinating body, then it cannot be given the role of planning the

nation; it only means the responsibility for planning lies with other bodies.”

“You have a point there, my son. Indeed, under this law, planning is to be done at the district, regional, and national levels”

“And which bodies are involved at these levels, Grandpa?”

“The responsibility at the district levels falls on the metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies. At the regional level, it falls on the regional coordinating councils and at the national level, on the government ministries, departments and agencies as well as the NDPC.”⁶

“If that is the case, Grandpa, how can you recommend that we give the NDPC the sole responsibility to plan this nation?”

“You see my son; the law gives the NDPC the authority to set the development guidelines for this nation. All the planning done by the planning bodies is required to conform to those guidelines. Besides,

it is the body that is required to put all the decentralized plans into a national development plan, and monitor the physical development to ensure that they conform to the approved plan.”

“I see; I didn’t know that such a law existed.”

“Now you know; you can go and look for it to satisfy yourself. I had a copy of that law, but I don’t know where I kept it. But there is also something in the constitution about that; find it”

I flipped through the constitution, found the section on NDPC, and started to read from Article 86(1); but Grandpa wanted me to read the section on the functions of the NDPC which I found under Article 87(2). After reading all the provisions under that section Grandpa wanted to focus on Article 87(2b and 2e).

“Read those two sections again, my son,” he ordered.

“Ok, grandpa. *Article 87(2b): the Commission shall make proposals for the development of multi-year rolling plans taking into consideration the resource potential and comparative*

advantage of different districts of Ghana”. Article 87(2e): monitor, evaluate and co-ordinate development policies, programmes and projects.”

“So there you have it; the constitution also gives the NDPC those roles to perform.”

“Ok, that is clear enough grandpa. But my question is: why hasn’t the NDPC done that over the years when it has always been their constitutional duty” I asked with considerable exasperation.

“You ask why? It’s because the politics of this nation has rendered it ineffective.”

“The NDPC, rendered ineffective by politics; how?”

“It should be pretty obvious, my son. Like many state institutions in this country, the NDPC has become a tool of the political party ruling at any point in time, rather than as an instrument of the state. The mandate of this institution has been completely stifled in this way.”

“I still don’t understand, Grandpa.”

“And what don’t you understand, huh?”

“How politics can stifle the NDPC.”

“Let me give you an insight into this: tell me; when the political parties are campaigning for power, what document do they always refer to?”

“Document; which document, Grandpa?”

“The one which contains all the promises they make during their campaigns.”

“Oh Grandpa, I see what you mean; are you referring to manifestoes?”

“Exactly, my son; political party manifestoes have completely supplanted national development plans which the NDPC is mandated to prepare.”

Political party manifestoes have totally supplanted national development plans

“Oh, so you are saying that our political parties are more interested in pursuing their manifestoes, and that has stifled the NDPC?”

“Isn’t that the case, my son? Since the ruling political party at any time, is only interested in pursuing its manifesto, the government would ensure that the NDPC does its bidding. It’s that simple.”

“But that amounts to breaking the law if, while pursuing their political interests, our political parties completely set aside the law on the development of this nation.”

“You can say that again, my son; and, if you asked me, they must be made to explain.”

“But Grandpa, I remember there was once a plan called Vision 2020, then later, a Vision 2015. Weren’t those prepared by the NDPC?”

“And what happened to those plans? Nothing; and you know why? Those so-called ‘visions’ were, in reality, glorified political party manifestoes. They had no national character, so the inevitable happened to them.”

“The inevitable, how do you mean, Grandpa?”

“Since they were political party sponsored plans they were doomed to certain death, left to rot on the shelves of political spite.”

“So Grandpa, how can we give the task of planning and monitoring the development of this nation to the NDPC, an institution that is stifled by politics? How can it perform?”

“Excellent question, my son; but you must answer that question yourself. If politicians are stifling the NDPC such that it cannot fulfill its mandate, what must be done to get it to perform?”

“Ok. You are suggesting that we should free the NDPC from political interference; is that it, Grandpa?”

“Exactly; the NDPC should be set free from political strangulation. All political party tentacles, which have bound the NDPC and turned it into a tool for political party purposes, must be cut. The NDPC should be set free to carry out its constitutional mandate.”

“I agree with you, Grandpa. But how are we going to achieve that?”

“The first thing we must do is to make the NDPC responsible to the state council, rather than to the president”

“Uh-huh”

“Then we must kick out all political appointees and political party hangers-on from that place.”

“Hmmm”

“Not only that, my son; the structure of the NDPC needs to change. There should be no presidential appointees on the NDPC; only technocrats and experts from various sectors of the economy.

“Very interesting, Grandpa”

The NDPC should spearhead Ghana's development agenda as required by Law

“The NDPC should spearhead Ghana’s development agenda as required by Law, without any political let or hindrance.”

“It should, Grandpa; I think we have departed from that to our detriment.”

“Say it again my son; our political parties have harmed this nation while pursuing their political interests.”

“That is very sad indeed,” I said shaking my head.

“My son, if you asked me, I would recommend that all the planning and monitoring functions in the districts, regions, government ministries, departments, and agencies should be placed under the direct authority of the NDPC.”

“And why is that, Grandpa?”

“Greater control my son; it will give the NDPC greater control.”

“Let me understand something Grandpa; are you saying that if I am a planning officer at the Ministry

of Health, for example, I should be reporting to the Chief Executive of the NDPC and not to the sector minister?”

“Not only that; you should receive your salary from the NDPC, my son”

“That sounds a little complicated Grandpa; don’t you think so?”

“It is necessary to do this to ensure that the national development planning system, though decentralized, is held together by a strong center.

“So Grandpa, if the planning and monitoring functions are placed under the direct authority of the NDPC, what will be left for the government ministries, departments, and agencies to do?”

“They will have the implementation role to play, and that is what they must do. They should serve as agents of the executive government to implement the development policy of the state”

“Ok, that is fine. So, let’s say the NDPC puts together a national development plan; what should happen to the plan that is prepared, Grandpa?”

“Those plans should be the blueprint for national development; every government should be obliged to follow that blueprint.”

“Ok, but how would our governments follow that blueprint?”

“Any long-term plan has targets and time-frames, don’t they?”

Oh, so the challenge for any government will be to achieve targets set in the blueprint, during its term in office.”

“Exactly, my son”

“So, what if a government does not follow the blueprint?”

“That should not be an option; every government should be bound to implement the national development blueprint.”

“Ok; but what if they don’t.”

“Any president who shifts away from the development blueprint, in any way or form, should be liable for impeachment by parliament. The state council should ensure that.”

Any president who shifts away from the development blueprint should be liable for impeachment by parliament

“So, how do we ensure that the blueprint is executed to the letter; and that the people are not short-changed during the implementation of the blueprint?”

“That’s easy. The blueprint should have standards that must be met.”

“I see Grandpa; so the performance of the government will be measured against those standards. That’s fine; but who will monitor actual performance against the standards?”

“We have said that already. Monitoring will be the responsibility of the NDPC, and should be carried out under the strict supervision of the state council.”

“Great, Grandpa; it seems good to me so far. But what happens if the performance of a government or the president falls below the set standards? They’ve always gotten away with it, haven’t they?”

“Not anymore. Remember we are talking about improving our democracy.”

“Not anymore? How will we ensure that a government or president performs according to the standards set in the development blueprint?”

“The state council will ensure that.”

“How, Grandpa; how?”

“To ensure that our governments perform to the set standards, the state council should have the power to recommend the prosecution of the president or any member of his government who is found to have been negligent or wasteful”

The state council should have the power to recommend the prosecution of any president who is found to have been negligent or wasteful

“It sounds like the law on ‘causing financial loss to the state’.”

“Exactly so, my son; the law on willfully causing financial loss to the state should be prosecuted by the state council, through an independent public prosecutor.”

“That appears rather stringent, Grandpa”

“Maybe; but it is nothing when compared to the damage done to this economy from corruption, poor judgment, political impunity, and unnecessary brinkmanship. Can you count the number of families whose livelihoods have been destroyed through the mismanagement of the economy; can you, my son?” Grandpa said hitting the mattress with his two fists.

“Fair enough, Grandpa. Now, you have made some serious points about politicians and political parties

and the national economy. Your main point is that we should not allow politicians to exclusively run the development of this nation. You want the state to take center stage and, through the NDPC, take over the planning and monitoring of the nation's development. You also said that political parties and politicians should only be implementers of our development plans. That sounds very good; but Grandpa, will our people embrace these ideas?"

"My answer to that, my son, is a question; and it's simple: if we allow our political parties and politicians to run the economy the way they have over the past 30 or so years, how long will it take this nation to achieve any meaningful level of development?"

"Hmmm, that's a fair question; and it's very loaded," I said as I bowed my head in thought.

Grandpa's question at the end of our conversation came forcefully to mind well after I left him, and I found myself repeating it: *"if we allow our political parties and politicians to run the economy the way they have over the past 30 or so years, how long will it take this nation to achieve any meaningful level of development?"*

I feared that, like the pregnant woman in Grandpa's story, many African economies may die prematurely unless we are willing to consider serious changes to our governance systems.

The people of Africa must take the destiny of their nations out of the hands of political parties and politicians. *The state must take center stage and, through established state institutions, take full charge of the development of their countries.*

We, the ordinary people must agitate and fight for serious changes to happen in our governance systems; after all, we are the ones who suffer most when our economies are mismanaged, and we are in the majority.

End of Part 5.

