DEFENSIVE MODE

Isaac Bohulu

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Dedication

To:

Present and future

generations of people

whose livelihoods depend, largely,

on the output of the state

DEFENSIVE MODE

"My question is: will the changes you have proposed bring any significant improvements to the national economy and the people of this country? I don't think we must have change for the sake of change. You see what I mean, Grandpa?"

"Clearly; and I think it's a great question. Of course, if these changes will not make any difference, there will be no need to bother about change. The benefits these changes will bring to this nation will be hugely significant; I am certain of that"

"In which ways, Grandpa?"

"We have talked about the separation of the positions of 'president' and 'head of state', and of vesting the state council with the head of state role. We have also talked about insulating parliament completely from the influence of political parties and the executive arm of government. Then we have said politicians should not be allowed to control the economy, and that the state should take center stage in the nation's development. Which of these is your question about?"

“Everything, Grandpa; will all these changes make any difference to the national economy?”

“Ok, let me begin with the separation of the positions of ‘president’ and ‘head of state’: When the president of the republic is no longer head of state, political power will be disengaged from the power of the state. Political power will be placed where it truly belongs.”

“Where it truly belongs; how do you mean, Grandpa?” I don’t understand.

“Political power will be placed on the same level as the power of the judiciary, or the police, or parliament, or any other state institution that exercises the power of the state.”

“Hmmm, Grandpa; does that mean that the president will not have authority over the police, for example?”

“How should I answer you? Let’s see; the president and the head of the police service, will both work in the spirit of cooperation in the interest of the nation. However, the president should not have the

power to interfere politically in the work of the police."

"That will mean that the police boss can disobey the president."

"' Disobey' is not the right word; It is not about obeying and disobeying. It's about the rule of law. The police will do its work in accordance with the law, and so will the president. The police will not be subordinate to the president and his government, and there will be a balance of power."

"And who will ensure that this balance is kept? The president may be tended to usurp power he doesn't have."

"Don't worry, my son. The overall power of the state will reside in the state council. It will be the responsibility of the council to protect the overall interest of the state and ensure that the power of the state is exercised evenly and appropriately by all organs of the state."

"And how will that benefit our people, Grandpa?"

"It will be the foundation of good governance. The rampant abuse of power, often dictated by political party interests, will cease, and the nation will be a place where the law truly reigns supreme."

"Ok, but apart from improving the rule of law, what specific benefits will the nation gain from the improvements you have proposed?"

"Corruption will be greatly reduced, my son"

"Corruption, reduced; how Grandpa?"

"First politicians will no longer have a field day to push their cronies into positions of authority. The president of the republic and his political party bigwigs will be denied the opportunity to flood state-owned enterprises with party men."

"That's great, Grandpa; earlier, you mentioned how these party men go to great lengths to exploit their positions for their benefit and that of their parties."

"Exactly; the looting of state resources, which results from such political appointments, will be eliminated. Moreover, the state council will ensure

that political parties do not subvert the national economy for their benefit."

"That should result in substantial savings to the economy, Grandpa"

"Exactly, and that money will be available to improve the lives of our people"

"Ok, Grandpa; that was a good one. Are there any other benefits that will accrue to this nation?"

"Professionalism will be enhanced in the institutions of the state"

"Professionalism?"

"Yes, professionalism; state institutions like the police, immigration, armed forces, the central bank, parliament, and the judiciary need to be professional in their work.

Professionalism in many of such these institutions have been undermined through many years of overbearing political party disposition. People work hard for the state, with the hope of getting to the peak of their careers, but others are imposed on

them through political appointments, thereby killing their zeal, and stifling initiative."

"Grandpa, you've touched a raw nerve. A friend of mine had to resign his job as a result of one such political appointment. He was due to assume the top post of his organization but someone by far his junior, and a member of the political party then in power, was imposed upon him, and he had to work in a subordinate position to that person. It was more than he could take."

"So there you are; that's the damage these political appointments can cause. If we eliminate these political appointments, actors in state institutions will work, fully assured that their progress will depend only on their performance and comparative competencies. They will be assured that their career ambitions will not be dashed on the rocks of political appointments."

"That's very true; our state institutions should be left alone to work professionally."

"But that is not all about professionalism. The police, for example, will be greatly empowered to deal firmly with politically motivated infringements

of the law, no matter who commits them or under which government they are committed."

"That is a great point. Sometimes the police have appeared intimidated by powerful political influences, and have not been very firm in dealing with political violence. It's not good for the country."

"So, you see, removing this political interference will greatly enhance professionalism in state institutions. The benefits that this enhanced professionalism will bring to the national economy will be there for all to see."

"And I believe that state-owned enterprises will be the better for it."

"Yes, my son; greatly so"

"The appointment of political party men as chief executive officers and board members will also stop, Grandpa."

"Exactly; state-owned enterprises will be free to appoint their board of directors and chief executives through strict business procedures and

principles. Can you imagine the benefits to these organizations, my son?"

"Yes, Grandpa; the resources of those institutions will no longer be siphoned for political purposes."

"Not only that, our state-owned enterprises will be forced to draw plans to promote the growth of their business. The boards and chief executives will be compelled to operate their institutions efficiently. They will no longer be able to hide in the shadow of government to cover the inefficiencies and wastage in their systems. They will be put on their toes to perform or be exposed."

"That will be a double benefit; wastage from siphoning, and wastage from inefficiencies will be checked. The state-owned enterprises could be placed on the path to recovery and growth, Grandpa, just by eliminating political interference."

"Now you are seeing the light, my son; but I haven't finished yet. One great benefit that these changes will bring to our democracy will be the elimination of political impunity.

“Political impunity is one serious problem our democracy has had to contend with; it is so pervasive, Grandpa.”

“I learned, the other day, that so-called party foot soldiers had invaded the offices of some district chief executives and locked them out for one reason or another.”

“That is true, Grandpa; sadly, this impunity is not limited to the lower political levels. A personal assistant to one of our presidents caused the dismissal of an immigration officer from his job, merely on suspicion of political sabotage. In that particular case, even though a court of law ordered the reinstatement, I am not sure if the victim was ever recalled.”

“I have also heard that some deputy minister caused the dismissal of certain police officers who were carrying out their legitimate duties.”

“Grandpa, as for political impunity, it exists even in parliament. The majority side tends to use the phrase ‘Say your say, but we shall have our way.”

“That is to suggest that the views of the minority do not count!”

“Exactly Grandpa, but it doesn’t end there; considerable political impunity has been exhibited in the ranks of presidents and presidential candidates. Presidents have either insulted their audiences or declared openly that they won’t listen to anyone.

“But you see, all this political impunity will be eliminated when we put political power on the level it belongs. When the president of the republic is no longer head of state, foot soldiers, personal assistants and ministers of state will not dare to exhibit such impunity. The law will deal with them, and put them in their proper places.”

“Grandpa, this political impunity is very evident also in political party activism throughout the country. I think that political party activism in our current democratic experience represents a time bomb that threatens the very stability of the state.”

“And how do you mean, my son?”

“Grandpa, look at the vehemence associated with party political campaigning, particularly the venom-filled political speeches, and the insults and lies which are thrown at opponents; it is very frightening.”

“You are right, my son. political party activism poses a serious threat to our national stability. The siege on our electoral commission the other day could easily have degenerated into something very tragic.”

The incident grandpa just referred to, happened when the results of one of our elections were being collated. One political party, upon rumours of manipulation of electoral results, galvanized its propaganda machinery and got its members and supporters to lay siege to the offices of the electoral commission, in an attempt to secure a victory that they considered their party to have won.

“Grandpa, we can only thank God that the supporters of the other parties were kept away. It could easily have degenerated into a blood bath.

“And do you know why this belligerent and unbending political activism persists? It’s because,

for most political party members, winning an election is considered the shortcut to prosperity, riches, and fame."

"You are so right, Grandpa. At the risk of exaggerating, I will even venture to say that our political parties consider winning political power as a crusade or a jihad.

Our political parties consider winning political power a crusade or jihad.

Anyone seen in the way of victory is considered a serious threat, even an enemy, to be dealt with in any way possible."

"Sadly, this mindset is not limited to the ordinary party members and supporters. Political party stalwarts have used very strong language in their campaigns towards winning political power."

"Yes, Grandpa; it's frightening. Language such *as 'there are many ways to kill a cat'; 'we shall meet you boot for boot'; 'this country will be turned into another Rwanda', 'we will make this country ungovernable'; 'greedy bastards', and 'all die be die'*

have been used on political party platforms. It feels like a battlefield."

> *The very strong language used in political campaigning makes our politics feel like a battlefield."*

"And there doesn't appear to be an end to all that."

"No Grandpa. What happened during one election petition hearings at the Supreme Court is a case in point. Political party activists openly dared the highest court of the land, speaking publicly that they would never respect its decisions. Indeed, one such activist went on radio to incite the supporters of his political party, urging them to disregard the judgment of the court if it went against his party."

"That was the peak of political impunity."

"It was, Grandpa; and he was not the only one. A general secretary of one political party called one of the Judges 'a hypocrite' and a 'joker', accusing him of 'pampering the lawyer for the president.' Slowly, but surely, this unbridled political party activism, with its attendant impunity, is driving this

nation of ours towards anarchy and possible civil disturbance."

"So son, I hope you see why we need changes to our governance system. All this political impunity is happening because, in making the president head of state, we have equated political power with the power of the state. That creates a strong impression among politicians and their followers, that they have the power to do whatever they want, and nobody can do anything about it."

"You are right about that, Grandpa. Some political party activists project themselves above the power of the state. They see themselves as being above the law."

Some political party activists project themselves above the power of the state; they see themselves as being above the law

"Perhaps a good example of this 'I-am-above-the-law' syndrome was clearly exhibited when a minister of state pulled a gun and threatened an ordinary traffic warden with death."

“Yes, that was really ugly; and the only reason was that the minister felt he had been kept waiting too long in traffic by the warden, who was only carrying out his legitimate duties.”

“There seems to be no end to political impunity, my son. But you know, all this unbridled political activism will be curtailed when the changes we have talked about happen.”

“I sincerely hope so Grandpa. We truly need to change things.”

“Yes, that will happen. You see, the intensity of political party activism is due, in part, to the numerous parliamentary candidates involved. Every political party wants to win as many seats in parliament as possible. The bulk of our electoral problems arise from there.”

“Yes, you are right. Every parliamentary candidate has their foot soldiers, spokespersons, and, so on, and so forth, spewing out their poison-laden, ill-mannered speeches on TV and radio. It is a muddy terrain.”

“But when we allow the district assemblies to elect members of parliament, much of this political activity will be curtailed and, with it, much of the threat to our stability.”

“You are right Grandpa; the elections will then be held in the district assemblies and those contesting will do so on their own merit, meaning that there will be no parliamentary elections as we know them now.”

“Exactly, my son; the only activity involving political parties will be the presidential election.”

“That will mean that the numerous parliamentary candidates, who would have mounted campaigns on various radio and TV platforms to spew their venomous speeches, will have no place under the new arrangement, Grandpa.”

“You are right, my son.

“And Grandpa, I am seeing another benefit from all this. The financial burden on political parties will be greatly reduced under your proposed arrangements”

“You need to explain that, my son”

“Since the main activity involving political parties will be the presidential election, that should reduce the unbridled spending often associated with the current political campaigning.”

So, in answer to your question, the improvements to our democracy that I have proposed will free our politics of a lot of the animosity, hostility, and venomous speech that threaten national peace and stability.”

“Grandpa, you have really surprised me; when I was coming this morning I was very doubtful that the improvements you have proposed will make any difference in our democracy. You have melted my doubts away completely” I confessed.

“You had doubts? Well, I am glad that you are converted to these ideas. But there are still more benefits we can talk about.”

“Still more! Ok, grandpa, I am all ears.”

"There is the issue concerning the real the size of our governments; I think that our governments have been too large."

"Say it again, grandpa. At one point, a small country like ours had a whopping eighty-three ministers and deputy ministers and, interestingly, this number has since increased."

"And that number may not include all the personal, or special assistants, and the presidential staffers or personal secretaries, et cetera."

"That's very true, Grandpa. I think the real size of our governments has never been known."

The real size of our governments has never been known

"And you can be sure that all these various assistants are political party men, their positions doled out as rewards for their roles in their party's quest for political power."

"But how else will they gain their positions, Grandpa? You are right; it's a case of 'jobs for the boys'. But what is serious about all this is that these

assistants receive fat salaries and drive very expensive vehicles all at the expense of the state.

“All that will change when we make parliament the sole body with the power to decide the number of ministries. Our presidents will no longer have the opportunity to inflate the size of their governments by tweaking the number of ministries as they wish. The size of our government will be brought within reasonable limits.”

“That should translate into huge savings for the economy, Grandpa. How exciting it will be to see these changes happen in this nation.”

“There are other benefits that will accrue to this nation, but let me mention them in passing. The development of this nation will receive serious attention because politicians will not easily get away with mismanagement of our resources.

Our governments will be more accountable to the people. This would force our political parties to work hard to attract the best brains, rather than the foulest mouths, in their quest to win political power.”

"You are right, Grandpa; so very right."

"Oh, there is yet one more, my son; I almost forgot. One benefit that these changes will bring to our democracy is that the nation will see a steady march forward in its development. Our development effort will be less haphazard."

"Grandpa, what do you mean by 'our development will be less haphazard'?"

"My son; our politicians, when they are in power, always say: '*The economy has been stabilized and readied for a massive take-off*'. Haven't you ever heard that statement?"

"Yes, several times."

"And have we ever taken off? No. One government says 'We are ready for take-off', but the government immediately after it says 'The economy is broke'. That is haphazard development. We take one step forward and follow it up with three steps in reverse. That has been this nation's development path, my son."

We take one step forward, and follow it up with three steps in reverse; that has been this country's development path

"You are right on point, Grandpa. Many times, projects initiated by one government have been deliberately abandoned by the succeeding government purely out of political spite. That attitude takes us backward, and causes serious losses to the economy."

"That will no longer happen with the changes we are talking about. When there is a development blueprint, that every government is obliged to implement, development projects initiated by one government will no longer be abandoned by a succeeding government for political reasons. The national interest will reign supreme, and will ensure a steady march forward in our national development."

"Grandpa I think there is yet another benefit we haven't talked about."

"Oh, ok; tell me, my son."

“When the state council, through the NDPC, takes over the planning and monitoring of our economy, the door will open for many of our people to contribute to the development of the nation.”

“Huh, explain yourself. How will that happen?”

“There are many people who could make significant contributions to the development of this country, but who never get the opportunity because they are not aligned with any political party. With the state in charge of the development of this country, such people will be free to come out and contribute their knowledge and skills to the national effort. The challenge this opportunity will generate could catapult this nation to great heights.”

“That’s very true, my son; but I hope there are many of such people out there.”

“Grandpa, you have no idea about the depth of quality human resources out there in the diaspora. Many of our countrymen and women are in top positions in foreign countries and can make significant contributions to the growth of our economy. And there are many more here, within

this country, who can contribute when given the opportunity."

"So there you have it my son; we are not talking about change for its own sake. These proposed changes or improvements to our democracy will bring real benefits to this nation, and the people will be the better for it."

"You are so right, Grandpa

Now, I want to shift our discussion onto something else

Ok, Grandpa, let's do it

"Tell me, my son", do you know what hornets are?"

"Of course, Grandpa; I know those wasps with painful stings. But why are you asking about hornets, Grandpa?"

"Because all that we've discussed these few days amounts to stirring the hornets' nest"

"Stirring the hornets' nest; how Grandpa? I don't get it."

“We have been talking about the politics of this country, and you don’t get it when I speak about stirring the hornets’ nest, my son?”

“Oh, Grandpa, are you referring to possible political attacks?”

“Exactly, my son; the political environment in this country convinces me that, when what we have discussed comes into the open, the political hornets will descend on you, and attempt to sting you to death.”

“But why worry, Grandpa; this conversation is between us; nobody will get to know, certainly not from me.”

“You are wrong, my son; this conversation must not remain between the two of us. Why do you think, I have spent this time speaking with you? I want you to put these ideas into the public domain. Bring it to the attention of all the people; if you don’t, you would have wasted the time I spent talking with you.”

I did not say anything for a while as I considered what Grandpa had just said. He took me completely

by surprise with his demand. I had viewed all this discussion as an interesting intellectual exercise between grandfather and grandson. I never imagined that my grandpa wanted his ideas to reach our fellow citizens. My instinctive reaction was to refuse.

“But Grandpa……

“Stop it there; nothing you say will make me change my mind. I, your Grandpa, am appealing to you with all my heart to bring these ideas to our fellow citizens. If you do that, you will be doing me a great honour.”

I was disarmed; Grandpa had a way of saying things. When he uses the phrase “appeal with all my heart”, then he means business. I acquiesced.

“I will, Grandpa; I assure you.”

“Is that a promise, my son? Let’s seal it with a handshake.”

“It is, Grandpa,” I said, offering my right hand in a firm handshake.

“Thank you, my son. I may not be around to see you do it, but your assurance alone makes me happy.”

“You don’t need to worry, Grandpa; I will find a way to do exactly what you ask.”

“Right, then back to our discussion; when you have brought these ideas into the open, it is certain that you will face a flurry of naysayers who will raise objections to the changes we have agreed on and, possibly, personal attacks from the ‘political hornets’.”

“Ok Grandpa; but what are some of the objections you envisage?”

“‘This is from the mind of a dreamer, ‘why rock the boat?’, ‘all the excitement in our politics will disappear’, ‘the principle of universal adult suffrage will be curtailed’, ‘it will require a massive review of the constitution’, ‘the ideas are novel, neither tried nor tested’, ‘it is a recipe for power struggle’, and such other objections”

“Hmmm..”

“These objections aside, some people may attack your person. You may be insulted and called all sorts of names. But you must not be daunted. Keep your promise; it is your obligation to the present and future generations of this nation.”

“Ok Grandpa, I am not afraid; a good cause is worth the sacrifice.”

“That’s the spirit. Now, what I intend to do is to defend these ideas against the various objections that will be launched at you.”

“I am all ears, Grandpa.”

“Now let’s answer those who may say that these ideas are from the mind of a dreamer.”

“Ok, Grandpa”

“My son, do you know who a dreamer is?”

“Well…, I think a dreamer is a person whose feet are not on the ground, or who nurses ideas that are not realistic or practical.”

“Exactly; so, when people attack you in such terms, what exactly will they be implying?”

“That everything that comes out of me should be dismissed because it is not realistic or practical.”

“You are right, my son. But I have a better definition for a dreamer.”

“You do?”

“Yes, my son. A dreamer is a person who desires a certain preferred state, a far-sighted individual who sees clearly what others may find very difficult to perceive.”

“Hmmm, that is insightful, Grandpa.”

“I will point you to examples of dreamers, my son.”

“Ok.”

“Our first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, was a dreamer; he dreamed of an independent African state where the black man would be in charge of his own affairs. His dream sparked off a cascade of struggles that brought political independence to much of Africa.”

“Yes, yes.”

“You have heard of the African American priest, Dr. Martin Luther King, haven’t you, my son?”

“Yes, Grandpa; he is noted for his ‘I have a dream’ speech.”

“Exactly; Dr. Martin Luther King was a dreamer. He dreamed of an America where a man’s worth will not be determined by the colour of his eye or skin.”

“You are right Grandpa. I hear his dream sparked off massive changes in that country, and brought some respect and dignity to this fellow African Americans.”

“It sure did, my son; so you see, to be a dreamer is not bad, especially if the dream touches on the well-being of your fellow men.”

“I agree, Grandpa.”

“So what will you tell those who may attack these ideas as ‘the work of a dreamer’?”

“Well…, that they should take these ideas seriously because they come from a dreamer; a person who

sees clearly what they may have difficulty perceiving."

"Excellent answer, my son; you see, the progress of this world has been significantly fuelled by dreamers. Let's look at some more dreamers."

"Ok, Grandpa."

"Have you heard of the Wright brothers, my son?"

"Yes, Grandpa. I know that they made the first successful attempt at flying in a machine."

"Exactly, and do you know what happened to their first attempts?"

"I think their initial attempts had limited success."

"Now, consider what has resulted from that dream; the aviation industry as we know it today, with its fleet of modern aircraft, owes its existence to the dream of the Wright brothers."

"Very true, Grandpa; their dream has made international travel much easier."

"And do you know about Henry Ford, my son?"

“Yeah grandpa; he invented motor cars.”

“Yes, and when he dreamed of motorized vehicles, there was not a single stretch of road. Yet the impact of his dream on this world has been revolutionary.”

“Another dreamer, Grandpa, one of our times, is Bill Gates.”

“Ok, you tell me.”

“Grandpa, when computers were first invented they were very huge machines. One computer could fill a whole room.”

“I see.”

“Bill Gates had a dream of putting the computer on every desk through his ‘Windows’ operating system. His dream has transformed the world in completely new ways.”

“Interesting, my son; you know I am not very computer literate. But I can give you yet another dreamer from Ghana; Tetteh Quarshie.”

"Yeah Grandpa; he's the man who brought cocoa to this country."

"His dream, while he sojourned in Fernando Po, was to grow cocoa in his native land."

"Yes. But do you know that Fernando Po is now called Equatorial Guinea?"

"They keep on changing names of countries, but not the well-being of their peoples; but that's by the way. You see, when Tetteh Quarshie planted the seeds he brought from that country on his farm at Mampong Akwapim, he was fulfilling his dream. The impact of his dream on Ghana's economy is there for all to see."

"Grandpa, I think your point is well made. You are saying that no one should discard these ideas simply because they are coming from someone they consider a dreamer."

"Exactly, my son; people who are prone to dismissing ideas from other people should learn from history for, it is the dreamers of this world who have changed the course of history. These ideas may be the 'work of a dreamer', but they have the

potential to bring economic transformation to this nation in proportions unimagined."

"You are right, grandpa. I think those who dismiss these ideas outright may do so because they fail to see the potential they hold for this nation."

"I agree; but I think some other people may dismiss these ideas, not because they fail to see the potential the ideas hold, but because they may perceive them a threat to the status quo."

"As we usually say; 'why rock the boat when it's sailing smoothly?'"

"Exactly that, my son; and do you know those who are likely to make such objections?"

"Yes, Grandpa; it's most likely those who benefit greatly from the system or seek to benefit from it.

"And, you know why they will object to these ideas?"

"Yeah, Grandpa; it's because they will consider these ideas a threat to their positions or interests. It's not difficult to see."

“And this is how I answer those who want the status quo maintained. I will address them directly, my son: ‘Status quo lovers; walk the streets of the capital only, don’t go into the villages. Do not drive in your air-conditioned vehicles; walk through the sun. Walk for an hour through the various markets of the city.”

“And why do you want them to do that?”

“My son, I want them to take in the poverty, the hardship, and the struggle, which the ordinary citizens go through on a daily basis.”

“Hmmm”

“When you are done, go back to the streets in the evenings, this time, take a slow drive in your vehicles, with your tinted windows rolled down.” Grandpa continued his direct speech.

“Oh, you want them to see the people who sleep on pavements in front of shops in the night, Grandpa?”

“Yes, my son. Let them go to those places when it is raining. They will see how the status quo is treating their fellow citizens. I want them to see

first-hand how the status quo they love so much, has consigned their fellow citizens to a life of misery, and second-class citizenship."

"Hmmm Grandpa, the poverty and struggle of our people cannot escape anyone who cares to look; you are so right."

"I have not finished yet; I ask those people who want to maintain the status quo to be more adventurous when they go into the streets."

"Adventurous; how do you mean?"

"Status quo lover, be more adventurous; approach the people you see on the streets and in the markets. Ask them how they live day the day; ask them what they take for breakfast and supper. Do not ask about lunch.", Grandpa continued with his direct speech.

"Grandpa, I assure you, they will not like what they hear, it will be so shocking that they won't even believe it."

"Well, but at least they will be confronted with the struggle, the hunger, and the indignity, to which the

status quo they seek to protect, is subjecting their fellow citizens. I want that experience to jolt their consciences so that they ask themselves: 'Do I still want the status quo to remain?'"

"Hmmm Grandpa, you talk about conscience; it depends on whether their consciences are alive to issues."

"Let me tell you something, my son; the late Opanin Kwasi Kuma used to say: 'Every human being has a supreme court in his head and, nobody can escape the judgment of his supreme court'."

"I guess you are right. There comes a time when we cannot deny things any longer."

"So, my son; let those people who want to maintain the status quo understand this: that the poverty, hardship, and unfulfilled promises that are so characteristic of life in this country, represent a veritable time bomb waiting to explode in our faces."

"Grandpa you have spoken my mind here; I am very much afraid that, one day, we may wake up to chaos and disorder. Our people suffer greatly, but not

much is done to help them. It is a very scary situation."

The poverty, hardship, and unfulfilled promises that is so characteristic of life in this country, represent a veritable time-bomb waiting to explode in our faces

"And remember that such explosion, if it occurs, will not discriminate. It will affect every one of us, including those who don't want the boat of this nation rocked."

"Grandpa, you are so right; I remember that it took the frustrations of one street seller to cause a cascade of social upheavals in much of North Africa."

"Good example, my son; this nation needs to take a cue from that. This nation needs to make changes to its governance system to forestall a looming revolution of the people."

This nation needs to make changes to her governance system to forestall a looming revolution of the people

"Grandpa, there is a limit to human endurance. The citizens of this country have endured too much hardship, 'promise-and-fail', and unfulfilled hopes and aspirations; who knows when they will throw these up in an upheaval?"

"Good point my son; clearly, our democratic system needs to improve so that the millions of our people who are consigned to a life of misery, frustration, business instability, and the high cost of living, that erodes harmony in families, may have a better life."

Our democratic system needs to improve to so the millions of our suffering people may have a better life

"Yes, Grandpa; this nation needs to make serious changes for the sake of all."

"So my son, tell those people who do not want to rock the boat, that we must rock the boat. Tell them that we need to do it peacefully, and in an orderly manner. Tell them that we need to steer the boat of this nation away from the tumultuous sea it is sailing in.

Tell them that we need to steer it through calmer waters into safer shores, where the citizens of this nation will realize the dreams outlined in our constitution: those of 'maximum welfare, freedom and happiness, adequate means of livelihood, suitable employment, and where the needy will receive public assistance'."

We need to steer the boat of this nation away from the tumultuous sea it is sailing in, into safer shores

"That was a spirited defense, Grandpa. They will surely get to know, I assure you."

Grandpa poured himself a glass of water, and after drinking it, continued:

"Some other people will attack these ideas because, in their estimation, all the excitement associated with our political system will be taken away."

"That one is true, Grandpa; from what we have discussed, the national elections will be restricted

to the presidential elections only. A lot of the excitement will be gone."

"You are right my son; the current political system is full of excitement."

"Yeah, Grandpa; the party paraphernalia, the songs, the slogans, the interviews, and the campaign promises, all add to this excitement. Moreover, it is during the campaign period that people, who have been starved for long periods, hope to cash in on politicians. Grandpa, it is a time when money is freely shared out, the time when bicycles, rice, toilet rolls, sugar, T-shirts, matchboxes stuffed with Ghana cedi notes, and other goodies are freely distributed. Our people truly love the excitement."

"But my son, our people need to be more far-sighted. Political excitement cannot be a serious consideration for rejecting these ideas."

"And why not, Grandpa? If the excitement is lost, some people will lose the free goodies."

"Ok, let's consider it this way; how long does this political excitement last? The truth of the matter is

that this excitement soon turns sour in the mouths of the people."

"Sour; how do you mean, Grandpa?"

"You see, the promises given in open forum, those promises that generate great excitement, are often firmly denied by those who made them, soon after the elections."

"Hmmm Grandpa, that is very true. I remember that one presidential candidate promised a drastic reduction in fuel prices, but when he became president, he denied ever making that statement. Moreover, many of the goodies that are freely given out are not of the best quality. And the money thrown at the people may only afford food for a day or two."

"That's exactly what I am saying; you cannot seriously hold on to the excitement of the political campaign. And there is something else; it is on the wings of this political excitement that our politicians throw dust into the eyes of the electorate."

"How, Grandpa?"

"Let me tell you, my son; political excitement is the cocaine of our democratic experience."

> *Political excitement is the cocaine of our democratic experience"*

"Cocaine; and how can that be, Grandpa?"

"I will tell you. You see, when people get high on this political excitement, they are stimulated to fight, harm, or even kill their brothers. On the 'highs' of political excitement, people are driven to do just anything to win political power, including acts that push this nation towards civil disturbances."

"I see your point, Grandpa; I remember that a serious civil disturbance nearly happened during one election when one political party mobilized its members to besiege the offices of the Electoral Commission."

"Yes, I watched it on TV."

"Grandpa; that day, people abandoned their offices and businesses, fetched their children from school,

and fled to their homes. The capital became a ghost city."

"And, sadly, this kind of violence happens within the political parties. Members of the same party often fight, bite, and harm one another on the 'highs' of political excitement. That is what political excitement can do to this nation."

"Very true, Grandpa"

"Now, the changes I have proposed will curtail this political violence. They will afford politicians and their parties less opportunity to create confusion on the wings of political excitement."

"I agree Grandpa."

"So, if these benefits come at the expense of some political excitement, I don't think we should complain. In any case, what has more than 30 years of political excitement brought to this nation?"

"Grandpa, you can ask that again. Political excitement, in my opinion, has brought joy to a few, and great disappointment to many."

"Then again, my son; some other people may reject these ideas because the principle of universal adult suffrage will be curtailed."

"Yes, Grandpa, and I think it will be a genuine complaint, won't it? In the changes you have proposed, the election of parliamentarians and members of the state council will not be done through universal adult suffrage."

"You're right, but you see, the principle of universal adult suffrage is only one of the means for selecting leaders of a country. It is not carved in stone, my son."

"You may be right, Grandpa, but as a method, it is very easy to use, and it appears to make every citizen feel important, at least for a while. Don't forget the '*kokromoti*" power' slogan; people love it, and have taken it in."

"Well, that is one of the deceptions of democracy; it gives you a feeling of importance. It's just a feeling, my son."

"And why do you say that, Grandpa?"

“Because the so-called power the voter is touted to possess quickly evaporates into thin air soon after the elections, and he controls nothing thereafter. Besides, the ‘one-man-one-vote’ principle doesn't always produce the desired result.”

“And why not, Grandpa?”

"The ‘one-man-one vote’ principle has not always ensured the election of committed leaders; it has not improved the economy; it has not made our democracy any better.”

“Hmmm”

“Indeed, the ‘one-man-one-vote’ principle has become the bane of our democracy in recent times”

The one-man-one-vote principle has become the bane of our democracy in recent times

“How has it achieved that, Grandpa?”

“You see, because our politicians and political parties are aware that sheer numbers count under universal adult suffrage, they engage in all sorts of shady, sometimes illicit, actions to get as many people to vote for them as possible.”

"Hmmm"

"Let's face it, all the malpractices that go on during elections, including the vote buying, ballot stuffing, forging of voter cards, and the bussing of people, some of them foreigners, to vote for particular candidates, can be traced to the principle of universal adult suffrage."

"I think you have a point there, Grandpa."

"I surely do, my son; and I have not finished. Consider the huge expenditure associated with our elections, and the trouble our electoral commission goes through to run elections.

Consider the expense associated with maintaining our voters' register, the need to use biometric equipment, the difficulties of voter verification, and the presence of party agents at all polling centers and in the 'strong room' of the EC; all that can be traced to the one-man-one-vote principle."

"So very true, Grandpa; and we can mention the state of heightened tension this nation goes into during the elections, and all the disputes that erupt

after every election; the most prominent being the election petition hearings at the Supreme Court."

"Look, my son, the one-man-one-vote principle appears simple but, in reality, it costs the nation millions, and offers little benefit to the ordinary citizen. Why does this nation spend so much money on electing leaders who mostly deliver suffering and hardship to her people? Why?"

Why does this nation spend so much money on electing leaders who mostly deliver suffering and hardship to her people? Why?"

"That is food for thought, grandpa; great food for thought."

"So, you must tell those who are motivated to reject these ideas on the basis of universal adult suffrage to pause and think."

"Hmmm"

"They should think hard, because these ideas will ensure that the metropolitan, municipal or district, authorities are better placed to deliver development to their areas; that people who enter

parliament go there, not to speak for political parties but, to speak on what directly concerns the people.

These ideas will ensure that parliament is better placed to keep our governments on their toes, and cause them to perform better."

"I agree, Grandpa; and I think corruption is another thing that will be curtailed. And all that can be achieved without the one-man-one-vote principle."

"Indeed, my son. So, tell me, are people justified in rejecting a system that can improve their living conditions, for the sole reason that their power to vote will be limited to one or two elections?"

"I don't think so, grandpa."

"You see, Jesus once told his followers "if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off, and throw it away; it is better to enter into heaven with one hand than to enter hell with the whole body".

"I think that is symbolic, not to be taken literally, Grandpa."

“No doubt, but it is so apt for our situation. My son, tell our fellow citizens who are in love with the "one-man-one-vote" principle that, since it has not improved the living conditions of the majority of our people, we should cut it off and throw it away. It is better for our people to enter a state of economic well-being without ‘one-man-one-vote’, than to bask in the principle of one-man-one-vote and remain in economic hell.”

It is better for our people to enter a state of economic well-being without ‘one-man-one-vote’, than to bask in the principle of one-man-one-vote and remain in economic hell

“I agree, Grandpa, the principle is excellently applied. But what will you say to those who will claim that the changes you have proposed will require a massive review of our constitution?”

“Oh, that? Yes, that is a very valid point; many of these ideas go contrary to key provisions of the constitution.”

“Exactly Grandpa; the separation of the positions of ‘president’ and ‘head of state’, the representation of people in parliament, the establishment of the

state council, and other such ideas, are alien to the constitution, and adopting them will require extensive changes to the it"

"You are right my son, but what is the problem with changing our constitution? If we must change our constitution to craft a system that will improve governance and economic development, as well as eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, political corruption, what are we afraid of?"

"You have a point, Grandpa"

"My son, one grave thing our constitution has brought about, is that it has subjected this nation to the spell of politicians and political parties to the disadvantage of her citizens.

> *Our constitution has subjected this nation to the spell of politicians and political parties to the disadvantage of citizens*

Must this constitution hold us back from adopting changes that will bring real improvements in the lives of the citizens of our country?"

"Well, what can I say, Grandpa?"

“Let me tell you another thing our constitution has foisted on this nation: it produces a president who is so powerful that even his lowly-placed officials easily usurp the power of the state. Now tell me; should this constitution immobilize us from addressing this power imbalance?”

“I guess you have a good point there, Grandpa”

“Of course I do. Let’s change the constitution, for the constitution was made for the people not the people for the constitution."

Let’s change the constitution, for the constitution was made for the people not the people for the constitution

“Well said, Grandpa; very well said.”

Grandpa took another glass of water, cleared his throat, and continued:

“My son; there is one other attack that may be hurled at these ideas.”

“Uh-huh?”

“Some may strongly argue that these ideas have neither been tried nor tested anywhere in the world.”

“And that will not be false; will it, Grandpa?”

“You are missing the point, my son; the fact that an idea is new doesn’t mean that it is useless and must be discarded. That is not true.”

“Hmmm, Grandpa”

“You see, the real and relevant question to ask about any ‘novel’ or apparently ‘strange’ idea should be: ‘Does it make sense, or, does it hold good potential to deserve attention?’”

“I guess you are right Grandpa. We are often too quick to dismiss new ideas without giving them much thought.”

“Exactly, my son; I am certain that anybody who carefully and truthfully considers these ideas should come to only one conclusion: they deserve very serious attention.”

“They do indeed, Grandpa.”

“My son; I have lived a long time in this country, and I really fear for the future if our current governance system does not change. I am firmly convinced that things need to change, and I believe that the ideas I have shared with you present an opportunity for that change to occur, in a peaceful and controlled manner.”

“I agree, Grandpa. We should avoid the fire-fighting approach to solving national problems.”

“Now to my next defense, my son; I proposed that the positions of ‘president’ and ‘head of state’ be separated; do you remember?”

“I do, Grandpa; very well. It’s one of the key changes you have proposed.”

“You know, some people may make a case there, and say that it will be a recipe for power struggle?”

“Power struggle, how?”

“Power struggle between the president of the republic and the state council”

“Hmmm, Grandpa; that possibility exists, doesn’t it?”

“It does, I agree; but the likelihood is very remote.”

“And what makes you so sure, Grandpa?”

“You see, we said that the state council will have the power to call for the impeachment of the president, right?”

“Right, Grandpa”

“But, you see, parliament will not be obliged to impeach the president unless it is convinced that the state council has valid reasons to support its call for impeachment.”

“You are right; parliament will need to be convinced before it takes such a serious action.”

“Great; it means that the state council cannot be frivolous in the exercise of its powers over the president. It will need to tread cautiously to avoid a crisis where parliament refuses to impeach the president.”

“That is interesting, Grandpa; the state council will check the president, and parliament will moderate the power of the state council; interesting arrangement!”

“Yes; but the president will also need to be conscientious in the performance of his or her functions.”

“Yeah Grandpa, the state council can call for his impeachment.”

“So, my son; there will be a delicate, but sure, balance of power. That will be great for good governance.”

“Very interesting Grandpa, I am impressed.”

“It’s all for the good of our dear nation.”

“It sure is.”

There is one concern for me though in all this; my son”

“Concern?”

“Yes. I fear that not only will people attack these ideas; they may also attack your person.”

“Attack my person, in which ways?”

“They will insult your intelligence, social standing, and possibly your family.”

“And why would anyone want to attack my person; I am just a harmless, ordinary citizen.”

“You are forgetting something, my son. The moment you bring these ideas to all the people, some powerful people may consider you a threat to their political ambitions. They might consider you a dangerous person.”

“Well, Grandpa, after listening to you these few days, I have no doubt that your ideas have come from a careful observation of our current political system.”

“Exactly so, my son, and not only that; I have done a critical analysis of portions of our constitution and I have observed that there are serious flaws with the current scheme of things.”

“And I believe you have a sincere desire to see a carefully managed change that will benefit this country and her citizens.”

“You are right, my son; these ideas come out of a good faith, and a clear conscience.”

“In that case, I am proud to be the one to carry these ideas to my fellow citizens. Rest assured, Grandpa, that I fully share your views, and I make no apologies whatsoever to people who may feel threatened in any way.”

“That is reassuring, but don’t forget that sometimes the insults may get to you.”

“That may be true. But, you see, resorting to insults is easy; anybody can do that. I think it is a characteristic of weak minds. I will not bother too much about that.

Resorting to insults is easy, anybody can do that, I think it is a characteristic of weak minds

The more positive approach, in my view, will be for people to critique these ideas with the view to

making them better, or to offer better alternatives. Those who cannot do that should leave it to those who can contribute objectively to these ideas."

"Very well said my son; you make me proud."

THE END