



The Impact of Good Governance Structure on Creating Social Convergence (Case Study; Governance Structure in China-Iran-Sweden)

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Abstract:

Since the beginning of human settlement, the most important factor in facing various natural and unnatural disasters and facilitating development in a society has been solidarity and unity. However, this can only be achieved through the performance of rulers and the formation of governments. As different societies have formed and various cultures have emerged, and as humanity has progressed toward evolution and excellence, the model of this consensus has also undergone changes. With the establishment of governments, based on the decisions of societies in their modern form, multiple factors have played fundamental roles in shaping this unity, while progressive human thought undoubtedly influencing this process. However, what prompts further reflection on this issue is how this cohesion emerges when needed and how its fragmentation being prevented under a governance structure. It is evident that a national governance structure plays a significant role in shaping different policy approaches. Due to the influence of various ideas on the formation of governments and the relentless efforts of scholars and thinkers to develop a suitable and superior governance model, the concept of "good governance" has gained attention in recent decades. Good governance, when properly aligned with a structure that suits a society's prevailing conditions, can play a crucial role and evolve over time. Principles such as participation, accountability, transparency, the rule of law, etc., are among the fundamental aspects of governance. Each of these principles can be extensively analyzed, but in this discussion, the focus is on the formation of public consensus or, more appropriately, "social convergence" within a desirable "governance structure." Undoubtedly, this structure plays a key role as a fundamental prerequisite for comprehensive and effective implementation of governance thought in fostering social convergence across various sectors of society and government.

Keywords: Governance, Structure, Good Governance, Social Convergence, Government, Public Consensus

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Introduction

One of the challenges that governments face today is how to create social convergence, particularly during times of crisis. Governments have realized that despite their full power, resources, and authority, they cannot solve problems by their own and must consider the role of society. Therefore, each and every government, based on its capacities, culture, and governance structure, as well as its available resources, seeks to devise an appropriate approach to this matter.

This study aims to examine the role, significance, and impact of governance structures, particularly in relation to social convergence, in different governments and regions. To provide a more in-depth analysis, three countries with three distinct governance models and structures have been evaluated. For instance, some governments, like China, have achieved social convergence through adherence to their traditional Eastern social culture, reliance on a well-organized governance structure, and comprehensive involvement in various aspects of their citizens' lives. This approach has enabled China to foster social cohesion, especially in times of crisis. Conversely, an opposing approach can be observed in Sweden, where individualism and minimal government intervention in personal lives are emphasized. Sweden, known for having one of the oldest monarchy-based political systems in the world, has focused on protecting individual rights as a fundamental principle of governance. The country has successfully established a governance model that balances socialist economic policies with capitalism, serving as an exemplary model of politics and governance in Europe.

The governance model of the Islamic Republic of Iran, however, is fundamentally rooted

in tradition, culture, and religion. This has led Iranian policymakers to adopt a distinct approach to achieving social convergence—one that simultaneously considers religious and traditional values while also looking at successful developmental policies from other countries.

Research background

Since this study focuses on the role and impact of governance structures—particularly good governance—and examines three different governance models, a few direct researches were found that specifically centers on this aspect. However, there are various studies conducted on the individual variables that are relevant to this research of which some related ones are referenced.

It is to be noted that, none of the existing studies have prioritized the role of governance structures in shaping governance and in fostering social convergence across different governance models worldwide. Nevertheless, several related ones are worth mentioning:

- Ashtarian (2023): In his article "*Governance and Structure: A Theoretical Reflection on Constitutional Structure in Iran*," He provides a general introduction to governance and its relationship with structure, with a focus on Iran's constitutional framework. His research primarily explores the relationship between governance and structure but does not extensively address how governance structures influence social convergence.
- Doleh, Seyfollahi, and Zanjani (2019): In their article "*Study of the Contexts and Barriers to the Formation of Good Governance in*

Contemporary Iran," the authors present a comprehensive overview of good governance theory. They argue that good governance is a new paradigm in development literature, emerging from the interaction between the private sector, civil society, and government. They emphasize that a stable civil society and a citizen-centered government are fundamental prerequisites for achieving sustainable development and good governance. Their research is closely related to this study in terms of governance in Iran, but their primary focus is on the role of political parties in shaping good governance rather than its impact on social convergence.

- Mark Bevir (2019): In his book *"Governance: A Very Short Introduction,"* Bevir explores the concept of governance and its various forms. The book thoroughly examines the meaning of governance, stating: *"The growing prominence of the term governance is undoubtedly due to its alignment with recent global transformations."* However, Bevir's book does not delve into how governance structures influence different societal sectors, a subject that this study aims to explore in detail—particularly how governance structures contribute to social convergence.
- Beidollah Khani and Arash (2020), in an article titled *"The Role of National Governance Structures in Public Health Policy-Making; A Case Study of Nordic Countries,"* elaborate on the concept of governance and, more specifically, on the role of governance structures in public health issues. In this context, they also conduct a case study on Nordic countries. While this article examines the relationship between structure and policymaking, it does not address the impact on governance or the influence on social convergence.
- Mohammad Baqer Heshmat Zadeh and others (2017), in an article titled *"Examining the Obstacles to Good Governance in Iran's Political Culture,"* introduce the theory of good governance. They argue that despite the introduction of this theory on Iran and its alignment with the country's ideological and legal foundations, little serious effort has been made toward its realization. While this topic is closely related to politics, its implementation within the government and political system faces obstacles. At the end of the article, the researchers propose solutions to overcome these obstacles and suggest ways to escape the constraints imposed on good governance. Among these suggestions are government downsizing, national dialogue and consensus-building, and the expansion of civil society.
- Imam Jomezadeh, Shahramnia, and Safarian (2016), in an article titled *"The Model of Good Governance; A Collaborative Society and an Efficient Government in Development Management,"* analyze the concept of development and good governance, seeking to establish a connection between these factors and their mutual influence. This article claims that "one of the most recent approaches to development is the establishment of good governance indicators." Clearly, this body of research has targeted the themes of good governance and

development management. However, what differentiates the present study is its emphasis on the role of governance structures in fostering social convergence.

- Naderi (2011), in an article titled "*Good Governance: An Introduction and a Brief Critique*," introduces the theory of good governance and explores its origins, initially placing it within the realm of economics. Additionally, he attempts to critique this theory from the perspectives of prominent political and religious thinkers. According to the author, what is today referred to as "good governance" includes the following key indicators: accountability and the right to express opinions, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and corruption control. However, the current study will specifically examine the role of good governance in fostering social convergence.
- Mohammad Rahimi and Ashrafi (2020), in an article titled "*Designing a Model for National Ethnic Convergence in Iran*," published in the National Studies Research Journal, propose a model for national convergence. The authors emphasize the importance of convergence, particularly national convergence, stating that "national convergence is one of the main factors in the stability of political and social systems and a key objective of political socialization in all political systems." They further discuss the role of convergence in maintaining governmental stability.

However, the primary concern of this study is social convergence and the role of good governance in its formation, which distinguishes it from previous research.

- Ruhollah Safarian and Seyed Javad Imam Jomezadeh (2017), in an article titled "*The Good Governance Model; Social Capital and Comprehensive Development*," propose that the good governance model, by fostering social capital within its three-tiered structure, contributes to development at managerial, political, economic, social, and cultural levels. At the end of their research, they conclude that good governance, by recognizing various social forces in different domains, emphasizes the simultaneous role of the government and society in the path of development and public administration while also advocating for decentralization within the social and political landscape.
- Mirza Aghanasab and Taghavi (2014), in a study titled "*Social Capital and Good Governance*," conducted a case study on developing countries between 1996 and 2010, aiming to assess the impact of social capital on good governance in these nations. Their findings indicate that social capital has a significant and positive effect on good governance.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study involves content analysis, theoretical examination of the data gathered from library

resources, articles published in relevant academic journals and specialized websites, as well as the analysis of behavioral models in selected case studies. The goal is to draw meaningful conclusions based on these sources.

Theoretical Framework

The main research question explores "How does governance structure contribute to social convergence?" This primary question, along with related sub-questions and the role of good governance components in achieving social convergence during widespread crises, forms the core hypothesis of the study. These considerations highlight the conceptual challenges that the research aims to address.

The author's objective in conducting this study is to examine the role of governance structures in fostering social convergence. Additionally, other goals include a comprehensive analysis of social convergence, particularly in times of large-scale crises, and an exploration of governance strategies in countries considered as case studies. These aspects constitute the major sections of this article.

Good Governance

In the 21st century, the role of people as the primary actors in solving societal challenges is undeniable. This is a widely recognized principle reflected in the words of great thinkers across various fields, including culture, economics, and politics. There is a general consensus that addressing issues in these areas is only possible through the presence and cooperation of a unified public voice.

In reality, this principle consists of three main components. If two of these components are made up of intellectuals and their thoughts, then the third—more accurately, the foundation of this triangle—must undoubtedly be the active and significant participation of all members of society. However, what is crucial

in this discussion is to identify the factor or combination of factors that can foster this unity and convergence among the masses.

If we consider society as a human body, where any disease or dysfunction in one organ prompts the other organs to work together in unison under the brain's command to restore health, the same principle applies to society. It is evident that the thinking brain, which plays the role of fostering unity, is represented in the concept of good and capable governance—an undeniable reality. To better understand the concept of "good governance," we must first examine the meaning of "governance." Linguistically, "governance" refers to the management and regulation of affairs and denotes the relationship between citizens and rulers. (Meidori, 2004, p. 17)

It is clear that this definition implies something broader than mere statehood and national administration. The reality of state governance may not always emphasize the relationship between citizens and the government, making the importance of governance even more pronounced.

The topic of good governance has gained increasing attention in recent decades. This subject is not only significant in political thought but also holds great importance in social sciences. Defining "good governance" comprehensively is a challenging task due to the diverse perspectives expressed by individuals and international organizations. Each definition claims completeness and a unique viewpoint.

Although the specific term "good governance" was not used in the past, traces of its concept can be found in ancient Greek thought and beyond, often described as "good government." Aristotle spoke of both good and bad government, focusing primarily on whether governance served public interests or private and group interests.

Moving past the classical era, with the development of broader civil society concepts, it becomes evident that the idea of government in ancient Greece differs significantly from the modern concept of governance. Thus, governance in today's world specifically pertains to the relationship between the government and its citizens.

Since the 1990s, the term good governance has gained clarity and widespread usage, with multiple definitions emerging. According to the World Bank, good governance is "the optimal use of resources for economic and social development." (Meidori, 2004) A close look at this definition affirms that good governance is a key objective for governments in the new century, closely tied to the idea of development. Miles defines it as "the use of political power, the exercise of control over society, and the management of resources for social and economic development." (Miles, 2002) Examining these and other definitions put forth by experts in the field reveals that each perspective highlights different dimensions of governance. For Miles, governance is tied to development, whereas Charlick prioritizes its normative, political, and bureaucratic aspects. One logical distinction that emerges from this discussion is the difference between government and governance.

- Government refers to the ruling system with all its abilities to enforce sovereignty and policy. It consists of political, administrative, legislative, executive, judicial, and military institutions responsible for maintaining order, managing society, and meeting people's needs.

- Governance, on the other hand, concerns the process of governing—how power is exercised, how decisions are made, and how

interactions between the government and citizens unfold.

At its core, governance is about power, interaction, and accountability, addressing key questions such as:

- How are decisions made?
- Who makes these decisions?
- How should the government and citizens interact?

These questions apply at local, regional, national, and global levels. (Plumptre, 1999, p.3) For good governance to be achieved, it requires the interaction of not only the government but also civil society, the private sector, and the citizens themselves. A comprehensive definition of good governance is: "The proper and efficient management of society within the framework of the rule of law, decision-making based on logic and fairness, accompanied by accountability, responsibility, and public participation." (Sardarnia, 2011, p.97)

Various perspectives exist on the key indicators of good governance. The most widely used and comprehensive framework is provided by the World Bank, which defines good governance based on six key indicators:

1. Voice and Accountability
2. Political Stability
3. Government Effectiveness
4. Regulatory Quality
5. Rule of Law
6. Control of Corruption

(Alizadeh sani, 2007, p.6) Without a doubt, these indicators continue to evolve in response to societal changes. Guy Rocher describes change as an inherent characteristic of society (Rocher, 2015, p.15), emphasizing how governance principles adapt over time.

It is evident that democratic societies are directly linked to the realization of good governance principles. Even developing and third-world countries recognize the importance of

these principles for stability and effective governance.

Structure;

The word "structure" is derived from the Latin root *structura* and the verb *struere*, meaning to build and construct (Miriam Glucksmann, 1979, p. 1). This word entered the English language in the 15th century and is defined as the way a thing is constructed and also the arrangement of the parts and components of a body (Moein, 1984, Volume 2). It refers to the way different parts of a thing are arranged together in a connected, organized, and systematic manner based on a precise plan (Oxford, 2005, p. 1523). Therefore, the word "structure" means form, shape, framework, skeleton, building, as well as foundation. However, before the 17th century, this word was used only in architecture; but after that, it gradually began to be used in fields like anatomy and grammar. In the 19th century, Herbert Spencer borrowed this word from biology and applied it to the humanities (Tavassoli, 1991 124-125).

By examining the place of the word "structure" in political science and the topic of governance, one can encounter other specialized definitions of this word, which point to the importance of this issue and, so to speak, the administrative organization of the state and its place in this field.

The collection of institutions and centers that hold political power and create a unified whole is called the political structure. This whole is influenced by all the characteristics and features that give identity to the society in question. In general, two major types of structure can be distinguished: one is the simple and non-specialized structure seen in traditional societies, where tasks and organs are not separated, and the other is the complex, diverse, differentiated, specialized, and

institutionalized structure that emerges in societies equipped with participatory political culture. Political power and its method of establishment, the institutions and organizations present in the society, and the substructures of the political system are elements that can reveal the nature and type of the political structure (Naghibzadeh, 2008, p. 165).

The body of the political and social system is composed of various institutions, distinct and independent from one another. These institutions form the complete structures and the unified framework of society, and the organization of the state, along with the political structure, civil institutions, and other such bodies, forms the fundamental and primary basis of the community and, of course, organizes the structure of governance.

Social Convergence;

In the thought presented regarding the issue of social convergence, it can be understood that reducing social distances between groups helps increase values and behaviors that are more compatible. Gathering different ethnic groups of a society, regardless of language, class, beliefs, etc., without them losing their identity, helps all regions access social life and eliminates discrimination. Factors such as cultural, linguistic, religious bonds, and spiritual and historical heritage can lead to convergence in society.

Plato considered human nature's weakness as the cause for the formation of society in order to cooperate and fulfill human needs. Perhaps Plato's ideal state model can be seen as the clearest representation of the reciprocal relationship between humans and society and the necessity of creating order and unity in social relations at both small and large scales. Aristotle regarded cooperation and mutual assistance between humans as the most basic and profound social relationship and the main

cause of the formation of the city and society. The division of labor for the benefit of society, as Aristotle mentions, is nothing other than functionalism in today's complex world (Saber, 1394, p. 14).

When we examine the components discussed in good governance, such as participation, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, etc., we find that among these indicators, the issue of "forming public consensus" also plays an important role in the modern world. This issue is discussed under the term "social convergence".

It is interesting that when searching for a comprehensive definition of the term "social convergence", upon analyzing the two components of this phrase, it was found that the meaning of "convergence" in lexicography is translated as "the tendency of two thoughts or ideas towards one direction" (Mohajeri, 2007, p. 103).

Therefore, it was considered whether this concept has been translated appropriately, and this is exactly what the structure of good governance seeks from the perspective of political science and its broad concepts in sociology, crystallizing it in "social convergence" in order to manage and resolve challenges and problems in society.

However, observing the behavior and governance methods of different governments with various political and social ideologies and different structures regarding this issue led to a research study in the form of this paper. Attention to different collectivist and individualistic thoughts regarding the role of good governance in creating social convergence in depicting governance behavior can be quite innovative in its own right.

Ibn Khaldun believed that without cooperation, solidarity, and mutual assistance, the

survival of society would be impossible. This Islamic thinker considered the human inclination towards society, after securing basic material needs, as the need for security and protection from environmental threats, dangers, and aggressors. However, he believed that society could not continue its existence except through the establishment of the state (Pooladi, 2008, p. 124). In various parts of Ibn Khaldun's thought, the issue of "civil by nature" can be clearly observed, which can be concluded that the inherent nature of human social life strongly highlights the importance of social convergence and the movement of society's organism.

Thomas Hobbes, referring to the pact individuals make within society to form a government, tends towards political unity in society. By creating unity against a common enemy, individuals secure and protect themselves from its threats. According to Hobbes' thought, all voluntary and intentional actions are the result of contemplation and reflection, and the existence of a power that can unite members of society is essential (Hobbes, 2020, p. 31). Upon reflecting on Hobbes' view, it can be written that since humans, by nature, seek to create order in their lives, they find this order through the formation of "contracts"; hence, sovereignty plays a fundamental role in creating convergence when confronting natural and unnatural threats to society.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his treatise *The Social Contract*, introduces the idea of the "common good" for the individuals of society. Through this concept, he essentially wanted to convey that if society inclines towards isolation, the lives of its members will be flawed and incomplete. Rousseau's view aligns with those of Plato and Aristotle, who saw the

relationship between humans and their fellow beings as an organic or bodily connection, where each fulfills its specific role and, through cooperation and coordination, advances toward self-perfection. In discussing the social contract, Rousseau believed that individuals should delegate all their rights to the ruler, who is the nation itself. In fact, according to Rousseau, "By giving his rights to all, everyone has given them to none" (Lalman, 2015, p. 65).

Rousseau's concept of this delegation of rights leads to the "general will", which represents the "public interest"—something that we expect from good governance in times of social crises: the protection of the public interest, which can only be achieved through social convergence.

John Stuart Mill believed that a kind of solidarity exists among the natural factors of society, which originates from "coexistence unity", where these elements combine in various ways. Mill claimed that a wise inquiry into history would reveal the empirical laws of society, and ultimately, the laws of nature would apply to the foundation of society. If we extend the law of unity in nature to the political order of societies, we can infer the theory of the necessity of union and convergence. Mill argued that the effect of government on the well-being and prosperity of society can only be assessed from a general perspective of all societal interests. Mill believed that the general welfare of society serves as the criterion for evaluating good and bad governance (Stuart Mill, 2010, p. 56).

Morris Duverger is one of the political thinkers who specifically addressed the concept of convergence. This term, which has also been translated into Persian as "homogeneity", according to Duverger, refers to "the process of uniting a society, a process that seeks to harmonize it and establish an order that is felt by

its members" (Duverger, 1997, p. 358). In this context, efforts were made, while emphasizing the components of good governance and the role and structure of governance in creating social convergence, to present an appropriate model during crisis situations—one in which the efforts of governments to create social convergence are inseparable from this path.

Given the complexities of today's human life and the various issues and problems surrounding it, especially in the course of social life, resolving these challenges individually is undoubtedly difficult and, in many cases, impossible, such as dealing with widespread crises. Therefore, one of the most reliable ways for humans to confront difficulties is collective action, and the role of rulers and the governance structure in society to foster this unity is considered essential.

Conclusion:

The issue of good governance is one of the topics that has attracted the attention of political and social thinkers in recent decades. On the other hand, the issue of social convergence, given its impact on solving societal problems, especially in crises that take on the form of a major challenge, has also preoccupied the minds of political rulers in recent global, regional, and national events. However, what can play a crucial role in this context and significantly enhance governance capacity in fostering social convergence is the governance structure. This study also addressed the role of structure in good governance. Examining the structure of power and its governing hierarchy enables a better explanation of policymakers' role in shaping policy-making. This issue becomes even more important in countries with totalitarian and closed political systems, such as China, where leadership plays a greater role in decision-

making, as decisions are made by a minority at the highest levels, in contrast to open regimes where other forces, such as political parties and public opinion, play a role. In the past 50 years, decision-making in China's political system has shifted ideologically towards pragmatism. Alongside this transformation, the dual structural system has reduced the priority of conservative institutions such as the Communist Party and the military while increasing the power of executive institutions like the State council and the presidency. Examining the political power structure in China shows that, unlike Western models, there is no separation and balance of powers, where independent executive and legislative branches operate within their respective domains with accountability and influence. In the Chinese Communist political system, the party has always held paramount importance, and the internal connections between party and state networks effectively run the country. Governance in this vast nation, with its billion-plus population and immense ethnic, religious, and sectarian diversity, has managed to penetrate all sections of society through a single-party communist system, establishing absolute collectivism. The governance structure in China, by creating an obedient bureaucratic apparatus under the supervision of party committees and nuclei, makes various decisions in different areas and at different times, successfully fostering social convergence.

The governance structure in the Islamic Republic of Iran illustrates that this Islamic country, based on a republican political structure with ethnic and religious diversity in Southwest Asia, operates with three independent branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—under the supervision of the Supreme Leader (Velayat-e Faqih). Governance

behavior and decision-making in Iran have entirely moved within the framework of tradition, culture, and religion, leading to a distinctive approach in fostering social convergence. Decision-making considers both religious and traditional values on one hand and developmental policies adopted by successful countries on the other.

Regarding another governance model, reference is made to Sweden's socio-political structure. Sweden is a monarchy in Europe where freedom of religion is recognized. However, according to its constitution, all citizens receive state support in religious matters, and freedom of individual and collective religious activities is legally protected. This country, ranking high in democracy and social welfare in Europe, legally makes no distinction between men and women. Principles such as freedom of speech and press are enshrined in its constitution. Adherence to these principles—some rooted in the realization of good governance—has enabled Swedish statesmen to create a desirable level of social convergence.

Thus, this research aimed to examine the role of good governance, under a suitable structural framework, in managing emerging issues, such as widespread crises affecting various countries. These crises, possessing novel and unknown dimensions, represent a contemporary global challenge. Analyzing the political and social structures of different countries and studying their methods for achieving social convergence in response to pervasive crises, while identifying key influencing factors, can play a vital role in the effectiveness of good governance under such conditions. It has been determined that while structures are products of human intellect and reasoning, their effectiveness in governance depends on

their alignment with the cultural, value-based, and environmental conditions of a society. The success or failure of governance in fostering social convergence is visibly tied to this factor. The perspectives of political thinkers and sociologists have also greatly contributed to the understanding of this subject. By analyzing the discussed issues, it can be inferred that in nearly all governance models and theories proposed by scholars, maintaining public interest and ensuring order and progress are two sides of the same equation. Good governance plays a significant role in this equation and must establish diverse foundations for fostering social convergence to overcome crises, particularly widespread ones. Furthermore, raising public awareness is one of the

responsibilities of good governance in promoting social convergence. If John Stuart Mill identifies "the growth of virtue and public awareness" (Mill, 2010, p. 66) as the ultimate goal that any form of government should strive for, to achieve such a growth is possible, only under good governance in which people's role as the other side of the equation being equally crucial.

By reflecting on this key issue, a reciprocal relationship can be established between increasing public awareness and fostering social convergence within an appropriate governance structure in a given country, particularly when facing widespread crises.

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