

PROGRESSION FROM IDEAL STATE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE: AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Prof Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad

Department of Public Management and Governance
Faculty of Management
University of Johannesburg
Republic of South Africa
Telephone: +27 11 559 4720
Email: svyas-doorgapersad@uj.ac.za

Prof. Dr. Coskun Can Aktan

Faculty of Economics and Management
Dokuz Eylul University
Izmir, Turkey
Email: ccan.aktan@deu.edu.tr

Abstract

Good governance, first appeared in the nineties within the United Nations, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund refers to describe how public organizations best conduct public affairs and deliver public goods and services. Today, about three decades later good governance seems to be still popular since there are still many challenges ahead for many governments especially in less-developed and developing countries.

This paper revisits that good governance incorporates some representative principles of an ideal state. What is an ideal state? What are the canons of an ideal state? What are the main characteristics of good governance based on ideal state? These and similar questions are the subject matter of this introductory paper.

Key Words: Good governance, good enough governance, ideal state, accountability, responsiveness, transparency, rule of law, efficiency, effectiveness, participation.

JEL Classification: D73 H1, H11

LINTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, good governance, has been intellectually hypothesized as an ideal state. According to Sahni and Vayunandan (2009), this notion endures even now, as good governance is seen to bring in happiness and welfare of the people. It is also associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework. The intellectuals such as Kautilya, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle also emphasized the term ideal state in their philosophical narratives. Kautilya highlights the concept good governance in his Arthashastra as *“in the happiness of his subjects, lies his happiness; in their welfare, his welfare; whatever pleases himself, he does not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he considers good”* (1.19.34 Kautilya – The Arthashastra – Penguin Classics p.x. cited in Keerthisinghe 2011). Plato “developed the concept of the philosopher king as the ideal king” (Sahni and Vayunandan 2009). Socrates in addition emphasized justice, equality and equity as cornerstones of ideal state. He stated that *“the paradigmatic society which stands behind every historical society is hierarchical, but social classes have a marginal permeability; there are no slaves, no discrimination between men and women. The men and women are both to be taught the same things, so they are both able to be used for the same things”*. Plato, the disciple of Socrates, further his teachings whereby his ideal state emphasized on elements such as “the distribution of talent was non-genetic”; and “women should be educated to the same degree as men” (Ganesan 2014). Plato’s teachings were expanded by his disciple Aristotle whose ideal state (Pradhan undated) “is an ethical institution”, where “there is a supremacy of law”.

However the changed social, economic and political environments; paradigm shifts in the field of administration; worldwide movement towards sustainable development goals, all demanded more evolvement and revolutionary approach in governance. Hence the notion of good governance was emerged as a normative

commencement of the principles, values and ethics to realise the acts of governance.

The good governance can also be considered as a new paradigm in the field of public management. The rationale is that the neoliberal paradigm shift, pure marketplace ideology, and private sector efficiency approaches failed to sustain values of new public management (NPM), creating an environment whereby “the central issues of equity, fairness, and market failure are resurfacing as government after government realizes that the lives of the majority, the ordinary citizens, cannot be ignored in favor of the few, the powerful particularistic interest group elites” (Ikeanyibe, Ez’Ori and Okoye, 2017: 3).

The article henceforth proposes a new paradigm shift towards “*good enough governance*” meaning “*that interventions thought to contribute to the ends of economic and political development need to be questioned, prioritised, and made relevant to the conditions of individual countries*” (Grindle 2007: 554). Authors advanced these ideas and formulated twenty ‘good governance-based’ recommendations that can be considered, imperative and holistic, as policy imperatives.

II. GOOD GOVERNANCE REVISITED

The concept of good governance is being argued in detail since 1990. It has been used widespread in the reports published by international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, OECD and United Nations later it has become a subject matter for serious research and review in the academic field. Authors find it useful here to summarize how the institutions that started using this term firstly define ‘good governance’.

The World Bank in a report entitled ‘Governance and Development’ (1992) set out its definition of good governance as “*the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for*

development". The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD which is another institution that supports the studies on good governance, in a document entitled Participatory Development and Good Governance (1995) highlights that the broad definition given by the World Bank encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of relationship between the ruler and the ruled. During the 1990s, supporting the World Bank's approach, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Woods 2000: 824) emphasizes that the good governance agenda includes promoting transparency, accountability, efficiency, fairness, participation and ownership. These values translate into a broad objective to improve political accountability, participation, an effective rule of law, transparency, and flows of information between governments and their citizens. Later, in 1997, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) defined good governance in a policy document entitled "Governance for Sustainable Human Development", stating that governance has three dimensions: economic, political and administrative. Economic governance includes the decision-making processes that affect a country's economic activities and its relationships with other economies. Political governance is the process of decision-making to formulate policy. Administrative governance is the system of policy implementation. Encompassing all three, good governance defines the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships.

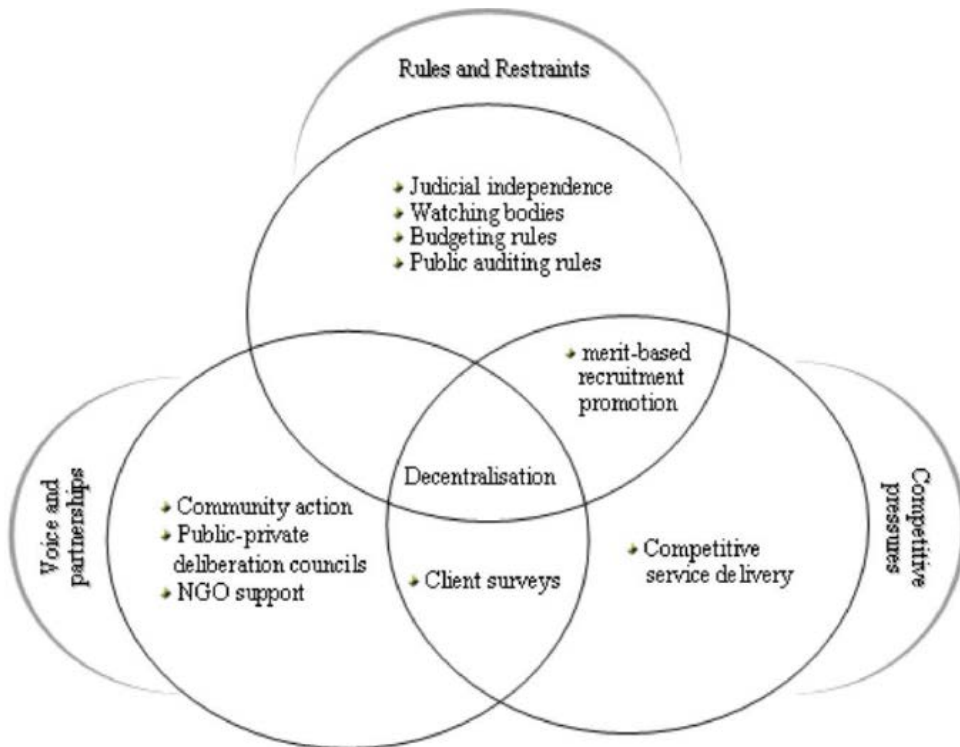
According to the World Bank, state reform should reinvigorate the state's institutional capability. World Bank recommends three basic incentive mechanisms to enhance state capability: (World Bank, 1997:7-9: World Bank: 2000:23.) (See Figure-1.)

- *Rules and Restraints within the Public Sector*: These include the constitutional separation of powers, divisions of responsibility among levels of government, budgeting rules across public organizations, formal rules and oversight arrangements within public organizations, and organizational culture.

- *Mechanisms That Promote Citizen “Voice” and Participation:* These include various forms of representative decision making; direct involvement of citizens, civil society etc.
- *Mechanisms That Promote Competition:* These include political competition (for example, between regions or parties); market competition among public agencies, or between public and private providers of information, goods and services; and internal competition within public bureaucracies.

World Bank and other international organizations are sharing the idea of “*better government requires good institutions.*” In other words, good rules and institutions are needed for “*good governance.*” (World Bank, 1992, 1994.)

Figure-1: Components of Good Governance by World Bank



Source: World Bank, 1997:7-9: World Bank: 2000:23.

On the other hand according to the Commission of the European Communities, five principles underpin good governance: *openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence*. (Commission of the European Communities: 2001.)¹

¹ -*Openness*. The institutions should work in a more open manner. They should use language that is accessible and understandable for the general public.

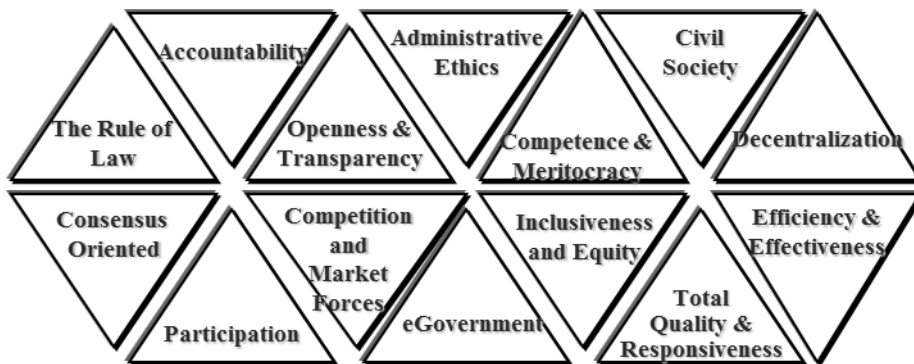
-*Participation*. The quality, relevance and effectiveness of government policies depend on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain .

-*Accountability*. Roles in the legislative and executive processes need to be clearer. Each of the government institutions must explain and take responsibility for what it does.

As it can also be seen from the definitions given above the international organizations using the concept widespread focus on an administration where participation, transparency, accountability, audit, ethics, virtue and merit are dominant. It is therefore imperative that the good governance concept should be discussed and defined by taking all these factors and/or elements into consideration.

Good governance has several major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, ethical, meritocratic, responsive, effective and efficient, quality-oriented, equitable and inclusive, decentralized and follows the rule of law etc. The components of this definition is illustrated in figure 2. ²

Figure-2: Components of Good Governance



Source: Authors.

-*Effectiveness.* Policies must be effective and timely, delivering what is needed on the basis of clear objectives, an evaluation of future impact and, where available, of past experience.

-*Coherence.* Policies and action must be coherent and easily understood. (Commission of the European Communities: 2001.)

² The components of this definition was analyzed earlier by Coskun Can Aktan in the following publications in detail: Aktan, 1995; Aktan, 1998; Aktan, 2003. Aktan, 2015.

First of all, good governance essentially requires “*participation*” of all people of the society. Participation means active involvement of all affected and interested parties in the decision-making process.

Good governance is also “*consensus oriented*” where all individuals can reach an agreement to support a decision in the best interest of the society.

A good democratic governance is fundamentally adherence to “*the rule of law*”. Rule of law demands that the people and the civil society obey to the law. It also demands that the government acts within the limits of the powers prescribed by the law.

“*Accountability*” which is another cornerstone of the good governance means that public officials -- elected and appointed -- have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to the citizens.

“*Openness and transparency*”, as an indicator of good governance, means information should be freely available and directly accessible to the citizens.

“*Government ethics*” constitutes the application of ethical rules to government. Public sector ethics is a more broad concept that deals with ethics for those who serve in the public sector. Good governance requires a good ethical government.

“*Meritocracy*” is a part of an ethical government. It means absence of nepotism, cronyism, favouritism etc. in the government. Power should be entrusted in individuals almost exclusively based on ability and talent. The professional skills of public servants should be continuously maintained and strengthened in order to improve public services. Competence is the basic principle in a meritocratic government.

“*Civil society*” is the “third sector” of society, along with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, labor unions, indigenous groups, professional associations, foundations etc. are all part of the civil society. A civil society is an important component of the good governance.

“*Decentralization*” is the process of redistributing or dispersing the roles and functions of the central government to the local government. It is sometimes called as “localization” Good governance supports deconcentration and devolution in government.

“*Effectiveness*” (meeting the needs of the costumers) and “*efficiency*” (proper utilization of resources) are also important components of good governance. Public service delivery must promptly and adequately cater the needs of the citizens. Total quality management aims a citizen-centered government within this context.

“*Responsiveness*” means that institutions and processes serve all stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner.

“*Equity*” and “*inclusiveness*” means that all the members of the society, especially the most vulnerable ones must be taken into consideration in policy-making.

“*E-government*” is the use of electronic communications devices, computers and the internet to provide public services to citizens. We are living in the information age and information and communication technologies must be widely used in all level of government.

Good governance support competition and market forces. The roles and functions of the government must be transferred to the market economy. Market forces that is ‘invisible hand’ may determine levels of supply, demand, the prices of goods

and services, as well as wealth creation and distribution. There is no need active government interference to the market forces.

And finally, “*sustainability*” is another important canons of the good governance. Sustainability refers to a quality that allows people to meet their current needs without compromising the resources available for future generations to meet their future needs. The needs of future generations should be taken into account in current policies.

III. CHALLENGES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Through the literature review, it can be deduced that good governance plays a significant role in the transformation and evolution of “predatory state” (Maung Aye, 2016: 1) to a developmental state. However good governance is not free from obstacles such as “weak institutions, lack of participation and democratisation, and lack of social capital, and corruption” (Maung Aye, 2016: 1), complemented with dictatorial leadership, social disintegration, economic stress, colonialism, civil war, post-conflict damages, social, political and economical degrading, political interference, militancy, dictatorship, to state a few. These factors are challenges to good governance leading into maladministration, mismanagement of finances, nepotism, inequality and inequity, lack of rule of law, misuse of power and authority, and bribery.

Corruption is thus identified as an endemic disease damaging the environment of good governance world-wide. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International 2016), “over two-thirds of the 176 countries and territories fall below the mid-point of the scale of 0 (highly corrupt). The global average score is a paltry 43, indicating endemic corruption in a country's public sector...with unacceptably high levels of abuse of power, secret dealings and bribery”.

Another challenge is *autocratic and dictatorial leadership* causing damage to good governance, especially witnessed in African continent. According to Vyas-Doorgapersad (2011: 238), “most African countries have experienced (some still do) the crisis of political turmoil, intolerance and harsh dictatorship; others have a military regime with highly centralised government processes. To name a few, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Libya, Ethiopia and Uganda are in dire straits, resulting in a marked degree of social disintegration and economic stress throughout the continent”.

Furthermore, *economic crises* often go hand in hand with political instability; in countries such as Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, ‘the orientation of the political leadership was not particularly pro-market or pro-private sector’ (cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad (2011: 238).

Every year the Governance Report (Hertie School of Governance 2017) explore various “pressing *policy-related* issues that involves a myriad of challenges to good governance, such as multiple actors and conflicting objectives, or spillovers into additional issue, areas or jurisdictions”. The various reports explore additional *policy-related issues* hampering good governance, such as (Hertie School of Governance 2017): “inadequate project delivery and implementation; lack of government decision-making capacity; inappropriate administrative capacities; slow pace of government readiness; challenges regarding infrastructure, energy sustainability, welfare, and integration; challenges to financial and fiscal governance”. The associated challenges include lack of freedom of expression; poor communication; gender inequality in governance structures and processes; economic recession; digital-divide; poor performance; inadequate service delivery; lack of public participation; nepotism; to state a few.

Nonetheless to state that some critical challenges involve issues surrounding existence of militant groups (Syria), refugee status (Europe), cross-boarder (territorial) declarations (Israel), women dis-empowerment and domestic violence (patriarchal societies globally, case-study could be India), banning of certain

foreign nationals (United States of America), institutionally voted economic decisions (United Kingdom), protests against the leadership of a country (South Africa), are some of the regional and local challenges that demand feasible policy implications for improvement.

IV. GOOD GOVERNANCE: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The article discussed concerns such as, which principles are important for good governance? What are the basic characteristics or principles necessary that can be retained from an ideal state? In the above explanations the article shortly summarized some of the necessary components for good governance. It was found it useful in stating the normative principles in more detail that must be found in an ideal state in order for the matter to be expressed more clearly. Authors henceforth recommend the following policy implications emphasizing that following principles must be considered to enhance the environment of good governance :³

1. The state must be an institution depending on social consensus. The first and main condition for the legitimation of the state is social consensus. Citizens should try to negotiate and start dialogue on what kind of duties they will transfer to the state beyond the protection of life and property. The people can specify the necessary principles for good governance through participant and consistent methods. This first aspect of the ideal state can be called as the Contractarian State. The social contract theory is important in understanding the basic fundamentals of the ideal state.

2. The state should be an institution dependent on social contract. The principles agreed upon by the citizens should be written down on a formal and written contract. This means making a formal contract (agreement) between the state and the citizens. This formal contract is the Constitution. The constitution takes the rights and freedom of the individuals under guarantee and should bear the

³ Those principles were first explored by Coskun Can Aktan in the following publication: Aktan, 1995.

identification of a formal contract which outlines the power, authority, duty and functions of the state. No constitution is legitimate unless limits the power and authority of the citizens and puts the rights and freedom of the citizens under guarantee. This second aspect of the ideal state can be called as the Constitutional State.

3 .The power and authority of the state should not be in one hand: it should be divided amongst the legislation, execution and judicial bodies. “This principle which is called “separation of power” forms another aspect of the ideal state. Taking this power division principle under guarantee with the constitution and its effective implementation carries great importance.

4. The power and authority of the state should not be combined in one center: some powers, authorities, duties and functions should be transferred to local administration and other state units. This aspect of the ideal state can be called as the Decentralized State. For good governance both service and income division should be made between administrators.

5. The framework and limits of the “political” power and authority of the state should be specified in the state’s constitution. The state must be limited with rules of law (constitutional and statutory rules/norms) in order to protect the individuals from the state. This aspect of an ideal state is called the rule of law. For the establishment of a good governance a state whose powers and authorities have been limited is of great importance.

6. The framework and limits of the “economic” power, authority, duty and functions of the state should be specified in the state’s constitution. For an ideal state and a good governance the expenditures, taxes, borrowing and issuing money authorities should be limited with constitutional and statutory norms. This aspect of the ideal state is called the Limited State.

7. The state should be an institution depending on the independence of the people. The people should be allowed to select the representatives that will manage them through free elections and should be allowed to participate in the management. This can be called as the Democratic State. The democratic state also means the effective protection of the rights and freedom of the citizens.

8. The state intervention to the market economy and price mechanism should be at a limited level and should be done when needed. A state understanding depending on the market and price mechanism should be formed. The state should not directly provide the goods and services, instead it should be in a position that facilitates the presentation of services through the market mechanism. This aspect is called The Catalyst State.

9. The state should specify the rules of the game in the market economy instead of producing the goods and services the private enterprises can present in a better way and more effectively. We can call this aspect of the ideal state as the Referee State. The state should undertake economic activities only when the private enterprise becomes insufficient. Apart from this, the state should also directly intervene in the game along with specifying “the rules of the game” (for instance forming the competition law) and punishing the persons who violate the rules of the game (precautions such as anti-exclusivity and anti-trust laws etc...). The state that performs arbitration in the best way is the best state.

10. There should be transparency in the management of the state. Citizens should be given the right and freedom to gain and access knowledge under constitutional and legal norms. This aspect of the ideal state is called as the Transparent State.

11. The reason the state exists is to protect the rights and freedom of the people. It is not the state that is sacred but the people and their rights and liberties. In summary, the ideal state should be based on the mentality which focuses on liberty and individualism.

12. *The state should be governed not with the religious rules, but with the legal rules which are formed by the individuals by using their independent thoughts.* The state should at the same time be neutral against all religious affairs and should not specify a religion as its official religion. This aspect of the ideal state is called Secular State.

13. *The state should be an institution which does not discriminate people according to their race, religion, language, ethnical origins.* In a country all the religions, races, and cultures should be respected and treated equally. This aspect of the ideal state is called Pluralist State.

14. *The state should not be an institution to be expected solving all the problems of all citizens, it should rather be an institution which provides help and support for the people who are in need of protection and guarding.* Not the Paternalistic State but the Responsive State should be adapted.

15. *The state should be an institution with equal income and expenses.* Attention should be given to the equality of the public expenses and incomes as a requirement of the morality of financial discipline and financial responsibility in state management. Budget equality and –under what conditions this equality can not be given up – should be included in the constitution and law.

16. *The state should be an institution that gives importance to international political and economic relations, focuses on international competition and has the aim of uniting with the world economy.* The globalization trend makes this approach an obligation. This aspect of the ideal state is called Global State.

17. *The state should be an institution which carries universal values.* We must respect all the culture, tradition, and customs of all countries and people. For a good governance along with local/regional/national values universal/global values should be accepted as principles and be adapted accordingly. This aspect of the ideal state is called universal state.

18. The merit system should be valid in the management of the state. In the employment of state officials a merit system depending on knowledge, skill and experience instead of nepotism should be applied/implemented. Semi direct democracy is the only political system that allows the people to participate in the management.

19. The state should be an institution of participation. Techniques (referendum, initiative, veto, recall) that will encourage the people to participate /join the state management should be given importance/emphasized. Semi-direct democracy is the only political system that allows the people to enter the management of the people. This aspect of the ideal state is called Participatory State.

20. The total quality philosophy should be adapted and applied for increasing the quality of the state management and developing it. We call this last aspect of the ideal state Good Quality State. The first thing that must be done for a good state is drawing the framework and limits of the duties and functions of the state. The state must be insistent on the implementation of all the quality principles in the second stage. The aim in the state management is to develop quality of man and the system together and simultaneously.

V. THE WAY FORWARD

The challenges discussed in this article raised global awareness and the following elements of good governance were identified:

- democracy, human rights and governance (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1999),
- participation; fairness; decency; accountability; transparency; and efficiency (Overseas Development Institute, 2017),

- civil and political liberties or political freedoms; frequency of political violence; and opinion of good governance (The Statistical Office of the Commission of the European Communities cited in Landman, 2003),
- accountability; bureaucracy process; civil and political rights; civil society; corruption; culture; decentralization; development; election statistics; freedom of media; gender; global governance and democracy; human rights; justice; political institutions process; public administration and governance; public expenditure; public sector governance process; social economic rights; and socio-cultural political; and workers' rights (United Nations Development Programme, 2004).

These initiatives are an indication that good governance “is not an accident. It has to be planned and managed. Managing Governance is a task in itself. To manage, it must have a vision, goals, targets and broadly accepted measurements. All stakeholders must have a consensus on what indices Good Governance” (United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2001: 128). Scholars may argue and recommend that countries must develop indicators based on their social, cultural, economic and political environment to manage governance. However, it must also be considered that the term “good governance is abused by using so many indicators that it becomes nearly impossible to achieve good governance, or only possible if one neglects the societal effects of governmental actions” (de Vries 2013: 3).

The article therefore demands a paradigm shift from good governance to good enough governance, a new concept which is advocated by Grindle (2004: 526) as “a condition of minimally acceptable government performance and civil society engagement that does not significantly hinder economic and political development”. It “opens new intellectual space. It provides a concept that allows us to discuss the role of government in coping with public issues and the contribution that other players may make. It opens one’s mind to the possibility that groups in society other than government (e.g. ‘communities’ or the ‘voluntary

sector’) may have to play a stronger role in addressing problems” (Graham, Amos and Plumtre 2003: 6).

VI. CONCLUSION

There is a need for more scholarly and analytical debates to assess ideal state and good governance principles exploring comparative data at global, regional and national levels. The article furthermore leaves a scope for future debates incorporating the aspects of assessing ‘good governance versus good enough governance’ that is important to improve governance capacity and performance in a country-specific context.

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