

# Politics and Ethics and a National Framework to Combat Corruption in Zimbabwe

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the issues which have pre-occupied the minds of researchers in Zimbabwe has always been the issue of governance and corruption. This is because governance defines the nature and outcomes of the relationship between the governors and the governed. If it follows the dictates of good governance, it brings joy to the governed, but if it is inspired by bad politics, it leads to the suffering of the people. Evidence of declining public trust has been seen in negative perceptions of the government as an institution prone to corruption (Zinyama, 2018). Rebuilding trust is critical to Zimbabwe in improving governance, public administration, combating corruption and reconnecting the citizens with the government. There is, therefore, an urgent need to come up with viable blue-prints for good governance Zimbabwe. This paper seeks to interrogate issues of politics and ethics because they have a bearing on the realisation or lack thereof of the Zimbabwean Vision 2030. In addition, this paper comes at a time when the government has already outlined its vision which clearly stipulates that Zimbabwe must become an upper-middle-class economy by 2030. This paper, therefore, seeks to provide strategies that can be employed to realise Zimbabwean Vision 2030.

The paper has four sections. Section one presents the background and conceptual framework where 'man in the state of nature', corruption, politics and ethics are operationalised. Section two focuses on the Zimbabwean anti-corruption system and experiences. In addition, the anti-corruption initiatives are presented and discussed such as public finance management reforms, ease of doing business reforms, electronic-government, anti-corruption structures, biometric measures, and lifestyle audits and public declaration of assets among others. Section three discusses the solutions and recommendations that can be employed to improve the institutionalisation process for anti-corruption such as ease of doing business, corruption and public procurement, reforming public sector management and fiancé, ending impunity, citizen empowerment, whistleblower protection and creating strong institutions among others. The last section presents the conclusion which concludes that corruption is a multifaceted issue that pervades all aspects of the public and private sectors, and cannot be addressed through legal reforms and enforcements without tackling the underlying causes and incentives for corruption. Hence, the need for a holistic revises of the national integrity system.

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## **BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

It is the argument of this paper that corruption can be effectively contained after comprehending the human behaviour. It is important to start by discussing the state of nature of human beings in order to deduce the ethical and political perspectives that form the environment upon which corruption thrives.

### **Man in the State of Nature**

One of the questions that preoccupy the philosophers and political thinkers' minds is: what is man – angelic or devilish? Assuming that there had been not powerful institution to administer and control human beings, in such a case what would have been people's behaviour toward one another? Would they have mutually respected and observed their rights or would they, like wolves, have fallen on and torn one another apart? Any sort of answer to this question necessitates the existence of a specific political and educational system. If one says that human being is intrinsically iniquitous, in that case he/she inevitably needs to perpetually control individuals. If one declares that human beings are innately angelic, it follows that he/she removes all restrictions and limitations and set them free. In order to comprehend corruption well, there is need to interrogate the views of two great thinkers. Hence, this section engages the viewpoints of Thomas Hobbes especially his famous statement, "Man is the wolf of other man." Subsequently, the section explores the views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau regarding human nature.

### **Thomas Hobbes' Views**

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is an English political philosopher who sought to apply rational principles to the study of human nature. One of the key concepts of Hobbes is the expression, "*Man in the State of Nature*", that is a hypothetical state wherein there is no political institution and administrative organisation existing in the society, the people being left to their own business and to do whatever they like. Since the instinct of love and defense of one's self is very strong in everybody, the people would be at each other's throats and would destroy one another. In the state of nature in which everybody is his/her master, one is at odds with the others concerning the nomenclature of things, and it is these differences that give rise to disputes and conflicts. Life in such a society is very thorny, painstaking and hazardous; in the words of Hobbes it is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." According to Hobbes, in no way is this kind of living to one's benefit and advantage. Therefore, people have to choose a person and give him/her adequate and total prerogatives to preserve security and so prevent individuals from assailing one another.

Such an approach to human beings draws Hobbes toward supreme monarchical rule, completely centralised authority (Leviathan) and the creation of powerful and commanding supervisory organisations, drags him completely away from populism and makes him conclude, thus: "It is, therefore, clear that so long as there is no government over the people to compel them to obey, they will exist in a state, which they have named 'a state of war', this war pitting individual against another" (Shumin, et al. 1999:84).

Hobbes' views on ethics, human beings and politics are highly controversial. In Hobbes' view, human beings are materialistic and pessimistic and their actions are motivated solely by self-interest. This is precisely the definition of corruption by World Bank, International Transparency, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Development Programme and many countries. It gives impetus to the creation of strong institutions to regulate human behaviour for the benefit of the majority. Thus, a state's stability

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