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**Beyond Passive Recipient: Ghanaian Agency and
Structural Constraints in the Bui Hydroelectric Power
Project**

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Abstract

This paper investigates South-South cooperation through a critical analysis of Ghana's Bui Hydroelectric Power Project, challenging prevailing narratives that frame African states as passive recipients of external structural adjustment. By integrating the agency-structure debate with the complexity of joint action, the study explores how institutional actors navigate the political-administrative interface during the delivery of large-scale infrastructure delivery. While existing literature extensively covers the environmental impacts and economic viability of resource projects, there remains a gap in understanding the specific politicization of the implementation process itself. Drawing on 20 in-depth interviews and a qualitative review of the Ghanaian bureaucracy, the research identifies specific mechanisms of negotiated sovereignty utilised amidst rigid bilateral constraints.

The findings reveal that while domestic agency is proactively exercised, its efficacy is frequently undermined by isomorphic mimicry and the delayed politics inherent in a competitive clientelist settlement. The study highlights that in hybrid regimes such as Ghana's, institutional complexity acts as a strategic shield for

national interest while simultaneously becoming a primary site of implementation failure.

Keywords: *Ghanaian agency, Complexity of joint action, Bui project, Political-administrative interface, Isomorphic mimicry, Political settlements, Negotiated sovereignty*

Introduction And Contextual Background

Ghana's identity as a resource-rich country is deeply rooted in a history of mineral extraction dating back to the colonial era. This historical legacy has positioned the mining sector as a cornerstone of national development, contributing significantly to government revenue and infrastructure (Ayee et al., 2011). However, this economic reliance has created a dual reality: while mining has aided development, it has also introduced severe negative environmental and health externalities (Emmanuel et al., 2018). The contemporary management of these impacts is made increasingly complex by the green transition mandate, requiring Global South states to balance industrial growth against global environmental standards (Nakanwagi, 2023; Gielen, 2021). The small-scale mining (SSM) sector, in particular, presents a profound challenge to sustainable governance. Despite its socio-economic relevance, the industry's negative externalities ranging from the destruction of water bodies to threats to food security often exceed its benefits.

In response, the Ghanaian state has utilised legislative frameworks, including the Small-Scale Mining Act of 1989 (PNDCL 218) and the consolidated Minerals and Mining Act of 2006 (Act 703), to regularise operations (Osei-Kojo et al., 2016). However, recent scholarly evaluations suggest that these robust laws often fall victim to isomorphic mimicry, where the state maintains the outward appearance of regulatory rigour while the actual capability for implementation remains stagnant (Pritchett et al., 2013). This institutional fragility is frequently undermined by "jobs for the boys", a system of political patronage and meritocratic erosion

where technical enforcement is sacrificed for political expediency (Grindle, 2012; Levy, 2014).

Policy implementation in Ghana is not simply a matter of technical follow-through; rather, it is an inherently political arena defined by conflict and negotiation. In developing countries, this process is often defined as delayed politics (Onyango, 2021; Ayee, 1994), where stakeholders excluded during formulation re-emerge to influence resource distribution during execution. This political character is symptomatic of a political settlement characterised by competitive clientelism, where winner-takes-all dynamics and partisan loyalty lead to the politicisation of enforcement by elite policymakers seeking to protect their political fortunes (Khan, 2010; Abdulai, 2017; Asante et al., 2021).

The failure to achieve stated policy goals is further explained by the complexity of joint action model. This framework posits that implementation is complicated by changing actors and multiple clearances (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). In the context of the political-administrative interface, the proliferation of veto points within hybrid regimes creates a significant gap between executive intent and bureaucratic output (Andrews, 2013). In Ghana, a vast array of actors, including the Minerals Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and traditional authorities, must coordinate their actions. The high number of these decision points increases the likelihood of delays, thereby reducing the chances of successful outcomes (Ayee, 1994).

Inside this landscape, external structural pressures frequently overshadow the role played by national agency. Traditional narratives of South-South cooperation, particularly the Sino-Ghanaian development interface seen in projects like the Bui Hydroelectric Power Project, frequently frame African states as passive recipients. However, this study aligns with the New African Agency school (Brown, 2012; Grovogui, 2011), arguing that the Ghanaian state exercises a proactive, albeit mediated, agency even under extreme structural and fiscal duress. As evidenced by the 2023-2026 debt restructuring (DDEP) and the Gold for Oil policy, the narrative of debt-trap diplomacy is often a strategic oversimplification that ignores the negotiated sovereignty exercised by African states (Brautigam, 2020; Gu & Carey, 2019). Drawing on the political-administrative interface (Fukuyama, 2014; Andrews, 2013), this study fills the gap in existing scholarship by examining how power plays and administrative hiccups define the actual impact of policy in the "world of action." The paper contributes to understanding how African countries can achieve efficient resource management while escaping the resource

course by analysing the Bui project through the lens of the agency-structure debate. Fundamentally, successful implementation depends not just on legislation, but on the state's ability to manage the intense political competition and institutional capacity challenges that define the implementation arena.

Literature Review

This section provides a synthesis of the scholarly discourse surrounding public policy implementation, natural resource governance, and the political economy of the Ghanaian state. The review highlights the implementation gap in African development and identifies the specific theoretical and empirical voids this research seeks to address by moving beyond state-centric models toward a more nuanced understanding of African agency.

General Studies on Policy Implementation

Public policy implementation is a multi-dimensional process that transforms government goals into tangible outcomes. Historically, before the 1970s, scholars viewed implementation as a straightforward administrative follow-through. However, seminal works by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) shifted this perspective, defining implementation as a complex interaction between goal setting and the actions geared toward achieving them. Contemporary scholarship has expanded this by focusing on street-level bureaucracy and the discretionary power of frontline actors who ultimately shape policy meaning (Onyango, 2021; Lipsky, 2010).

Furthermore, the digital transformation of African bureaucracies has introduced new layers of technological agency. As argued by Ndulu et al. (2023), the integration of digital monitoring tools in resource-rich states acts as a dual-edged sword, potentially reducing veto points while simultaneously creating new informal spaces for elite capture if not backed by robust political will. This is particularly relevant in GovTech

environments where the maturity of digital systems dictates the state's ability to effectively oversee resource-rich sectors (Dener et al., 2021).

Scholars such as Lester et al. (1995) define implementation as the critical link between objective and outcome, while Dye (2008) emphasises its resource-intensive nature. In developing countries, Onyango (2021) and Ayee (1994) note that this phase is often characterised as delayed politics, where stakeholders excluded during formulation seek to influence resource distribution during execution. Anderson (2011) provides a comprehensive view, noting that implementation encompasses everything done to carry a law into effect. However, as noted by Pritchett, et al. (2013), many developing states exhibit isomorphic mimicry; they adopt the outward appearance of a state while lacking the functional capability to implement complex policies due to persistent failures in state capability. In pockets of efficiency within the African state, implementation success is often less about technical planning and more about the political settlement and the alignment of elite interests (Whitfield et al., 2015; Hickey, 2019).

Studies on Policy Implementation in Ghana

In the Ghanaian context, the implementation of policy is embedded in the country's political-administrative culture. Early studies on the reorganisation of central government ministries highlighted that implementation often fails due to a complexity of joint action, characterised by changing actors and bureaucratic inertia (Ayee, 1993, 1994). However, more recent evaluations suggest that these failures are frequently rooted in the political settlement where formal rules compete with informal political logic (Abdulai, 2017; Khan, 2010). For example, the success of policies is often mediated by the new institutional politics of governance, particularly in sensitive sectors (Asante et al., 2021). Furthermore, the effectiveness of broad national policies is often weakened by the lack of a locational locus, the formal authority to command compliance (Andrews, 2013). This interface is increasingly strained by "jobs for the boys", a system of political staffing where partisan loyalty often overrides technical merit (Grindle, 2012). As Fukuyama (2014) argues, such political decay occurs when personalistic interests capture the administrative machinery, leading to the politicisation of enforcement. This institutional fragility, coupled with winner-takes-all political dynamics, frequently results in policy outcomes being sacrificed for the sake of political survival (Levy, 2014).

Studies on Natural Resources Governance and the Political Economy of Mining

Natural resource governance in Ghana presents a paradox of significant potential versus disappointing developmental outcomes. While mining contributes to revenue, it introduces severe environmental risks (Ayee et al., 2011). The political economy of this sector is increasingly analysed through the lens of competitive clientelism, where the relationship between political elites and mining interests creates a resource curse environment (Abdulai, 2017). In the small-scale mining (SSM) sector, Hilson (2017) observes that state efforts to handle the informal menace often fail due to regulatory gaps and the reactive nature of enforcement. While earlier studies focused on corruption and legislative gaps, there is a relative dearth of scholarship, particularly post-2020, that addresses the agency of the Ghanaian state in navigating international infrastructure-for-resource swaps. This gap is significant because, as Nakanwagi (2023) points out, Global South perspectives are essential in the green transition. Ghanaian agency is no longer just about financial negotiation but about managing the critical minerals nexus amidst global energy shifts (Gielen, 2021). Furthermore, the narrative of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy is increasingly viewed as a "meme" that oversimplifies the complex agency of African states (Brautigam, 2020). Instead, African states utilise development finance to bridge infrastructure deficits, exercising a mediated agency even under structural duress (Gu & Carey, 2019). This study fills these gaps by investigating the domestic political drivers that frustrate mining law implementation within a changing global order (Mohan et al., 2021).

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which is most appropriate for exploring the complex, "behind-the-scenes" political dynamics of policy implementation. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth understanding of the meanings, motives, and interpretations that actors

attribute to their actions within the political-administrative interface (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Onyango, 2021). As noted by Levy (2014), the qualitative approach is essential for uncovering how domestic agency is exercised amidst structural constraints, facilitating a nuanced analysis of the "how" and "why" of implementation hiccups that quantitative metrics often fail to capture. The study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which posits that social reality is constructed through the purposeful actions and interactions of individuals (Neuman, 2014; Andrews, 2013).

Case Study Strategy: The Bui Hydroelectric Project

The study used a single-case study strategy, focusing on the Bui Hydroelectric Power Project. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The Bui project was selected as a critical case because it represents a high-stakes intersection of national energy policy, environmental regulation, and international development cooperation. This project provided a concentrated look at what Pritchett et al. (2013) describe as the struggle for state capability, demonstrating how the Ghanaian state manages a specific, large-scale administrative mandate under the pressure of bilateral agreements. This approach enabled a detailed examination of the complexity of joint action and the specific veto points that emerge during the execution of strategic infrastructure.

Sampling Rationale and Participant Selection

A purposive sampling technique was utilised to ensure a thorough understanding of the political-administrative interface. The rationale for this technique was to target experts who possess specialised knowledge of the Bui project's contractual obligations, environmental compliance, and local political negotiations. This strategy was specifically designed to identify the limits of institutional reform by capturing data from actors situated at key clearance points in the implementation chain (Andrews, 2013). Data saturation was achieved through 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted between February and May 2023. These participants were categorised into four primary stakeholder groups to allow for the triangulation of perspectives between those formulating policy at the center and those navigating its structural constraints in the "world of action." Table 1 below details the study participants.

Table 1: Profile of Study Participants

Participant Category	Institutional Affiliation / Role	Number of Informants (n)	Data Collection Method
State Regulatory Bodies	Minerals Commission, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Bui Power Authority	6	Semi-structured Interview
Political Executive	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Energy	5	Semi-structured Interview
Industry Practitioners	Ghana National Association of Small-Scale Miners (GNASSM)	5	Semi-structured Interview
Local Authorities	Traditional Rulers (Bui/Banda Area), Local Assembly Members	4	Semi-structured Interview
Total		20	

Source: Compiled by the author (2026)

Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

Data for the study were gathered through a combination of primary and secondary sources to ensure methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2017). Secondary data were sourced from a review of legislative instruments, including the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), government white papers, and contemporary literature on Sino-Ghanaian relations (Brautigam, 2020; Gu & Carey, 2019). Primary data were gathered via semi-structured interviews, a technique selected for its flexibility, which permitted participants to elaborate on sensitive political interference and informal administrative roadblocks.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved: (1) familiarisation through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generating initial codes related to veto points and agency; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing potential themes against the complexity of joint action model; (5) defining and naming themes such as "delayed politics" and "administrative silos"; and (6) producing the final report. This process ensured that the analysis of Ghanaian agency was grounded in both empirical reality and the political settlements framework (Khan, 2010). Ethical considerations remained paramount; all participants were assured of anonymity to encourage honest discourse regarding the "jobs for the boys" (Grindle, 2012) phenomenon and other political pressures affecting the project.

Theoretical Framework

The study is founded upon a dual-analytical approach, which merges the administrative intricacies of the complexity of joint action with the wider geopolitical dynamics of the agency-structure debate. This integrated lens provided a robust mechanism for examining how the political-administrative interface in Ghana functions as both a site of institutional friction and a space for strategic national navigation (Asante et al., 2021).

The Complexity of Joint Action

The primary lens for analysing the implementation of large-scale infrastructure in Ghana is the complexity of joint action model. Originally propounded by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), this theory posits that implementation is an arduous process requiring the coordinated efforts of a multitude of actors with varying interests. In the Ghanaian context, implementation is seldom a linear process; rather, it is an interaction between the setting of goals and the world of action. The model highlights three elements: multiple clearances, veto points, and participant diversity.

For the Bui hydroelectric project, the implementation chain involved numerous administrative functions, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Energy, the Minerals Commission, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, as noted by Pritchett et al. (2013), many developing states suffer from isomorphic mimicry, where they look like a state by adopting formal structures while lacking the actual capability to implement complex policies. In Ghana, these veto points are often

symptomatic of political decay (Fukuyama, 2014), where formal administrative procedures are captured by personalistic interests. Each junction acts as a clearance point where a project can be delayed or redirected. As the number of these points increases, the probability of successful outcomes decreases, a phenomenon worsened by jobs for the boys, a system of political staffing where partisan loyalty often overrides technical merit (Grindle, 2012). Veto points are often informal, a file sitting on a desk or a delayed budgetary release representing the structural result of a crowded institutional field. Through this lens, delayed politics is understood not as simple incompetence, but as a space where actors attempt to influence the distribution of resources during the implementation phase (Onyango, 2021).

The Agency-Structure Debate and Negotiated Sovereignty

To complement the internal administrative focus, the study adopted the agency-structure framework to analyse power dynamics in South-South cooperation. In social theory, structure refers to patterned arrangements: laws, global financial systems, or bilateral treaties that limit actor choices (Giddens, 1984). Conversely, agency refers to the capacity of states to act independently (Brown, 2012). Traditional narratives often frame African states as passive recipients trapped by structural constraints like the resource-for-infrastructure model. However, this paper employed a modernised structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) to argue that agency and structure are fundamentally intertwined. This is consistent with a New African Agency perspective, suggesting that states have the capacity to exert power even when involved in asymmetric partnerships (Grovogui, 2011).

In the Bui project, agency was visible when the state renegotiated local content or balanced international financier interests with traditional leadership demands. As Brautigam (2020) notes, the narrative of debt-trap diplomacy often oversimplifies the complex agency of African states, which utilise development finance to bridge infrastructure deficits while navigating global structural constraints (Gu & Carey, 2019). This

negotiated sovereignty allows domestic actors to use the gaps in global structures to assert national interests. Through this lens, the study examined how the Ghanaian bureaucracy uses its own internal complexity as a tool for agency, occasionally using administrative delays as a negotiation tactic to extract better terms from external partners.

Amalgamation: The Political-Administrative Interface

The combination of these theories provided a comprehensive framework for the "world of action." While the complexity of joint action explained internal administrative delays, the agency-structure debate explained the state's strategic response to external pressures. Together, they form the political-administrative interface (Onyango, 2021). This interface is governed by a political settlement, the informal balance of power that dictates how institutions actually function (Khan, 2010). For the Bui project, this means analysing how pockets of effectiveness within the Ghanaian state (Hickey, 2019) navigated veto points to assert national interests against the rigid structural requirements of international financing. By employing this dual approach, the study captured the microscopic administrative hurdles as well as the macroscopic political strategies that define policy implementation in the 21st-century African state.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The analysis investigates the complex "world of action" where the theoretical objectives of Ghanaian resource policy encounter the fragmented reality of institutional implementation and global structural pressures.

The "World of Action" and the Anatomy of Implementation Failure

The transition from policy formulation to the realm of action constitutes the most volatile stage of the policy cycle in Ghana. Data gathered from the Bui project underscores an implementation gap that is fundamentally structural. While Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) viewed implementation as the interaction between goals and actions, in Ghana, this interaction is disrupted by a complexity of joint action that renders well-designed policies stagnant. A key finding of the study was the proliferation of veto points and clearance junctions. As noted by Pritchett et al. (2013), this

often results in isomorphic mimicry, where the state maintains the outward appearance of functional bureaucracies while the actual capability for implementation fails. Inside Ghana's political settlement, these junctions serve as spaces where formal rules are undermined by the informal balance of power (Khan, 2010). A senior official from the BPA further elucidated this tension:

On paper, the implementation plan is flawless. But the moment you enter the 'world of action,' you realise that technical milestones are often at the mercy of political timelines. We are constantly negotiating between what the engineering manual says and what the political climate demands. (Field Interview, 2023).

Supporting this, a project coordinator highlighted how these administrative silos effectively paralyse implementation:

It is a classic case of having the right institutions but no coordination. The EPA, the Minerals Commission, and the Ministry all have their own mandates, and they do not talk to each other until there is a crisis. We spend more time clearing veto points within our own government than we do actually managing the project site. (Field Interview, 2023).

This friction confirms the complexity of joint action model: as decision points increase, the probability of success decreases exponentially. This situation is exacerbated by "jobs for the boys", a practice where technical administrative positions are filled according to partisan loyalty, thereby weakening the state's technical agency (Grindle, 2012). Furthermore, these veto points are strategically used within competitive clientelism (Asante et al., 2021; Abdulia, 2017). In a winner-takes-all system, the implementation phase becomes a site for patronage.

Navigating Asymmetry: Ghanaian Agency in Sino-Ghanaian Cooperation

A critical contribution of this study is the refutation of the passive recipient narrative. Through the agency-structure framework, the analysis reveals that Ghanaian actors exercise significant bureaucratic agency to navigate rigid international constraints (Brown, 2012). In the Bui project, domestic actors insisted on higher thresholds for local content than initially outlined. This represents a classic instance of the dialectic of control; the supposedly weaker party utilises their essential role in implementation to secure concessions. A lead negotiator involved in these infrastructure-for-resource swaps noted the strategic use of bureaucracy:

People think we just sign whatever is put in front of us by international partners. That is not true. We know where the gaps are in the global structures. We often use our own internal administrative delays as a strategic buffer, telling partners that 'local clearances' are pending just to buy ourselves more time to renegotiate better terms. (Field Interview, 2023).

Another senior diplomat emphasised that Ghanaian agency is rooted in indispensable local expertise:

The structural power might sit with the financier, but the operational power sits with us. They need our 'sovereign stamp' to move any equipment or break any ground. We understand that our agency is not about saying 'no' to the deal, but about dictating the 'how' and 'when' of its execution to suit our national energy goals. (Field Interview, 2023).

As Brautigam (2020) argues, the popular narrative of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy is often a meme that ignores the strategic agency African states exert in these partnerships. This form of negotiated sovereignty is consistent with Grovogui's (2011) perspective that African agency is a vital component of the global order. In the contemporary context (2023-2026), policies like Gold for Oil and the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) demonstrate a unique site for the exercise of crisis-driven agency¹ (Hickey, 2019).

¹ The recent "Gold for Oil" policy (launched in 2023) and the 2023–2024 Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) serve as contemporary extensions of the agency-structure debate explored in this paper. While the DDEP represents a profound structural constraint imposed by fiscal crisis, the "Gold for Oil" initiative reflects a proactive

The Political-Administrative Interface and Delayed Politics

The political-administrative interface is the primary source of delayed politics, where conflicts unresolved during formulation re-emerge during implementation. In the Bui project, this became most apparent during the resettlement phase. While high-level agreements were signed in Accra, implementation occurred locally, where traditional authorities held sway. A local authority representative from the Banda area highlighted this disconnect:

The politicians in Accra see a map and a budget; they do not see the shrines, the ancestral lands, or the local power structures. When the administrative wing tries to enforce a resettlement deadline without our blessing, the implementation stops dead. We are the ultimate veto point that the central state often forgets to calculate. (Field Interview, 2023).

An administrative officer in the energy sector further described how the interface becomes a site for political survival:

You cannot separate the technician from the politician in Ghana. If I enforce a regulation that hurts a local 'big man' who is a financier for the ruling party, my phone will ring within ten minutes. Implementation is essentially a permanent state of negotiation where technical standards are the first thing to be traded for political peace. (Field Interview, 2023).

This confirms that implementation is politics by other means, a reality that can only be managed by "working with the grain" of local political structures (Levy, 2014). In Ghana, this is worsened by the politicisation of enforcement. Much like the SSM sector, where informal mining menaces are often handled with reactive measures rather than systemic reform (Hilson, 2017), large-scale projects are subject to informal pressures.

attempt by the Ghanaian government to utilize natural resource agency to navigate trade dependencies.

Synthesis: Bridging the Implementation Gap

The missing link in understanding the developmental trajectory of Ghana lies in the politicisation of the implementation process. While traditional literature often blames a lack of technological capital, this study demonstrates that the true bottleneck is the interaction between fragmented institutional agency and complex administrative structures. As Andrews (2013) highlights, the limits of institutional reform are reached when formal changes fail to alter the underlying informal power dynamics. While Ghana has the required theoretical frameworks and institutions in place, it grapples with the complexity of joint action as these bodies frequently pull in different directions, driven by rival political interests and loyalties. To escape the cycle of failure, the state must move beyond "looking like a state" and focus on the political-administrative interface (Pritchett et al., 2013). The Bui project demonstrates that the Ghanaian state has the agency to navigate global structures; what it lacks is the internal coordination to ensure that this agency is not squandered at the numerous veto points of its own bureaucracy.

Conclusion

This study has interrogated the world of action within the Ghanaian politico-administrative landscape, using the Bui Hydroelectric Power Project and Small-Scale Mining (SSM) legislation as critical evaluative lenses. By synthesising the complexity of joint action and the agency-structure framework, this study shows that policy failure in Ghana seldom stems from inadequate formulation or a deficiency in technical skills. Instead, it is the systemic consequence of a crowded institutional field characterised by an excessive number of veto points and the persistent re-emergence of delayed politics during the implementation phase.

The findings confirm that the implementation gap is not a mere administrative oversight; it is a political product of a political settlement where technical goals are frequently subordinated to the imperatives of political survival and the informal balance of power (Khan, 2010). While Ghanaian bureaucrats demonstrate a sophisticated capacity for institutional agency and negotiated sovereignty in the face of international structural constraints specifically within Sino-Ghanaian cooperation, this agency is frequently undermined by jobs for the boys (Grindle, 2012) and internal political interference. As argued by Pritchett et al. (2013), such environments frequently lead to isomorphic mimicry; the state preserves

an outward appearance of functional institutions while actual administrative capacity remains stalled.

The setbacks identified in the Bui project are symptomatic of a broader governance challenge: the difficulty of maintaining a developmentalist agenda within a political system that prioritises short-term electoral visibility over long-term administrative efficiency. As evidenced by the state's recent (2023-2026) navigation of the Gold for Oil policy and the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP), the Ghanaian state possesses the crisis-driven agency to maneuver within global structural rigidities (Brautigam, 2020), yet it remains hampered by the fragmented silos and political decay of its own internal bureaucracy (Fukuyama, 2014; Andrews, 2013).

Overall, the study concludes that for Ghana to achieve sustainable development and escape the resource curse, it must harmonise the political-administrative interface. The exercise of domestic agency must be unified and depoliticised to ensure the state presents a coherent, pockets-of-efficiency front to international partners (Hickey, 2019). By working with the grain of existing political realities (Levy, 2014) and reducing the complexity of joint action, the state can bridge the gap between policy design and implementation. Lacking these reforms, the Ghanaian state remains institutionally dense yet administratively weak, possessing the capacity for grand policy formulation but often failing within the decisive and unpredictable realm of practical action.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified and improve the efficacy of policy implementation in Ghana, the following strategic recommendations are proposed:

Streamlining the implementation chain

The government should undertake a comprehensive audit of the administrative junctions involved in large-scale infrastructure and resource

projects. To mitigate the complexity of joint action, the number of required clearances should be reduced by establishing Integrated Project Management Units (IPMUs). These units should house representatives from the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance, and environmental regulators, among other key institutions, under a single administrative roof to facilitate parallel, rather than linear, clearance processes.

Depoliticising the administrative interface

There is an urgent need to insulate technical implementing agencies such as the Minerals Commission and the Bui Power Authority from direct partisan interference. This can be achieved by enhancing tenure security for senior administrative staff and ensuring that appointments to regulatory boards are made using non-partisan, merit-based criteria. Legislative instruments should be amended to grant these bodies a stronger locational locus, allowing them to enforce technical standards without the constant requirement for ad-hoc political approval.

Institutionalising proactive stakeholder engagement

To prevent the re-emergence of delayed politics, the implementation phase must incorporate formal local content and resettlement committees from the onset of project design. By incorporating traditional authorities and local community leaders during the planning phase, the state is able to pinpoint and address potential veto points before they become practical obstacles on the ground.

Enhancing national negotiating agency

Ghana should establish a permanent National Bureau of Strategic Negotiations. This body would serve as a repository of technical and legal expertise, ensuring that the state exercises its agency in bilateral partnerships with a singular, unified voice. This would prevent external financiers from exploiting the fragmented agency often observed between competing domestic ministries.

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