

Ethics, governance, and justice: Harmonizing faith-based ethics with public service and legal frameworks in Africa

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Abstract: The role of ethics as an indispensable mechanism for institutional order, societal harmony, and administrative integrity is globally recognized. However, the discourse surrounding the integration of faith-based ethics into secular governance and justice frameworks remains a profoundly contentious paradigm, particularly across contemporary Africa. This article examines the critical debate regarding the incorporation of religious ethics into public service and legal frameworks within the African context. In doing so, it offers vital, strategic insights for the continent's political leadership, policymakers, and global governance scholars who analyze the systemic tensions existing between proponents of moral alignment and advocates for strict secular institutional neutrality. Critics of harmonization strongly warn that embedding faith-based ethics into public administration systems risks introducing highly exclusionary, coercive, and inefficient practices into governance. These opponents emphasize the absolute necessity of maintaining entirely neutral, transparent, and pluralistic public codes that protect all citizens equally. Conversely, pro-harmonization champions argue that deliberately aligning civil service systems with spiritual principles enhances institutional transparency, public accountability, and long-term sustainable development by reinforcing conventional statutory laws with divine standards of honesty and integrity. This study comprehensively evaluates these competing perspectives, highlighting the enduring tension between personal moral convictions and impartial public regulations. Ultimately, the article proposes that a deeper, more nuanced understanding of human nature is critical to successfully resolving the conceptual dichotomy between religious and secular administrative ethics, thereby providing African leaders and global stakeholders with an excellent, actionable, cohesive framework for fostering sustainable institutional integrity across modern societies worldwide.

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1. Introduction

There is an interconnected triad between ethics, governance and justice. The interplay between the three is essential for building a just society where ethical governance leads to improved decision-making, social cohesion, and long-term stability. Within the public service and judicial systems, ethics, governance, and justice are interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in the functioning of institutions. Ethics guide decision-making processes, ensuring that leaders act in the best interests of their constituents and uphold justice. Governance, in turn, is the framework that allows these ethical principles to be realized, providing a legal and moral structure for public affairs. Justice, as fairness, is a fundamental aspect of governance and ethics, ensuring that all individuals are treated equally and fairly. The interplay of these concepts is essential for building a just society where ethical governance leads to improved decision-making, social cohesion, and long-term stability.

The harmonization of faith-based ethics within public service and legal frameworks is a contentious issue, balancing the need for moral guidance in governance against the principles of secularism, equality, and pluralism. Proponents argue that integrating religious values can strengthen integrity and social cohesion, while critics maintain that it risks marginalizing minorities and violating the separation of church and state. Amidst these arguments there exist a number of axioms for and against, further enriching the debate.

Among those in support for harmonization include: *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn"* (Proverbs 29:2 KJV); *"By justice a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down"* (Proverbs 29:4 NLT); *"Do not let kindness and integrity forsake you, tie them around your neck... then you will find favor... in the sight of God and man"* (Proverbs 3:3-4); and, *"Your role is not for your own comfort, but for the community's welfare."* (African Principle)

While those opposed to mixing distinct spheres of life argue that faith-based ethics, while valuable personally, can become exclusionary, coercive, or even ineffective when mandatory in public service and secular legal frameworks. Among the maxims invoked to strengthen their position include: *"Keep the church out of the state's business and the state out of the church's business."* - A widely recognized idiom emphasizing the separation of religious and public spheres; *"Religion begat prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother."* - A quote attributed to Cotton Mather (2021), highlighting the risk that religious institutions can damage their own foundations when they gain too much political power; *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* - A foundational biblical principle, often used to advocate for a clear distinction between civic duties and religious obligations; and, *"The dog does not enter the church just because it is hungry."* (A proverb implying that forced harmonization of belief and action (public service) often fails to produce genuine, effective outcomes).

The contextual distinctions espoused by those against the harmonization are of twofold, namely: i) *Individual vs. Public*: asserts that while faith-based communities believe in carrying values (like honesty) to the workplace to fight corruption, this is often distinguished from making religious doctrines into legally binding laws; and, *The Problem of Interpretation*: that even if religious laws are applied (e.g., "do not steal"), people of the same faith often have conflicting ideas on how to apply those, making them ill-suited for secular legal frameworks

The earlier axiomatic adages underscore the need for harmonization of faith-based ethics in the public service, and legal frameworks by emphasizing the intersection of integrity, accountability, and divine justice. They highlight that true, ethical, and sustainable public service requires aligning human laws with divine standards of fairness and honesty.

The later warns against mixing distinct spheres of life, emphasizing that faith-based ethics, while valuable personally, can become exclusionary, coercive, or ineffective when mandatory in public service and secular legal frameworks. The two standpoints elicit critical Theophilosophical questions: Is there any need for the harmonization? What, in the context of human nature contributes to the paradoxical dichotomy between faith-based ethics and secular ethic? Aren't human beings created in the image of God, in his likeness; and if so, are they essentially and naturally ethical beings? What are the essentials of human nature? What is the purpose for human existence? (Bharat, 2019)

In order to grasp the deeper meaning and significance of these arguments and their operational relevance, it's necessary to understand the concept of human nature and the purpose for human existence. This is because ethics; secular or faith-based is of relevance only insofar as it concerns the human person. Can the philosophy of human nature contribute to our understanding of this prevalent ethical paradoxical dichotomy?

2. Human Nature

Human nature comprises of the fundamental, naturally intrinsic dispositions and characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Although used to denote the essence of humankind, this usage has however proven to be controversial in that there is dispute as to whether or not such an essence actually exists. Arguments about human nature have been of central focus for philosophy for centuries, and the concept continues to provoke lively and brain-fatiguing philosophical debate. In this article, we take views about human nature from two perspectives: philosophical, and theological.

The concept of human nature as a standard by which to make judgments is traditionally said to have begun in Greek philosophy. By late antiquity and medieval times, the particular dominant approach was that of Aristotle's teleology, where human nature was believed to exist somehow independently of individuals, causing humans to simply become what they become. This has been understood as demonstrating a special connection between human nature and divinity,

where human nature is understood in terms of final and formal causes. More specifically, Aristotle defined human nature by its unique capacity for reason (logos) and its inherent need to live within a community, characterizing humans as rational, social, and political beings (zoonpolitikon). Human nature is aimed at flourishing (eudaimonia) through virtuous action, moral development, and the active exercise of reason within a polis. He asserts that the essence of being human is the possession of logos (speech and reason), which allows us to comprehend concepts of good and evil, just and unjust. Propelled by reason, humans are, by nature, intended to live in organized communities - city-state (polis); and that human potential is only realized in community, meaning that any person who cannot exist in a polis is either a beast or a god. In terms of virtue, Aristotle is of the opinion that humans are not born inherently good or bad (amoral) but they possess the capacity to become virtuous through habituation and rational choices. His view emphasizes that developing our nature requires active participation in community life to achieve our highest potential. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020)

Against Aristotle's view of a fixed human nature, the relative malleability of man has been argued especially strongly in recent centuries, first, by early modernists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Thomas Hobbes believes that human nature is fundamentally mechanistic, selfish, and driven by self-preservation and appetite. In his masterpiece *The Leviathan*, he argued that without a strong, absolute sovereign to impose order, human beings would naturally fall into a violent "war of all against all" due to competition, distrust, and desire for glory. He avers, that without authority, life human life in the state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Consequently, the threats in the state of nature necessitates the need for strong authority to maintain social order. His view emphasizes that only an absolute authority can prevent society from collapsing into a brutal natural state. (Pomerleau, 1997)

John Locke viewed human nature as inherently rational, social, and tolerant, shaped by experience rather than innate ideas, holding that individuals are free and equal. He emphasized that humans have the capacity for goodwill, and that while in the state of nature, individuals are free and equal, obliged to respect each other's rights to life, liberty, and property. Arguing for a "blank slate" (tabula rasa) mind and believing in natural rights - life, liberty, and property he asserts that reason propels people to seek protection through social cooperation. Further, being naturally rational and guided by reason, human beings have the capacity to understand moral laws and to choose to live in peace. And unlike Hobbes, Locke views the "state of nature" (life before government) not as a war, but as a state of liberty and equality where people possess natural rights. And as a social and moral beings, Locke believed that human beings have a social instinct to coexist, manage conflicts peacefully, and adhere to a "law of nature" that prohibits harming another's life, health, liberty, or possessions. (Armitage. 2004)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau avers, that human beings are innately good and free in their natural state, often referred to as the "*noble savage*." That in the natural state, humans lived in harmony

with nature, without the corrupting influences of organized society. Rousseau argued that society's development led to the corruption of this natural goodness, introducing private property, social hierarchies, and artificial needs that diminish human freedom and morality. In his *Emile, or On Education*, Rousseau wrote "*We do not know what our nature permits us to be.*" meaning that human beings are not defined by an unchangeable, innate nature, but are instead "almost infinitely perfectible" and malleable. He meant that society and education create our "nature," allowing us to become whatever we choose to make of ourselves, meaning that humans have unique ability to learn, change, and improve (or degrade) over time; the implication being that human "nature" is constantly evolving based on social and environmental influences. (Gourevitch, 1997)

Since the early 19th century, however, thinkers such as Darwin, Freud, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, as well as Structuralists and Postmodernists, have also sometimes argued against a fixed or innate human nature. On the other hand, the theological perspectives on human nature have explored the essence of humanity, its creation, moral implications, and the relationship with God, significantly shaping Christian doctrine and ethics. Various approaches are manifest:

The Biblical (theological) foundation of human nature is deeply rooted in the biblical creation narrative. According to Genesis, humans are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), which imparts inherent dignity, intellect and value to every individual. But as a consequence of sin, humans are profoundly marred by a fallen, sinful nature inherited from Adam. Humans are viewed as beings designed to reflect God's character, possessing rationality, creativity, and the ability to love, distinguishing them from animals as integrated, living souls consisting of body, mind, and spirit, and not merely as spirit trapped in a body. Despite their fallen state, they are moral agents capable of choice, although this freedom is marred by selfishness. The Bible portrays humans as capable of great good (being made in God's image) and great evil (being fallen), leading to a daily conflict between the "flesh" (sinful nature) and the spirit. (New African Bible, 2010)

The historical development concept of human nature shifts from seeing humans as possessing a fixed, rational, or divine essence, such as Aristotle's "rational animal" toward more malleable, evolutionary, and historically contingent views, often emphasizing flexibility over fixed traits. Augustine of Hippo observed that human nature was initially good but became corrupted due to sin, affecting humanity's will and moral choices, while Mencius and Confucius often viewed human nature as inherently good, with moral qualities like compassion and fairness requiring development through education. Marx and Darwin suggested that human nature is revealed through the natural progression of history, with Darwin introducing the idea of human life as a set of problems to be resolved through adaptation. Their thoughts shifted from a purely structural definition of the image of God (e.g., humanity has reason) toward a functional or relational definition (e.g., humanity acts as God's representative, or humanity exists to be in relationship with God)

Theistic evolution (or evolutionary creationism) perspective of human nature affirms that God created the universe and life through evolutionary processes. It attempts to harmonize scientific consensus on human origins - that humans are closely related to other primates with the theological belief that humans are created in the image of God and have a unique spiritual nature. This perspective explores how scientific insights can coexist with theological beliefs about creation, morality, and the nature of the soul. It seeks to reconcile traditional theological concepts with modern scientific findings. It holds that the evolution of human beings from less advanced animals (substance) was part of God's ultimate plan for creation.

Consequently, the theological understanding of human nature has profound implications for ethics and moral decision-making. It shapes how Christians view themselves, others, and their responsibilities in the world. The belief in the inherent dignity of every person informs social justice efforts and the call to care for creation. Hence, the theology of human nature encompasses a rich tapestry of biblical teachings, historical developments, and contemporary discussions, all of which contribute to a deeper understanding of what it means to be human in relation to God and the world. But to this array of somewhat contradictory views about human nature, could our understanding of the purpose for human existence hold key to the complex debate on whether or not harmonization of faith-based ethics with secular ethics provides a pragmatic solution to human problems and challenges in the public service and judicial frameworks in Africa?

3. The Purpose for Human Existence

From the earliest whispers of civilization, humanity has asked a question that transcends time, culture, and belief: *what is the purpose of our existence?* This inquiry is woven into the songs of ancient poets, the debates of philosophers, the prayers of mystics, and the equations of scientists. It is not merely an intellectual puzzle but a yearning, an ache at the core of consciousness that refuses to be silenced. The persistence of this question reveals that our search for meaning is not an ornament of life, but part of its essence. Neither modern science nor philosophy has offered any single, definitive answer to the question, instead, they continue to open doorways into different ways of speculation, complexity, and confusion. (Green, 1918)

Theists believe God created the universe and that God had a purpose in doing so. They hold the view that humans find their meaning and purpose for life in God's purpose in creating. Some theists further hold that if there were no God to give life ultimate meaning, value, and purpose, then life would be absurd. Philosophers argue that life's purpose is self-defined, and that we create meaning through our choices, relationships, creativity, and pursuit of knowledge, while spiritual traditions suggest that our existence is about growth of the soul, connection with a higher power, and contributing to the greater good of humanity.

In the Ubuntu worldview, the purpose of human existence is to actively cultivate humanity, maintain harmony, and affirm one's own humanity by recognizing and uplifting the humanity

of others This African worldview is anchored on the maxim that “I am because we are” as summarized by the Nguni Bantu phrase *"Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu"*, commonly translated as "a person is a person through other people" emphasizing the interconnectedness between an individual and community as the foundation for ethical development (life purpose is found in community, not individualism), with a governance structure that emphasizes and prioritizes human dignity. Ubuntu philosophy suggests that the purpose of existence is not just to survive, but to thrive together, creating a "humanized" world through shared, relational, and caring actions. (Rodgers, 2021)

To Hindu, the purpose of human existence is to achieve liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara) by fulfilling the fourfold goals of life, known as Purusharthas, which ultimately leads to spiritual liberation (Moksha). It is a process whose goal is the realization of one's divine nature through dharma (ethics), artha (prosperity), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation). To Hindu, human life is often viewed as an opportunity to achieve this purpose through various paths, such as selfless service, devotion, knowledge, or meditation. (Swami, 1994)

The contradictory dichotomies inherent in debates about human nature and the purpose for human existence makes sense within the framework of human society and its institutions established to navigate and elevate humans to self-actualization and self-consciousness.

From the above exposition, a number of issues emerge, especially in relation to human aspirations vis-a-viz ethical standards that can enhance actualization of the true essence of beingness: i) does the realization of the essence of human nature and the purpose of his existence lie in a civil society; a society constructed along rules, morality and judicial norms?; ii) does human beings' belief in the superior being such as God and His purpose for creation hold the key to human self-actualization?; how best can faith-based ethics unravel and harmonize the true essence of human existence?; ii) on what premise are the ethical, governance principles and judicial systems definitive of public service and legal frameworks in Africa anchored; and how best do they contribute to human self-actualization in Africa?

4. Governance

Governance is basically the overall complex system or framework of processes, functions, structures, rules, laws and norms borne out of the relationships, interactions, power dynamics and communication within an organized group of individuals. It sets the boundaries of acceptable conduct and the practices of different actors of the group and controls their decision-making powers through the creation and the enforcement of rules and regulations; it also manages, allocates and mobilizes the relevant resources and capacities of the different members and sets the overall direction of the group in order to effectively address its specific collective needs, problems and challenges. But what exactly necessitates a structured civil society governance?

In his seminal work, *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes asserts that humans are inherently motivated by self-interest and the instinct for survival. He describes a hypothetical "*state of nature*" where no government exists, and individuals act solely to satisfy their own needs and desires. In this condition, he observes, *life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,"* characterized by *constant fear, competition, and potential violence, and death* since there would be no rules or moral constraints to regulate behavior. (Abdullahi, 2007)

According to Hobbes, the chaotic state of nature demonstrates the necessity of a social contract. Individuals collectively agree to surrender certain freedoms to a sovereign authority in exchange for security and order. This agreement is not merely theoretical; it reflects the practical need for good and effective governance to prevent conflict and ensure cooperation. Hobbes affirms that without such authority, society would descend into perpetual conflict, making moral and legal norms impossible to enforce. *Humans are self-gratifying animals.*

While some interpretations may suggest that Hobbes saw humans as purely egoistic, his view is more nuanced. He recognized that humans are capable of reason and can understand the benefits of cooperation, but their actions are primarily guided by desires for power, resources, and safety. This understanding underpins his argument for a strong, centralized authority to regulate behavior and prevent the destructive consequences of unchecked self-interest.

Hobbes's insights emphasize the relationship between human nature and the necessity of governance. His work highlights the tension between individual freedom and collective security, and it is an instrument that informs debates on authority, rights, and social order in contemporary society. His thought presents a realistic, if pessimistic, view of human nature, asserting that humans require structured authority to maintain peace and prevent the natural tendencies toward conflict and self-interest from destabilizing society.

From a normative perspective, however, good, effective and fair governance involves a well-organized system that fairly represents the interests and needs of both the governed and the governing. Such governance guides the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the group's objectives, policies, and programs, ensuring smooth operation in various contexts. It fosters trust by promoting transparency, responsibility, and accountability, and employs mechanisms to resolve disputes and conflicts for greater harmony. It adapts to changing circumstances, keeping the group responsive and resilient. By delivering on its promises and creating positive outcomes, it fosters legitimacy and acceptance of the governing body, leading to rule-compliance, shared responsibility, active cooperation, and ultimately, greater stability and long-term sustainability. (Juhana, 2011)

The United Nations defines good governance as the responsible, transparent, and accountable management of public resources and affairs to fulfill human rights and promote sustainable development. This can be achieved through the application of the eight principles that ensures *participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and*

inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. These principles are anchored on eleven salient values for effective governance developed by the UN Committee of Experts on public administration (CEPA), to promote effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. They include: i) competence - high-quality public service delivery; ii) sound policy-making - evidence-based decisions; iii) integrity - preventing conflict of interest and corruption; iv) transparency - open government data. It asserts that the weakening of any of these pillars is a recipe to the slipping of governance - Development outcomes suffer along with it. As a consequence, sensitivity to this slippage manifests within the population since they depend on long delivery chains stretching from the central to their villages,

Important to note is that the UN's prescribed principles are universal, and they apply to all its member states, Africa included. African states have witnessed grandiose yearly representation of its leadership to the UN Assemblies, with presentations of well-promising speeches that soon evaporate once the leadership exit New-York. While the bloated Africa delegates dine, wine and plunder resources of their nations, crippling their economies, their citizens are embroiled in hunger, diseases, poverty and death. As they return home with promissory notes, they get down to looting, further widening the gap between them (the rich) and the burdened workers and farmers (the poor). And sooner than later, the eloquent speeches and promissory notes are fastened to the rot-shelves of oblivion, while more graves to bury the exploited continue to flourish. Africa is ailing from poor leadership and bad governance, while the challenges continue to mount.

5. Governance challenges in Africa

Despite the very polished policy documents anchored in their respective constitutions, and the obvious glitter of the very positive attributes definitive of governance, many African nations continue to stagger in the prison of leadership deficiency - contrary to their mandates as spelt out in their constitutions, and in total disregard to the objective goal underpinning the concept of good governance. As a consequence, the self-afflicted challenges continue to affect the effectiveness and efficiency of public service across all arms of governments in Africa, thereby impeding the very essence of their establishment and achievement of good governance. Majority of Africa's leaders soon forget that leadership is a privilege to better the lives of others and not an opportunity to satisfy their personal greed. (Gardner, 1993)

Among the most prevalent vices definitive of mismanagement in Africa include, though not limited to: i) *corruption* - the most pervasive obstacle to good governance which entails expropriation of public resources for personal use; ii) *institutional Weakness* - often the result of historical legacies of colonialism, conflict, or authoritarian rule, hastening the lack of capacity and authority to implement good governance principles; iii) *limited and incompetent administrative capacity* - the lack of technical expertise, human resources, and institutional memory to formulate and implement effective policies; iv) *Fragmented authority* - overlapping jurisdictions and unclear mandates between different government levels that create

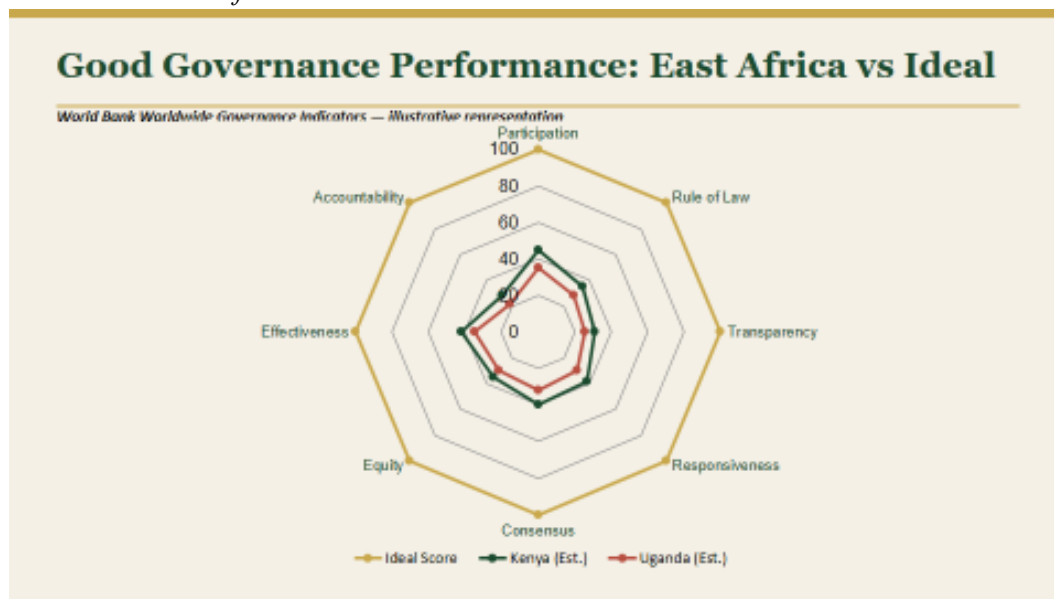
inefficiencies and accountability gaps; v) *Insufficient funding* - institutions operating with inadequate budgets, thereby hampering their ability to fulfill their mandates effectively; vi) *Bureaucratic accountability and administrative inefficiency* - limiting effective service delivery and creating bottlenecks of inefficiency, lack of transparency, and resistance to change; vii) *nepotism* – rampant granting of favoritism, jobs, and promotions to relatives and close friends based on kinship rather than merit which often creates unfairness in employment, business, politics, thereby leading to lack of diversity, decreased morale, diminished performance, and conflict of interest; viii) *Criminalization of politics* - having elected leaders with criminal records, or with political institutions as vehicles for personal enrichment and protection from prosecution; with legislatures populated by individuals with vested interests in preventing accountability mechanisms from working, thereby collapsing the legislative oversight of the executive; and making the institutions meant to serve as checks on power to become instruments for those in power. (Alex-de W, 2015)

Other elements of vices within African states governance structures are: ix) *Freedom of information* – denying citizens access to information, making it impossible for them to hold governments accountable for what they cannot see. Restrictions on press freedom, weak freedom of information laws, and government control over public data all limit the ability of citizens' scrutiny; x) *Access to justice* - rampant judicial delays, bribery and extortion, political interference and capture, case delays and corruption, judicial bias, administrative perversion, and, ineffective prosecution and police practices which further compound the problem of ineffective service delivery and governance in Africa. Even where legal protections technically exist, justice systems that are slow, underfunded, or vulnerable to political interference fail to deliver meaningful recourse. In many African nations, cases drag on for years or decades, effectively denying access to justice for those without resources or connections to buy justice.

As a consequence of these vices, governance in many African states lack transparency, accountability, participation, and rule of law. Although these challenges can be addressed through various strategies, such as improving public sector management, ensuring accountability, and promoting transparency and information, and addressing corruption by fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, participation, and effective governance strategies, while ensuring compliance with regulations, there is more to be done in terms of mindset, and paradigm shift as essential elements towards achieving good governance in Africa. China did it, and today it's the most developed nation in the world.

In addition, African nations require a multifaceted approach that includes, not only the implementation of the good governance guidelines and principles enshrined in the United Nations (UN) and other relevant domestic policy documents, and anchored within their distinct constitutions, but a blend of these principles with some of the fundamental ethical tenets from faith-based ethics (theological ethos). By so doing, with zeal, commitment, and pragmatic guiding principles, governments in Africa can create a more equitable and responsive governance system beneficial to society as a whole.

Chart 1: Governance Performance



World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators

As stated earlier, good governance embodies effective, transparent, accountable, and participatory management of public affairs and resources to ensure fairness, human rights, and sustainable development. It guarantees that political, social, and economic priorities are based on broad societal consensus and that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making. Good governance is crucial because it strengthens the relationship between the state and its citizens, promotes sustainable development, and protects the rights of all individuals. Key elements of good governance include: *Participation* - active involvement of citizens in decision-making, either directly or through representatives, ensuring that political rights and societal needs are addressed; *Rule of Law* - a fair legal framework, independent judiciary, and impartial law enforcement system that protect human rights and ensure justice; *Transparency* - decisions and their enforcement are open and accessible, with information provided in understandable forms to the public; *Responsiveness* - institutions and processes respond to the needs of society in a timely manner; *Consensus-Oriented* - governance seeks broad agreement on policies and priorities, balancing diverse interests; *Equity and Inclusiveness* - all members of society, including minorities and vulnerable groups, are considered in decision-making; *Effectiveness and Efficiency* - resources are managed wisely to achieve desired outcomes and sustainable development; and; *Accountability* - decision-makers are answerable to the public and institutions, ensuring responsible governance. (Acemoglu, & James, 2012)

In view of the above, and despite majority of African nations being members and signatories to the UN charter and other international treaties, why are Africa States' leadership far from embracing these cardinal principles of good governance? Is it as a result of insensitivity, blindness, or some sly genius demon blinding them from the plight and woes of their people? Could the harmonization of the African States' governance paths with faith-based ethics blow

off this lid of blindness? What are the basic principles of faith-based ethics, and how practical are they to enhancing capacity of African states leadership?

6. Principles of Faith-Based Ethics – The Debate

Debates for and against harmonization of faith-based ethics with secular public service and legal frameworks ethos abounds. Understanding these debates helps us to rethink the best scenarios possible to addressing Africa's governance dilemma.

The protagonists of this debate, referred herein to as the pro-harmonization asserts that theological principles that anchor its moral teaching is divine-derived and encompasses a holistic view of the good. Invoking the scriptures, and the civic/humanitarian services they render to humanity, they conclude that the divine spirit of the good inherent in their ethics dictates the principles of good governance beyond their faith-based institutions. Consequently, they make reference to some salient features characteristic of this code, such as: i) *enhancing integrity and reducing corruption* - religious ethics, focuses on spiritual accountability, and it can act as a check on unethical conduct in public office reducing corruption and improving public service delivery; ii) *strengthening moral foundations* - faith-based values provide a robust moral framework, emphasizing virtues like honesty, justice, and compassion, which are crucial for effective, fair, and responsible governance; iii) *addressing social needs* - faith-based organizations (FBOs) often work in collaboration with the government, providing social services (healthcare, education) rooted in a commitment to community development, justice, and care for the vulnerable; and, iv) *reshaping public ethics* - religious values can complement secular limitations in public policy, fostering a more purposeful, "post-secular" approach that recognizes faith's positive role in public life. (Waldo, 1988).

The antagonists (anti-harmonization) crusaders postulate that by allowing faith-based ethics into the secular governance structures negates the principle of separation of institutions and can be counter-productive. Their position is premised on the fact that such an integration/harmonization will: i) *violate secular principles* - emphasizing the importance of separating religion and state, arguing that faith-based agencies (especially in law) create conflicts with constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination; ii) *infringement on minority rights* - that in a pluralistic society, prioritizing one faith's ethical framework can lead to the marginalization of minorities and the restriction of their religious freedom, thereby fostering inequality; iii) *lack of accountability and transparency* – that while influential, religious organizations may operate without adequate public oversight, creating risks of abuse when involved in public services; iv) *incompatibility with rapid social change* - that religious ethics are often static, based on long-standing texts, and cannot adapt quickly to evolving legal, social, or human rights standards; and, v) *undermining autonomy* - that law should be an independent, rational source of authority rather than being subject to sectarian, theological interpretations. An argument strongly used to affirm secularism in the legal systems. (Grudem, 2022)

Some of the key challenges advanced by the anti-harmonization are premised on: i) *diversity of religious beliefs* - that in multicultural societies such as Africa, deciding which faith's ethics to harmonize presents a major challenge; ii) *defining "public good"* – that while religions aim for the "good," the interpretation of that good may conflict with human rights or secular, pluralistic values; and, iii) *political misuse* - that the use of FBOs by politicians for "cleansing" or maintaining communication after failures can lead to the politicization of faith and weaken its moral authority. The debate often centres on whether public service can be truly fair if it is rooted in specific religious doctrines, particularly when those doctrines may contradict fundamental rights of individuals and secular institutions.

While these differing debates persist, and given the blatant and deliberate blindness of African leadership visited on the suffering innocent, our reflection on the principles and application of faith-based ethics and their relevance in the governance of institutions in Africa will elucidate our appreciation of their relevance to awakening the spirit of consciousness in the effective management of state affairs.

By faith-based ethics (or theological ethics) we mean a moral framework that derives its principles, values, and guidelines from religious beliefs, sacred texts, or a belief in a divine authority rather than solely from human reasoning or social consensus. It is a system of moral principles derived from religious or spiritual beliefs that guide personal conduct, professional behavior, and societal engagement. Broadly understood, it is a framework of moral values rooted in religious traditions, guiding individuals and communities in discerning right from wrong and shaping their actions and decisions in daily life and broader societal contexts. It is not merely theoretical but a lived practice that informs behavior in areas such as social justice, environmental stewardship, and economic fairness. Across different faiths, these ethics emphasize shared values like honesty, integrity, compassion, and responsibility, while specific principles may vary according to theological teachings. (James, 2007).

There are basic distinguishing characteristics between and across religious groupings globally. For example, for Christianity, it's rooted in the Bible and it heavily emphasizes both deontology (duty to God's laws) and the greatest commandment: to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. For Islam, it is guided by the Qur'an and the Hadith. Islamic ethics involves specific obligations (like Zakat, or charitable giving) and a broad duty to "*bid the right and forbid the evil*" to promote social justice. Buddhism and Hinduism systems often emphasize Karma, where ethical actions generate positive spiritual outcomes, and focus heavily on compassion, non-harm, and mindfulness.

While secular ethics builds moral systems using human reason, logic, and societal agreement (e.g., Utilitarianism), faith-based ethics asserts that true morality is intrinsically linked to the transcendent. However, there is an overlap between the two: to most of these ethical systems there are common shared values such as the importance of integrity, honesty, and treating others with respect and dignity.

The key characteristics of faith-based ethics are that: i) right and wrong are determined by the will or nature of a higher power, often interpreted through sacred scriptures or spiritual leaders, namely, a divine authority; ii) moral absolutes - they rely on absolute, universal rules (like the Ten Commandments in Abrahamic faiths) rather than adjusting ethics based on shifting cultural trends; iii) virtue and character - they focus on cultivating an inward moral character (e.g., compassion, humility, charity) alongside outward actions; and, iv) purpose-driven – they view actions in the context of a higher ultimate purpose, such as achieving spiritual enlightenment, glorifying God, or serving humanity out of a sense of divine love.

As part of faith-based ethics, Christian ethics, also known as moral theology, for example, is a multi-faceted ethical system within the virtue ethic domain, focusing mainly on building moral character, and at the same time, it is deontological in the sense that it emphasizes duty from the Christian/biblical perspective. Christian ethics also incorporates natural law ethics, built on the belief that it is the very nature of humans - created in the image of God and capable of morality, cooperation, rationality, and discernment and so on. It informs how life should be lived, and that awareness of sin does not require special revelation. Other aspects of Christian ethics, represented by movements such as the social Gospel and liberation theology, may be combined into a fourth area sometimes called prophetic ethics. (Stephen, 2010).

Overall, Christian ethics takes from the Bible its normative rules focusing on conduct, its basic understanding of natural law, its patterns of moral reasoning which focus on character, and the ideals of a community built on social justice. Wogaman posits that Christian ethics has, in some instances had uneasy" relationship with Greek and Roman philosophy, taking some aspects of its principles from Plato, Aristotle and other Hellenic philosophers, and it touches on almost all aspects of life. (Wogaman, 2011)

Islamic ethics, or *akhlāq*, on the other hand, are divine moral principles rooted in the Quran and Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad) that govern all aspects of life, focusing on justice, compassion, honesty, and dignity. It integrates legal requirements with spiritual virtue, aiming to perfect human character and establish a balanced, harmonious society. The main themes of Islamic ethics include: i) *divine command* - it is ordained by Allah to purify the heart and guide actions, not just in worship but in daily conduct; ii) *virtuous character* - aims at developing *husn al-khuluq* (good character), with Prophet Muhammad serving as the supreme model; iii) *justice and equality* - promotes justice and upholds human dignity, irrespective of race or social status; iv) *balance (wasatiyyah)* - advocates for a middle path, balancing spiritual needs with worldly responsibilities and natural desires; v) *stewardship (khilafah)* – advocates for responsible management of natural resources and care for the environment.

Islamic ethics is a lived code that manifests in the character of its adherents. Its practical manifestations are through: i) *social conduct*- emphasizing politeness, generosity, kindness, and respect, especially toward neighbors and elders; ii) *truthfulness* - emphasizing honesty,

and, avoiding perjury, slander, and gossip; iii) *Business Ethics* - strict adherence to fair dealings, fair wages, and avoiding fraud or exploitation.

Tracing its foundations in the *Qur'an & Sunnah* which is the primary sources of ethical laws, *Tawhid* which is the belief in the oneness of God, and which forms the foundation of all ethical behavior, *Akhirah (Afterlife)* which is the principle of accountability to God for all earthly actions, and *Adab* - code of proper etiquette and manners in daily life, Islamic ethics offer a holistic framework that connects personal morality with societal well-being, demanding, that Muslims act with integrity in all interactions. (Ismail, 2009)

From the African perspective, *Ubuntu* ethics is a philosophical framework centered on the belief that "a person is a person through other persons," emphasizing deep interdependence, communal harmony, and human dignity. Often summarized as "I am because we are," it prioritizes collective well-being, sharing, compassion, and respect over individualistic interests. Ubuntu serves as a framework to rehumanize interactions, emphasizing that undermining the dignity of others inherently undermines one's own humanity

The main principles and values espoused by Ubuntu ethics centres on: i) *interdependence* - that humanity is inextricably tied, suggesting that enhancing the community enhances the individual; ii) *common good & solidarity* - focuses on teamwork, sharing, and ensuring community well-being, particularly for the vulnerable; iii) *respect and dignity* - emphasizes treating all people with high regard, often acknowledging elders as custodians of wisdom; iv) *Reconciliation & Forgiveness* - aims to restore social harmony rather than merely punishing wrongdoing; v) *Hospitality & Compassion* - cultivates a welcoming, generous spirit toward community members and strangers.

Contextually, Ubuntu ethics is, in political and social arenas used to promote good governance through consensus-building, dialogue, and ethical leadership; while in modern times with the myriad emerging challenges occasioned by technology, i.e., AI and social media, it provides an ethical counterpoint to toxicity, focusing on using technology for human connection and protecting shared knowledge. And in matters justice, Ubuntu emphasizes "redemption" rather than punitive measures, aiming to rehabilitate individuals into the community.

On its part, Hindu ethics focuses on living a righteous life, centered on *dharma* (duty), *karma* (action/consequence), and liberation (*moksha*), rooted in scriptures like the Vedas and Bhagavad Gita. It emphasizes virtues such as non-violence (*ahimsa*), compassion, and selfless action in order to maintain cosmic order and achieve spiritual growth.

The principal elements of Hindu ethics include: i) *Dharma* – focus on duty, ethics, and law. As a guide to actions based on an individual's life stage (*ashrama*) and social role (*varna*); ii) *karma & reincarnation* – emphasizing that ethical actions have consequences in determining one's future, as described in the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita; iii) *Ahimsa (Non-violence)*:

Considered the highest virtue (paramo dharma); iv) *virtues* - of which key values include truthfulness (satya), purity, self-control, and patience; v) *purusharthas* - the four goals of life: dharma (righteousness), artha (prosperity), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation).

By emphasizing a "right-being" that aligns with the cosmos, Hindu ethics is a code of conduct for spiritual realization, aiming at eliminating egoism and greed, and it is anchored on the following essential components: i) *sādhāraṇa Dharma* - universal moral principles applicable to everyone, including honesty, compassion, and non-anger; ii) *Svadharmā* - personal duty dependent on age, gender, and social station; and, iii) *karma yoga* - acting without desiring the rewards of actions, focusing on duty.

Drawing from the above religious based entities, commonality of the purposive goal of human existence is manifest. The basic elements of respect of human dignity, relevance of application of rule of law across board without discrimination, good governance as the pedestal for human actualization embedding honesty, integrity, compassion, humility, empathy, faith in reason, solidarity, care, reconciliation, and, forgiveness cuts across all the religious establishments. These dispositions, religion notwithstanding, are core to reforming institutions of governance in Africa, especially the public service and the judicial systems.

Before examining the need to harmonized faith-based ethics with the secular public service and legal frameworks in Africa, we need to ask ourselves the extent to which the governance of faith-based organizations embrace the faith-based ethics. This will help us to appreciate the need for integration, and at the same time, provide us with the pragmatic pendulum on which to lay the foundation.

This is informed by the fact that it's one thing to claim to integrate/harmonize faith and ethics into leadership, and to some extent many faith-based organizations do; but allowing those values to inform their day-to-day decisions seems to be a much more formidable and less common achievement. At the macro level, many faith-based organizations operate ethically, but the manifestation of the leadership of these organizations demonstrates otherwise, creating a gap between the values they advocate and how everyday decisions are made. After all, allowing core values to penetrate and guide decision-making is no small feat; it requires commitment, unwavering intentionality, and strong self-awareness on the part of leadership, whether responding to political inducements, or rendering service to communities.

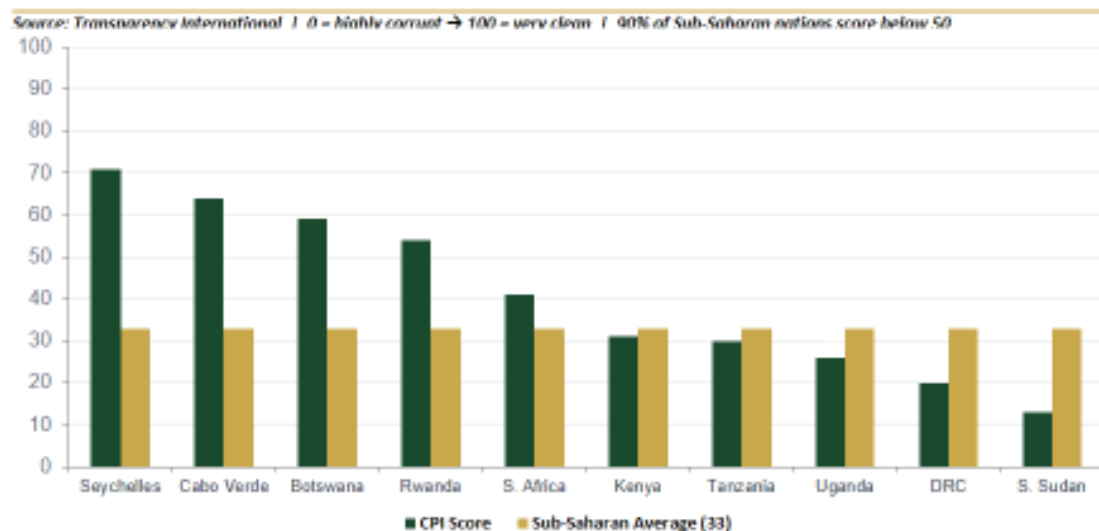
There have been instances where the clergy have been found in ethically compromising situations: evidence of some clergy swindling tithes and church offertories, while a number of them have appeared in courts for attempting to expropriate church lands abound. Cases of sodomy and sexual abuse visited on innocent kids and married women by priest/pastors have been reported in the media and even presented to courts of law. Kenya, for example, has witnessed the clergy turning houses of worship into political campaign arenas, while themselves into political campaign machines for politicians. Instances of the clergy falling prey

to financial enticement to abuse the sanctity of the church are self-evident in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Other instances of moral abuse by the shepherds of the church are vividly alive, for example, recent high-profile cases of priests and religious leaders accused of malpractices in Africa primarily revolves around sexual abuse of minors, financial fraud, and complicity in covering up systemic misconduct. Specific cases in the region include: i) Kitale Kenya - a Catholic priest was arrested and charged with defiling a 14-year-old girl; ii) Eldoret Diocese Kenya - a priest was arraigned in a Thika court for the defilement and indecent assault of an 11-year-old girl; iii) Mombasa Kenya – a priest was convicted of sexual misconduct with a minor by the Mombasa High Court. In a highly controversial ruling, the judge substituted his seven-year prison sentence with a directive that he preaches about the Sexual Offenses Act at least once a month for three years; iv) the Anglican Church of Southern Africa apologized for exposing children to John Smyth, a prolific British child abuser who fled the UK and abused over 80 boys in camps in Zimbabwe in the 1990s before operating in South Africa. The failure of church leaders to report him formally to the police led to significant fallout, including the 2024 resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury; vi) cases of self-proclaimed pastors and leaders have faced massive scrutiny for financial extortion, particularly within cult-like settings. Some have been accused of swindling congregants out of billions of shillings, while other of exploiting women by claiming to perform religious rituals. (Daily Nation, July 15, 2020)

Chart 2: Africa's Corruption Performance Index 2023

Corruption Perceptions Index: Africa 2023



Transparency International 2023

While many of these cases are actively prosecuted under local legislation such as Kenya's Sexual Offenses Act, institutional cover-ups remain a concern. These are just but a few of the

many instances of promiscuous and rogue behavior perpetrated by men of the cloak. So, the question that begs an answer remains: Do we harmonize the faith-based ethics with the secular public service and judicial systems' ethical code on the basis of principles, or do we also need to witness their relevance in steering the uprightness within faith-based institutions? On what basis should we recommend the faith-based ethics as the best option to addressing the rampant vices inherent in Africa's public service and judicial systems?

Another lacuna in addressing this concern stems from policy conceptualization in the context of a number of Africa's nations. Many of the constitutions of a number of African countries are anchored on the belief in the supremacy of God, the divine being as the pillar to their nationhood. For example, the preamble of the Kenya constitution opening statement asserts the fundamental authority and place of the divine within the nation's architecture: it reads: "*We, the people of Kenya*", "*ACKNOWLEDGING the supremacy of the Almighty God of all creation.....*" and concludes with the phrase – "*GOD BLESS KENYA*" (Kenya Constitution, 2010).

We believe that the preamble of a nation's constitution is fundamental to the development and application of national values in the Kenya's legal system and elsewhere. Without it the idea of national values makes no sense. While anchoring its aspiration on the supremacy of the Almighty God of all creation, and committing to nurture and protect the well-being of the individual, the family, communities and the nation; while recognizing the aspirations of all Kenyans for a government based on the essential values of human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, social justice and the rule of law, what then remains of the principles of faith-based ethics that need to be infused in the conventional ethics definitive of the public service and the judicial system in Kenya? Why is the leadership of Kenya so insensitive and blind to these cardinal principles that informs the nation's blueprint? Of what value and relevance will harmonization of faith-based ethics within the secular public service and judicial systems in Kenya have?

In Somalia, the current provisional constitution does not contain a traditional preamble that lays out civic values or historical context, but the transitional federal charter of the Somalia republic of February 2004 does make reference by asserting; "*In the Name of Allah, the most Merciful, the Beneficent*". Again here, the very first statement of the Charter that eventually led to the realization of the Somalia current provisional constitution asserts the authority of Allah, the Supreme Being. This also means that the anchor of the nation's moral principles is infused in the divine. In fact, Quran, the Islamic holy book is given dominance over any other law in Somalia. (Somalia Transitional Federal Charter, 2024)

As we acknowledge the salient features of faith-based ethics, and as we applaud the cardinal responsibilities of The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) Kenya, and other entities of the same nature across Africa nations committed to combating the pervert acts in the public service and in the judicial systems, how best are we in tune to embracing ethical behavior

in the governance of our nations, especially in the civil services and judicial system? While our constitutions proclaim and assert the authority of the divine, why, and what, in practice, is a miss to our commitment to the virtues and values espoused and shared across with the faith-based establishments?

Uganda, (whose preamble to the constitution concludes with the words – “*FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY*”, cases of malpractice are widespread, spanning systemic bribery in civil service recruitment, embezzlement of relief supplies, and misuse of parliamentary funds. The Inspectorate of Government and international watchdogs regularly highlight deep-rooted corruption across local governments and state institutions. Specific instances of malpractice include: i) *civil service bribery* - a major report by the Inspectorate of Government revealed that roughly 35% of Ugandan civil servants (over 130,000 individuals) paid bribes to secure employment between 2018 and 2022. Corrupt recruiters demanded up to UGX 50 million for senior positions; ii) *embezzlement of relief funds* - high-level officials - including former Karamoja Affairs minister and top parliamentary leadership - were implicated in the diversion and theft of iron sheets and relief supplies originally intended for marginalized communities in the Karamoja sub-region; iii) *parliamentary mismanagement*: the former Parliamentary leadership was a focal point of high-profile corruption investigations, involving joint security raids and searches of legislative offices in widening probes over irregular budgets and misuse of taxpayer funds; and, iv) *public procurement & health*: ongoing audits frequently flag inflated costs and phantom procurements, particularly within the National Medical Stores and Ministry of Health, contributing to stock-outs and compromised delivery of public healthcare. (International Watchdogs, 2023)

In Kenya the situation is even worse. Cases of malpractice span high-level bribery, nepotism, procurement corruption, examination irregularities, public healthcare fraud, and military recruitment misconduct. Other instances of malpractices range from cases of sexual enticement, exploitation, and "sextortion" which generally take the form of public officials demanding sexual favors from citizens in exchange for government services, as well as harassment of junior staff in the workplace. These abuses directly violate the Kenya's Sexual Offenses Act and the spirit of the selfless service to the citizenry, but they are hardly brought afore.

Major documented contexts and cases in Kenya include parliamentary and county harassments, sextortion for services, education sector exploitation, security sector allegations, among others. Within the judicial system, cases of malpractice in Kenya primarily revolve around grand and petty corruption, including bribery for favorable verdicts, inordinate delays, and collusion to misplace case files.

The Office of the Judiciary Ombudsman and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) continue to handle numerous complaints regarding the courts where key malpractices touching on the following have been reported: i) *bribery and extortion* - soliciting money to

influence outcomes or secure preferential treatment, such as altering judgments or granting favorable bail terms; *deliberate case delay* - stalling proceedings (often referred to as "Dickensian" delays) or granting unjustified adjournments to wear out litigants; iii) *tampering with evidence and files* - the hiding, misplacement, or doctoring of case files and digital records to obstruct justice; iv) *"air judgments" and forgery* - falsifying court rulings or participating in fraudulent garnishee and civil proceedings to siphon money from accounts; and, v) *collusion* - bribing judicial officers to dismiss criminal cases, often as part of a multi-agency breakdown involving police and prosecution

These, and many other unethical practices visited on the deprived and exploited citizens by the incompetent and politically engrained rogue officers undermine public confidence and subverts the justice system. The glaring misnomer is that all these malpractices occur in the glaring eyes of those meant to address and curtail them. How can an act of a visible, highly unprecedented crime, exposed by the media, including CCTV cameras, attested to by the highest crime investigating authority, and even confessed to by witnesses, go without attracting the attention, comment and direction from the highest Executive Office (the Presidency) in a nation?

Absurdity seems to define governance in African nations. On the 29th May 2026, Kenyan nation was in mourning. A fire believed to have been ignited by infuriated students gutted a dormitory at the Utumishi Girls Academy Gilgil Kenya, killing more than 16 students, and leaving more than 128 incapacitated. The future of a nation was dismembered, and destroyed. In the glaring sadness and mourning, the Principal Secretary of Basic Education, vested with authority to protect and steer Basic Education was insensitive, and obdurate to this dehumanizing and sensitive act. Instead of joining the mourning parents, he took camp in Baringo County, campaigning for the 2027 reelection of the current president. How insensitive and callous can the leadership and governance principles in Africa be?

These acts of negligence, actuated by political bigotry, and localized systemic protection from political establishment occurs in the broad presence of superb constitutional provisions, world-class policy instruments, international treaties and accords to which Africa is a signatory, and which, their execution is unfortunately vested in the armpits of superficial, highly arrogant, and superbly perfected geniuses of deceit and plunder.

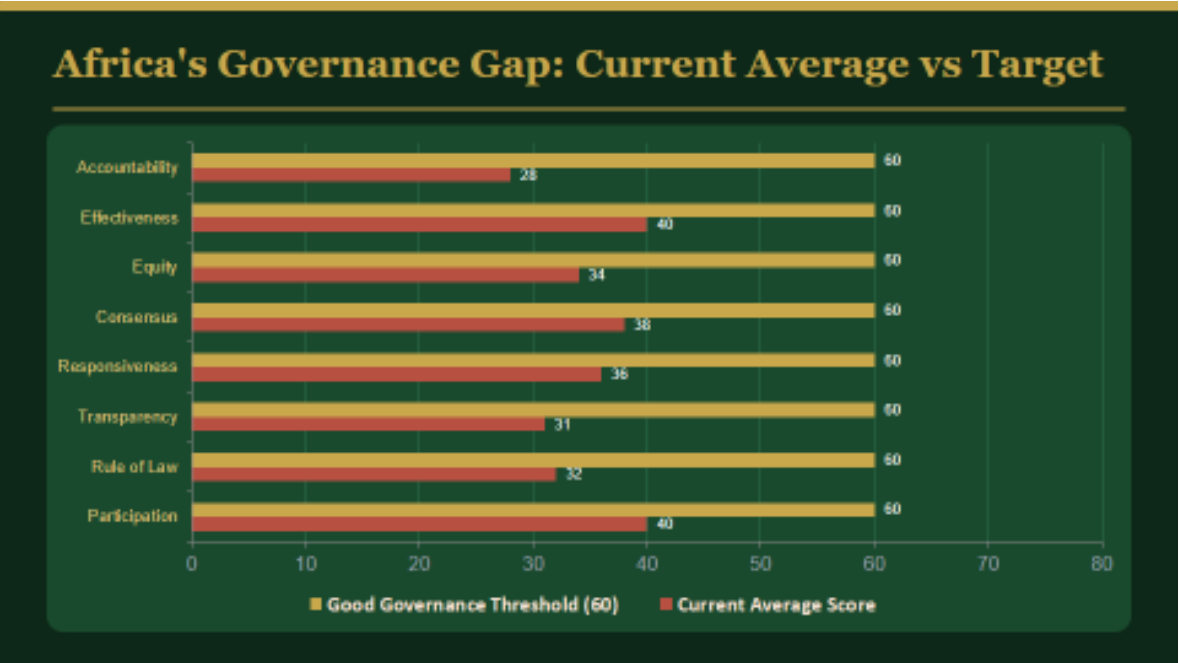
Even in the glare of mitigating and supervisory organs such as the Office of the Judiciary Ombudsman, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), Kenya's Sexual Offenses Act, the Inspectorate of Government (IGG) Uganda, etc., the malpractices persist and they continue to consume the productivity of the innocent, diminishing hope for proletariats, and suffocating the future aspirations of the common citizens. So, what flavor would the faith-based ethics add in order to reengineer and alleviate these deep-rooted malpractices? Can faith-based ethics, without strict and structured procedures change the mindset of those within the public service and the judicial offices? Or do we, first, address the rot at the helm?

7. Value of Faith-Based Ethics to Public Service and Judicial Systems in Africa

As African people bleed for their continent, they should refuse to lose hope. The efforts to kill their past and present is evident, but they should resist believing that their future is lost. The rogue and insensitive leadership has made things difficult, but the window of possibility is wide open. African people need to be judicious believers, that difficult does not sum to impossibility; they need to have the confidence that they can, and, will definitely get there. The horizon might be far, but it's reachable. Whereas faith-based ethics provide the roadmap towards the awakening of our spirit to embrace, and commit to goodness, the efforts to actualize the prescriptions is the must do. Focusing on malpractices by some clerics is only but begging the question over the principles definitive of faith-based ethics. True escape from Africa's governance challenges lies in the commitment, resolve, and dedication to create a better world, prevent suffering and build a better Africa society.

Further, African people need to be futuristic, and confident that despite the challenges resulting from bad leadership, deliberately choreographed to exploit the suffering innocent, they can still find a grand remedy in committing to restructure Africa's public service and judicial systems through fusion of the secular ethos with salient elements of faith-based ethics. With commitment to transform, faith-based ethics can help resolve governance malpractices in Africa by promoting the most desirable moral imperatives such as accountability, honesty, transparency, integrity, justice, and human dignity.

Chart 3: Africa's Governance Gap



Transparency International 2024

Holistically, faith-based ethics can be instrumental to addressing governance malpractices in various other ways; for example; i) *enhancing accountability & integrity* - rooted in Holy

Scriptures, leaders are called to internalize values that transcend secular oversight. It encourages stewardship, where power is seen as a divine trust to serve the common good rather than a tool for personal enrichment; ii) *reverence for human dignity* - across various faiths and ATR (e.g., the Ubuntu philosophy of "I am because you are"), there is a strong emphasis on equity, fairness, and human rights, which counteracts nepotism, tribalism, and marginalization in state affairs; iii) *instrument of moral authority* - because the African continent is highly religious, faith communities serve as trusted intermediaries. Religious institutions hold the moral weight to mobilize grassroots participation and critique unethical conduct by the state.

Consequently, faith-based moral ethos can play a vital role in shaping how those in the public service conduct themselves. These ethics, grounded in personal beliefs and values, provide a framework for making decisions that align with integrity and moral principles. In today's fast-paced and often challenging work environments, maintaining integrity is crucial for personal fulfillment and also for building trust and credibility with the broader community. Further, faith-based ethics offer a consistent guide in tackling professional challenges. Whether it's dealing with ethical dilemmas, leading a team, or simply interacting with others in the workplace, these principles help professionals stay grounded in their values, thereby influencing professional integrity, ethical decision-making, overall positive leadership etiquette, and more.

In matters of ethical decision-making, faith-based ethics provide a clear framework for making decisions that align with one's and national values. When faced with difficult choices, professionals can rely on their faith to guide them toward decisions that uphold integrity. This approach is particularly valuable in situations where the right course of action may not be immediately obvious or where there are competing interests at play.

Case in point, when a decision impacts others, such as in financial management, hiring staff, work-place practical applications, or customer relations, faith-based ethics encourage transparency, fairness, and compassion. These principles guide professionals to consider the broader implications of their decisions so that their actions reflect a commitment to doing what is right. As a result, professionals who adhere to faith-based ethics often build stronger, more trusting relationships with those around them, enhancing their credibility and effectiveness in their public service delivery jurisdictions.

Leadership grounded in faith-based ethics tends to foster an environment of trust and respect. Leaders who prioritize ethical considerations in their decision-making processes set a positive example for their teams and encourage others to act with integrity. Apart from building a strong moral foundation within the public service and judicial institutions, this approach also promotes a culture of accountability and fairness.

Leaders who incorporate faith-based ethics into their leadership style are more likely to consider the well-being of the citizenry in their decisions. This perspective helps create a public

service culture that values honesty, respect, and mutual support. Over time, this ethical leadership can lead to increased satisfaction, productivity, institutional cohesion, and a more positive reputation for the public service as a whole.

Faith-based ethics also play a significant role in building trust within professional relationships. When professionals consistently act in ways that align with their ethical beliefs, they establish themselves as trustworthy individuals. Trust is a cornerstone of any successful relationship, whether it's with colleagues, clients, or business partners. People are more likely to engage and collaborate with those they believe are honest and dependable.

Trust built on ethical behavior leads to stronger, more enduring professional relationships. When others see that decisions and actions are guided by a firm moral foundation, they feel more confident in the integrity of those they are dealing with. Alongside enhancing individual reputations, this trust also contributes to the overall credibility of the public service. Over time, a reputation for ethical behavior becomes a valuable asset, fostering loyalty and respect from the citizenry.

Often, workplace conflicts are inevitable, but how they are handled can make a significant difference in the outcome. Faith-based ethics offer a framework for resolving conflicts in a manner that is fair and compassionate. When conflicts arise, approaching them with a mindset rooted in ethical principles helps to de-escalate tensions and find solutions that respect all parties involved.

Those in the public service that depend on faith-based ethics during conflicts are more likely to seek outcomes that are just and beneficial for everyone. They focus on understanding different perspectives and aim to resolve disputes in a way that upholds the dignity and rights of each person. This approach helps in reaching amicable resolutions and also strengthens relationships by demonstrating a commitment to fairness and integrity.

And in the face of challenges and pressures, faith-based ethics serve as an anchor that keeps actors grounded. Faith-based ethics (FBE) provide a consistent reference point, helping individuals stay true to their values even when faced with difficult decisions. This alignment between personal beliefs and professional conduct ensures that actions taken in the workplace are consistent with one's moral compass.

Maintaining the alignment between FBE with secular public service ethics is crucial for sustaining long-term integrity in the public service. When faced with situations that test their ethics, individuals who are anchored in their faith are more likely to choose the path that aligns with their values. This consistency reinforces their integrity while also inspiring others around them to act ethically, creating a positive, thriving, and conscientious public service environment.

Faith-based ethics also provide a solid foundation for maintaining integrity in public service. From guiding ethical decision-making and leadership to building trust and resolving conflicts, these principles play a crucial role in shaping how professionals conduct themselves in the workplace. By anchoring their actions in faith and ethics, individuals not only strengthen their integrity but also contribute to creating a public service environment that values honesty, respect, and fairness. In today's complex and often challenging professional landscape, faith-based ethics is an essential guide for leading with integrity and purpose.

In order to actualize the integration of and/or harmonization of faith-based ethics within the public service and legal frameworks in Africa, there is need for paradigm shift and change of the mindset. Many of the vices inherent in the public service and in the judicial systems in Africa are born of fixated attitudes, greed, selfishness etc. There is need to shake up, and harmonize faith-based ethics with the secular ethical code definitive of public service and judicial system institutions. In order to achieve this, there is need for the leadership of African states to reexamine themselves in relation to the responsibilities vested upon them. Harmonizing faith-based ethics with public service and in judicial systems is not enough. Establishing a deliberate, structured, and intentional enforcement mechanism is what will enable African nations to achieve the objective good inherent in the faith-based ethics. Some of the very difficult, but practical steps towards this goal will require the following:

- a) *A paradigm shift*: need for fundamental change in the basic concepts, practices, and underlying assumptions fixated in African people, culture, and in their ways of thinking. Africa States do not need cosmetic tweaks, but a revolutionary leap that completely alters how problems are solved or how the world is viewed.
- b) *The Governance Shift*: need to shift from a solely compliance-based legal approach to a "values-based" approach, where the "heart" of the public servant is addressed alongside regulatory mandates.
- c) *Mindset*: the bulk of African States' public service suffers from chronic drone mentality botheration, a kind of mentality of being too comfortable with the status quo, acting without thinking, and without paying attention to the world around them, and believing that the acts of yesterday justifies the "ultimate voice" of today. This ought to be dismantled. Africa needs a mind change - the rewiring of the public service systems and utilize the restructuring to alter the management dynamics, ensuring that the previous mistakes inform the path of correction and distaste.
- d) *Enforcement mechanism*: establishment of a structured institution with requisite tools, procedures, and authority that will ensure the laws, contracts, and regulations are strictly followed. This will aim at deterring violations and guaranteeing compliance through a mix of positive incentives (rewards) and severe disincentives (penalties or legal action).
- e) *Synthesis of Values*: faith-based ethics and African traditional values (e.g., Ubuntu, communalism) are not mutually exclusive with modern legal frameworks but are

complementary tools for strengthening public integrity. Incorporation of traditional values best practices will enhance accountability and public service responsiveness.

- f) *Constitutional entity*: enshrine and establish a well structure, independent, and enabled entity with investigators, prosecutors, a court with independent jurisdictions, and with power to investigate, arrest, prosecute, and determine. Such a court and its officers should not be answerable to, or under patronage of any other legal entity or judicial jurisdictions - its ruling/determination is final.

8. Conclusion

Harmonizing faith-based ethics with public service and judicial systems in Africa will help to embed deep-rooted moral values such as integrity, compassion, and justice into governance. This alignment will consequently build public trust, reduce corruption, and ensure that legal and administrative decisions are viewed as fair, legitimate, and respectful of human dignity. Further, the harmonization of faith-based ethics with African legal frameworks is essential for fostering authentic accountability and sustainable development. By integrating community-centric African traditional values and religious moral imperatives with modern public service regulations, leaders can bridge the gap between legality and morality, moving beyond corruption toward a justice-driven, inclusive, and ethical governance structure.

The benefits of such harmonization will lay a solid foundation for: i) *Integrity and Accountability* - since it emphasizes stewardship, accountability, and honesty. Integrating these into national frameworks reinforces laws (such as the Public Officer Ethics Act) and judicial conduct standards by appealing to an officer's internal moral compass; ii) *Enhancement of Public Trust and Legitimacy* - Citizens will more likely start trusting government institutions and the judiciary when they perceive officials as acting morally, fairly, and impartially. Faith traditions often provide a widely understood language of virtue that resonates with the public; iii) *Promotion of Social Justice and Human Dignity* - Religious and secular moral frameworks heavily intersect on issues of equity, care for the marginalized, and protection of human rights. Harmonizing these principles ensures the law serves the common good and promotes human welfare; and, iv) *Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution*: Many faith-traditions stress reconciliation, forgiveness, and understanding. Integrating these values can strengthen the judiciary's capacity for restorative justice and mediation, offering alternatives to purely adversarial proceedings. A truly African model of governance that respects both the rule of law and the moral conscience of its people is the only path to sustainable development, lasting social justice, cohesion, and dignity for the continent of Africa.

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