Mitigating Developmental Disparities and Regional Instability through Public Policy Landscaping

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Abstract

Since government is the universally-accepted system that is responsible for midwifing the development and progress of nations and governance is mainly delivered through the making and implementation of public policy, it is imperative to develop a strategic policy view of the root-cause(s) of the bad governance that triggers the developmental disparities within and between nations which invariably engender national and regional instability across many corners of the globe. Developmental disparities within and between nations are especially important as the primary causes of national and regional conflicts as well as trans-national migration and sundry trans-national crimes such as human trafficking. In this article, I argue that public policy is so central to governance and pivotal to national development and progress that it must be recognized as the powerful force that can either unite polities around the pursuit of development and progress or leave them deeply-divided and starved of much-needed development. The crux of this argument is that national development and progress are impossible without national unity and regional stability. My second argument is that commitment to the practice of policy-led governance should be considered doubtful unless it can be proven by the prioritization of the institutionalization of Public Policy systems that are designed to, first and foremost, foster national unity and regional stability. The mission of this article is to introduce the novel concept of Public Policy Landscaping as the strategic means of making the governance landscape suitable for the development and deployment of the environmentally-sensitive public policy systems that can be relied upon to unite policy-led entities around the pursuit of national and regional development. Public policy does to the governance what landscape architecture does to natural land and this means that any neglect of public policy landscaping is bound to leave the governance landscape in a poor state that will invariably impede good policymaking and policy implementation.

Keywords: governance, governance landscape, policy environment, national and regional development, policy landscaping, policy landscaping specifications, developmental disparities

1. Drilling down the Concept of Public Policy Landscaping

Since governance is mainly delivered through the making and implementation of public policies, it follows that public policy is the strategic force that shapes and sustains the institutional, organizational and administrative mechanisms of government to the extent of determining the quality of governance that can be delivered to all policy-led entities. This makes the ability to identify and institutionalize the right Public Policy System the first challenge of policy-led governance-this is especially important because any failure to identify and institutionalize the right Public Policy System is bound to impair effective governance in the most fundamental ways. As indicated in the abstract, national development and progress require unity of purpose that is best achieved through the institutionalization of environmentally-sensitive Public Policy Systems that are designed to continuously ensure the environmental alignment of all the public policies that are made and implemented. The reality is that public policy can only propel national and trans-national development and progress to the extent that it can facilitate national and trans-national unity. The reality is also that united polities can only be built upon environmentally-sensitive and aligned Public Policy Systems that are designed to make all constituencies decidedly development-oriented and equally policy-impacted.

The assurance of good Public Policy landscaping is the practical means of making the governance landscape suitable for the implementation of Public Policy Systems that can be relied upon to build united polities through the consistent making and implementation of environmentally-aligned policies. Needless to say that Public Policy

Systems that are not environmentally-sensitive tend to be divisive and where this is the case, the result is bound to be broken governments and divided polities which are hard to govern, and even harder to either secure or develop. The conceptual thrust of public policy landscaping is as follows: (a) The public policy enterprise of each nation/state is built on its underlying public policy landscape which is foundational to the form, function and sustainability of the public policy enterprise; (b) The relationship between a nation's public policy enterprise and its underlying governance landscape is what fundamentally determines the environmental fit and overall outcomes of its public policies; (c) The key to achieving the best policy outcomes is to prioritize the assurance of the environmental alignment of the policies that are made and implemented and this is done through good public policy landscaping. The philosophical thrust of the concept of Public Policy Landscaping is that good governance and national development are best guaranteed by guarding against internal and external developmental disparities especially by making the governance landscape suitable for the making and implementation of environmentally-aligned public policies.

Lee Kuan Yew's exemplary public policy landscaping can be gleaned from his articulation of the national development strategy of his then newly-independent Singapore thus, "I gradually crystallized my thoughts and settled on a two-pronged strategy to overcome our disadvantages. The first was to leapfrog the region, as the Israelis had done… The Israelis, faced with a more hostile environment than ours, had found a way around their difficulties by leaping over their Arab neighbors who boycotted them, to trade with Europe and America. Since our neighbors were out to reduce their ties with us, we had to link up with the developed world – America, Europe, and Japan – and attract their manufacturers to produce in Singapore and export their products to the developed countries… The second part of my strategy was to create a First World oasis in a Third World region. This was what Israel could not do because it was at war with its neighbors. If Singapore could establish First World standards in public and personal security, health, education, telecommunications, transportation, and services, it would become a base camp for entrepreneurs, engineers, managers, and other professionals who had business to do in the region. This means we had to train our people and equip them to provide First World standards of service… We had one guiding principle for survival that Singapore had to be more rugged, better-organized, and more efficient than others in the region. If we were only as good as our neighbors, there was no reason for businesses to be based here. We had to make it possible for investors to operate successfully and profitably in Singapore despite our lack of a domestic market and natural resources."

Lee Kuan Yew's articulation of his national development strategy for his then newly-independent Singapore is very instructive because it shows the great extent to which good public policy landscaping can shape the governance landscape especially in terms of highlighting the internal and external dimensions of a nation's ideal policy environment based on the understanding of the following realities: (a) Regional relationships can and do play into domestic, bilateral and multilateral policy considerations; (b) Good policymaking requires the development of both an inside-out and outside-in view of the political environment; (c) Good policymaking requires defining policy objectives and setting policy targets that are influenced by a nation's unique history, existential realities and developmental aspirations and therefore, capable of accelerating its development, transformation and progress as well as its regional and international attractiveness and competitiveness when duly-implemented; (d) Good policymaking requires the willingness to learn from the experiences, successes and failures of nations with similar histories or social, political and economic conditions; (e) Good public policy landscaping is what determines the range of policy opportunities that can be exploited and the policy threats to be countered and by so doing, increase the environmental alignment and performance of the policies that are made and implemented; (f) Good policymaking can only be the brainchild of good policy thinking. Evidently, it was the quality and scope of Lee Kuan Yew's public policy landscaping that directly determined the governance landscape as well as the size and quality of policy environment that he created. Once Lee Kuan Yew was able to create an enabling governance landscape and a policy environment of the right quality and size, it was as good as guaranteed that the right domestic and foreign policies would be made and implemented within that Singapore's post-independence policy environment. Lee Kuan Yew conclusively-proved that each nation's enabling or disabling governance landscape is always the most accurate reflection of its government's careful or careless public policy landscaping. While careful public policy landscaping creates an enabling governance landscape upon which the right policy environment can be built, the neglect of public policy landscaping leaves the governance landscape in a continuously unstable and disabling state that invariably makes effective and efficient policymaking a mission impossible.

2. Public Policy Landscaping Specifications

It is important to note that the remit of public policy landscaping extends beyond the identification of the internal and external dimensions of the policy environment. Though the overarching objective of public policy landscaping

is the creation of enabling policy environments within which environmentally-aligned domestic and foreign policies can be consistently made and implemented, it is only by consistently satisfying its key specifications that this overarching objective can be achieved. Public policy landscaping is a strategic concept and its eight key specifications include the following:

1) The specification on legal clarity and alignment. Since public policymaking is a *prima facie* legal undertaking, good public policy landscaping must necessarily involve the continued assurance of the legal clarity and alignment of all public policies especially by implementing constitutional forms that are deliberately designed to engender national unity, shared development and progress. It is important to emphasize the point that just as national development and progress are impossible without national unity, public policies that engender national unity of purpose can only be made and implemented within constitutional frameworks that are designed to unite nations on the pursuit of inclusive/shared development and progress. The huge developmental disparities between the USA which has continued to operate its same national constitution that its founding fathers adopted at its independence in 1776 and Nigeria which is still grappling with agitations for constitutional reforms and the restructuring of the polity despite its history of as many as six and four constitutional changes during its colonial and post-independence eras respectively point to the reality that there is a correlation between constitutional stability and stable governance systems on the one hand and between stable governance and sustainable development on the other hand. The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on legal clarity and alignment teaches is that stable governance and sustainable development are impossible without the legal clarity and alignment that constitutional stability provides. The specification on the legal clarity and alignment of public policy is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because public policy is a legal instrument which can only be made and implemented within the ambit of the law.

2) The specification on policy spectrum. Good public policy landscaping dictates that the policy spectrum should span Theodore Lowi's policy typology in which he identified as regulatory, distributive, redistributive and constituent policies as the four broad types of policies that governments make and implement towards best delivering the governance that is owed their polities. The policy landscaping lesson that the specification on policy spectrum teaches is that balanced development can only be pursued and achieved on the basis of balanced policymaking. The specification on the spectrum of public policy is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because governance is multi-sectoral and this means that public policy contributes to national development and progress on the fundamental basis of the number of sectors that it is able to simultaneously impact. Multi-sectoral development and progress require multi-sectoral policymaking and policy implementation.

3) The specification on the responsiveness of public policy. Good public policy landscaping requires the identification of the five types of government inaction that render public policy more reactionary than responsive. McConnell and Hart identified calculated, ideological, imposed, reluctant and inadvertent inaction as the five types of government's policy inaction. The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on policy responsiveness teaches is that governance adds the highest value (in terms of the expected public impact) when government can be perceived as consistently taking the right policy actions at the right time. The specification on the responsiveness of public policy is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because responsive public policies nip problems in the bud and by so doing, prevent the expenditure of huge sums of public funds trying to solve problems that are allowed to fester.

4) The specification on policy change. Good public policy dictates the identification and exploitation of the opportunities for policy change (concerned with incremental modifications to existing policies) and policy reform (concerned with major changes to existing policies and/or the introduction of new policies). Cerna (2013) identified the ten major policy change models which include path dependence, the advocacy coalition framework, policy learning, policy diffusion, punctuated equilibrium, institutional change, multi-level governance, policy networks, disruptive innovation, and the politics of change and reform. The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification of policy change teaches is that public policies add their highest value when governments are able to maintain the right balance between policy consistency and policy change. The specification on policy change is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because public policy performance is greatly-helped by the pursuit of continuous policy improvement.

5) The specification on policy strategy. Good public policy landscaping involves the crafting and execution of a public policy strategy that is designed to identify the type and range of development to be pursued through policymaking, the development constituencies to be policy-targeted and the benchmarks of good policymaking which include the following: (a) Priorities. Specification of what the government intends to do or not to do; (b) Purpose. Clearly-defined policy objective/goals; (c) Positioning. Determination of the form that the policy will take–whether a law, regulation or guideline; (d) Participation. The policymaking and policy implementation

process must be transparent and participatory to ensure stakeholder alignment, buy-in and support; (e) Productivity. Policy must be designed to achieve a specific result or outcome; (f) Pro-business, pro-growth. The economic sensitivity of Public Policy is a big deal! The most successful nations are mostly those that are committed to making and implementing business-friendly policies and; (g) People. The government should not only make Public Policy on behalf of the public, but also in the best interest of the public. That is, Public Policy should always be deliberately people-oriented. The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on policy strategy teaches is that each policy performs on the fundamental basis of both its overall strategic quality and the strategic unity of purpose that its key stakeholders bring to bear on its making and implementation. The specification on policy strategy is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because policymaking involves the identification and countering of threats to national development as the means of increasing the opportunities for national development that can be exploited.

6) The specification on regional development. Good public policy landscaping must prioritize the pursuit of regional development through regional partnerships like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which was established in 2003 by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) as an instrument for all member-states to voluntarily self-monitor their governance performance in four thematic areas which include democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. The World Bank rightly noted that 'Regional integration helps countries overcome divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people and ideas. These divisions are a constrain on economic growth, especially in developing countries…Divisions between countries created by geography, poor infrastructure and inefficient policies are an impediment to economic growth.' The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on regional development teaches is that national development can be equally-helped or hindered by internal and external factors and therefore, the ideal is for it to be deliberately supported with the pursuit of national unity and regional cooperation. The regional development specification of public policy is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because national development and progress are hard to achieve or sustain within a region where lack of development is pervasive.

7) The specification on policy coordination. Good public policy landscaping involves effective coordination between key stakeholders. Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, longtime Prime Minister of Malaysia, acknowledged the kind of coordination that is required to optimize policy performance saying, "And what is Malaysia Incorporated? It is the embodiment of smart partnership. How else can we describe the partnership between the civil service, the private sector, and the so-called political masters? And the partnership is implied in the deliberate policy of trilateral co-operation. And the partnership is smart because it yields results, results which are shared without exception by everyone, not only the three partners but the people and the nation as a whole." The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on policy coordination teaches is that top-down policymaking is never a substitute for collaborative policymaking. The specification on policy coordination is a fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because policy success is greatly-helped by stakeholder alignment.

8) The specification on the technology and innovation sensitivity and impact of policy. Good public policy landscaping includes ensuring that policymaking keeps pace with the rapid (ever-increasing) speed of technological change and innovation. Based on the rapid pace at which technology and innovation are changing the way people communicate, work and live as well as the ways governments of sovereign nations are operating especially in response to new phenomena such as cyber warfare, cybercrimes, it is self-evident that the governance landscape across the globe is fast-becoming so highly technology-impacted that it is in the best interest of each nation to develop and deploy tech-savvy public policy capabilities. In review of science and technology innovation policies in major innovative-oriented countries in response to COVID-19 pandemic, Tao Yun noted inter alia, 'Since the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, major Innovative-Oriented countries have adopted various science and technology innovation (STI) policies to address global public health challenges…The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) began to spread rapidly worldwide in early 2020, majorly affects global economies, societies, industries, and supply chains…Therefore a strong science and innovation (STI) system and effective and inclusive STI policies are crucial in such times of global crisis…As of April 2022, the STIP COVID-19 Watch had surveyed 56 countries and identified 886 policies and measures in response to COVID-19. These can be divided into six themes, with 28 policy categories.' The public policy landscaping lesson that the specification on the relationship between public policy and technology and innovation teaches is that the world is already so technologically-acculturated that the inability to effectively exploit the many opportunities that innovation and technological change present can easily translate to the biggest drawback to the pursuit of national and regional development. The specification on the technology and innovation sensitivity of policy is a

fundamental public policy landscaping imperative because technology and innovation have since become established as the leading contributors to personal, national, regional and global development, competitiveness and transformation.

Developmental disparities within and between nations are directly attributable to differences in the levels of commitment to satisfying these key specifications of public policy landscaping which are especially important for three main reasons. First, the specifications of public policy landscaping make it the critical means of creating and sustaining the internal unity and regional cooperation that are needed to conduce national development and regional stability. Second, since public policy landscaping is the creative means of generating the internal unity and regional cooperation to which each nation's development and progress are inextricably tied, it is the leading contributor to good governance. Third, governance systems and their policymaking and policy implementation can only perform to the extent that they satisfy the key specifications of public policy landscaping.

The conclusion is that poor public policy landscaping is the main reason for the failure of governance and the attendant low rates of national development and regional instability. It is plausible to argue that poor public policy landscaping is the root-cause of the pervasive phenomena of divisive politics that is known to act as the trigger of bad governance and regional instability which combine to starve not a few nations of much-needed development and progress. Show me divided polities in which bad governance and lack of development are commonplace and I will show you victims of poor policy landscaping which is evidenced by the implementation of public policy systems that are weakened on account of the poor definition of the internal and external dimensions of their unique policy environments, limited policy spectrum, unresponsiveness to the opportunities for policy change and policy reform, tendency to be far-more reactionary than responsive, low on constitutional alignment and regional cooperation.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which was adopted in July 2001 as the roadmap for the continent's development. In 2002, the UN General Assembly supported NEPAD as the main channel for UN assistance to Africa. In January 2010, the NEPAD structures were fully integrated into the Africa Union as the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. The two key strategic planks of the NEPAD include CAADP [Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme] and PIDA [Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa]. Despite the big hope for Africa's renaissance that the establishment of NEPAD inspired, the reversal of Africa's monumental under-development remains a tall dream after its over two-decades existence and activities. Morbi has identified some of the criticisms of NEPAD as including the following: (a) The presentation of the NEPAD blueprint to members of the G8 before it was seen by any sector of African civil society; (b) The NEPAD is perceived as being driven by elites in society rather than local social movements and this involves the risk of local communities being overlooked; (c) NEPAD has also been criticized for being based on neo-liberal ideals rather than the genuine concerns of the African continent-this involves the risk of the use of the "old neo-liberal models of development" allowing poorer countries to continue suffering economic exploitation by larger economies in the name of regional development; (d) The pursuit of the reversal of Africa's monumental under-development could trigger social problems such as exponential increase in the rates of rural-urban migration; (e) The tendency to publicly promote the ideals of good governance and democracy without equally ensuring that the violators of these ideals are publicly criticized and held accountable. Morbi's criticisms of NEPAD clearly illustrate the great extent to which the performance of an otherwise laudable policy initiative such as NEPAD can be limited by poor public policy landscaping. Like the case of NEPAD, there are not a few otherwise laudable national and regional development policy initiatives that are doomed to avoidable failure because they are not supported with much-needed public policy landscaping.

Nigeria's Business Day Newspaper Editorial commented on the growing political instability in the West African sub-region thus, 'The military junta in Burkina Faso on Monday, January 24 announced that Roch Kabore, the civilian president has been suspended from office. It was announced that other pillars of democratic order have been dissolved. In taking these decisions the military cited the deterioration of the security situation and what they described as Kabore's inability to unite the West African nation and effectively respond to challenges, which include an Islamist insurgency. This comes on the heels of September 5, 2021, when in another West African country, Guinea, the military ousted President Alpha Conde. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, who led the junta that ousted the civilian government of Guinea, cited autocracy, economic mismanagement, and erosion of democratic norms as reasons for military intervention. Earlier, on May 24, 2021, the military seized power in Mali. Nine months earlier, in August 2020, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was removed from power by a military alliance. Before the Mali coup in May, the military struck in Chad and overthrew the democratic government of President Idris Deby Itno. This ugly development leaves the West African region with five military coup d'état in less than 24 months.' In view of the fact both that NEPAD took off as far back as 2001 and that good governance based on

the right democratic systems and practices is one of the key result areas covered by the partnership's peer review mechanism, it is compelling to argue that the poor domestication of key NEPAD protocols and processes directly connected to the assurance of good governance by the West African nations of Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Chad that permitted the failure of their political systems to the point that their militaries launched coups that have since suspended democratic governance. The link between the poor domestication of NEPAD protocols and processes connected to the assurance of good governance and the incidents of lingering bad governance that triggered the resurgence of military coups is important especially because it fully justifies the argument that the coup-afflicted West African nations are paying a heavy price for their failure to support their NEPAD engagements with much-needed public policy landscaping.

After the NEPAD, the next major milestone in Africa's pursuit of development is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that was mediated by the African Union (AU) and signed by 44 of its 55 member states in Kigali, Rwanda on March 21, 2018. If implemented as agreed, AfCFTA promises to be the world's largest free trade area that brings together the 55 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US$ 3.4 trillion. The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Union's long-term development strategy for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse. As part of its mandate, the AfCFTA is to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade. In particular, it is to advance trade in value-added production across all service sectors of the African Economy. The AfCFTA will contribute to establishing regional value chains in Africa, enabling investment and job creation. In its New 2022 AFCFTA Report titled Making the most of the AFCFTA, the World Bank noted thus, 'The scope of AfCFTA is large. The agreement will reduce tariffs among member countries and cover policy areas such as trade facilitation and services, as well as regulatory measures such as sanitary standards and technical barriers to trade. Full implementation of AfCFTA would reshape markets and economies across the region and boost output in the services, manufacturing and natural resources sectors'

Signé (2022) summarized the big economic targets that global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and UNECA have identified as achievable as follows, 'In fact, under a successfully implemented AfCFTA, Africa will have a combined consumer and business spending of $6.7 trillion by 2030 and $16.12 trillion by 2050, creating a unique opportunity for people and businesses —and meaning the region can be the next big market for American goods and services. UNECA has predicted that by 2040 implementation of the AfCFTA will raise intra-African trade by 15 to 25 percent, or $50 billion to $70 billion. The World Bank estimates that the AfCFTA will lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty and substantially increase the income of 68 million people who are just slightly above the poverty line. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) similarly projects that, under the AfCFTA, Africa's expanded and more efficient goods and labor markets will significantly increase the continent's overall ranking on the Global Competitiveness Index. Although there is a great momentum behind the agreement, its successful implementation is dependent on smart choices and thoughtful policy options.' The national and regional development potentials of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are beyond doubt. Equally beyond doubt is the fact that it is only by remaining committed to supporting the AFCFTA project with the most exhaustive public policy landscaping that the poor implementation of this all-important agreement can be prevented.

3. Conclusion

While political parties can only receive the reins of state power by winning elections, they can only deliver good governance on the fundamental basis of their ability to create and maintain an enabling governance landscape. Since governance is mainly delivered through the making and implementation of public policy, an enabling governance landscape is one that is suitable for the creation of the right policy environment within which the right (environmentally-sensitive) policies can be consistently made and implemented. Public policy landscaping is the practical means of creating and maintaining any desired governance landscape. The tendency to profess commitment to the delivery of good governance without prioritizing the creation of an enabling governance landscape through good public policy landscaping is little more than putting the cart before the horse. While poor public policy landscaping is the root-cause of the inability to create and maintain an enabling governance landscape, the inability to create and maintain has a domino effect because it fundamentally undermines policymaking and policy implementation and by so doing, limits the rates and level of development and progress that can be achieved. Developmental disparities within and between nations are the natural result of policy-led entities that prioritize the creation and maintenance of an enabling governance landscape through good public policy landscaping develop faster and better than those policy-led entities that are constrained to operate on disabling governance landscape that reflect their neglect of much-needed public landscaping.

The most damaging effect of disabling governance landscapes and public policy systems that are weakened by poor public policy landscaping is the making and implementation of public policies that bring about broken governments and divided polities that are hard to govern and harder to secure or develop. Put otherwise, developmental disparities within and between nations are best understood when viewed as direct consequences of poor public policy landscaping. For as long as there are more policymakers than policy landscapers, for so long will policy-led entities be prone to divisive governance, and where this is the case, failed public policies and paucity of national and regional development will persist.

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