

**TOWARDS GOOD GOVERNANCE ISSUES FROM A SOUTH ASIAN  
PERSPECTIVE: AN EXPLORATORY ASSESSMENT**

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**Abstract**

Governance is widespread and it seems to be an all-encompassing notion that shelters a diversity of extents. However, evaluating governance is a significant exercise because a state's image is influenced by its situation in world rankings, which plays a significant role in a diverse range of choices by the international community. Good governance usually denotes a list of estimable features of how government has to be worked out. "Good" governance includes many factors, such as operative, honest, impartial, transparent and responsible. The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), Human Development index, Corruption Perception index and the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) are helpful in understanding governance. Consequently, this paper aims to describe governance through its indicators and the performance of good governance in South Asia. The governance indicators that are used in this paper also indicate the presence of poor governance in South Asia. This paper hopes to inspire states to progress their performance and implement philosophies and practices of freedom and citizen involvement in public affairs.

**Keywords:** Governance, Good Governance, Poor Governance, Indicators, South Asia.

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## **I. Introduction**

Governance is inclusive and aims to be a wide-ranging idea that shelters a number of concepts, including accountability, productivity, comprehensiveness and openness, performance, privileges and admittance, voice and choice, and so on. Throughout the last decade, there has been a visible move in the paradigm to understand the magnitudes--profundity and viewpoints concerning the role of the country, government, and peoples (Aminuzzaman, 2018). The new approaches of governance are varying the traditional governance representations of nation states. This encompasses efforts to reorganize central government agencies, reform events of all directions working for the public welfare, and improved service delivery to better respond to the individual's necessities and demands. South Asian countries have also introduced initiatives to rationalize their public management and policy making procedure. However, governance has not yet flourished and been able to respond to the social and political requirements of citizens, much to their discontent and their lessening trust to governments in South Asia (Jamil et al., 2013).

Even though the era of colonial rule came to a close in the middle of the twentieth century, its heritage still lingers

in most of the post-colonial states. South Asia has an extensive colonial history. The British governed the Indian sub-continent for nearly 200 years (1757-1947). The management of South Asian states is therefore particularly impacted by the period of British rule. The heritage of colonialism is noticeable in the governance structure of these states. Consequently, the organizational and political structures of South Asia are frequently mismatched with its indigenous societal, financial, political, and cultural settings. The colonial management framework has an unintended influence on sustainable development and good governance in South Asia (Vartola et al., 2013). Therefore, this paper aims to simplify the present-day debate and condition of governance through stressing the indicators and performance of good governance in South Asia.

## **II. Conceptual Focus**

The idea of governance is as long-standing as human evolution. The English expression 'governance' originates from Latin and earliest Greek and was originally used to represent control, direction, and operation (Keping, 2018). The term governance indicates macro choice-creation (Qian, 2012). Theoretical research of governance mirrors the attention of the social science community and has

constantly changed shape. The outdated definition of governance sees it as a replacement for government. Thus far, in the increasing effort on governance, there is a forwarding in its usage and significance. Rather, governance indicates ‘a variation in the sense of government, denoting to a new procedure of governing; or a reformed state of well-organized rule; or the innovative process by which society is administered’ (Stoker, 1998). Governance is ultimately concerned with generating the situations for methodical rule and cooperative accomplishment. The yields of governance are thus not diverse from those of administration. It is somewhat a substance of a transformation in procedures (Stoker, 1998).

The World Bank (1992) defines governance as “use of power in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development.” According to Jon Pierre (2000) “governance refers to sustaining coordination and coherence among a wide variety of actors with different purposes and objectives.” Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Pablo Zoido-Lobaton (1999) defines this as follows:

Governance largely as the societies and organizations by which authority in a state is doing exercises. This contains (1) the procedure by which

governments, are designated, observed and swapped, (2) the dimensions of the government to efficiently articulate and implement comprehensive strategies, and (3) the esteem of residents and the state of the organizations that administer financial and societal connections among them.

The idea of governance narrates to the excellence of connection amid the government and the inhabitants whom it attends and defends. Governance can be defined the way in which the connected authority, if any, workouts power, applies effects and achieves the state's societal aims, in addition to financial possessions leading to improved progress. In other words, governance is the technique through which those with power, practice their power. Therefore, governance has societal, political, and financial extents (Sahni, 2003).

The appearance of good governance in the terminology of progress in the 1980s has been accredited to the “effect of influential organizations like the World Bank ... as conditionalities”. This may have been the aim for the instigation of the term given the many efforts to define the philosophies and features of good governance (Khan, 2009). Good governance must be discovered in the framework of a

comprehensive vision of progress and diverse consecrations of globalization and innovative technologies. However, good governance is an uncertain notion (Prasad, 2003). Good governance usually denotes how a government must work (Grindle, 2010). In particular, good governance includes many levels of government, which should be operative, honest, reasonable, transparent and responsible (Johnson, 1997).

According to the World Bank (1994):

Good governance is characterized by expectable; open, and rational policymaking (that is to say, transparent procedures); a bureaucracy filled with a specialized philosophy; an administrative limb of administration accountable for its activities, and a solid civil society contributing in public matters; and all performing under the rule of law.

And according to the UNDP (1997):

Good governance defines the procedures and structures that control dogmatic and socio-economic relations. It confirms that political, societal and financial significances are grounded in extensive agreement in society and that the vocal of the poorest and the weakest are gotten in

decision-making over the distribution of development properties

### **III. Implications of Good Governance**

Good governance indicates good direction, good strategies, and the willingness of government officers and people alike to honor directions, traditions, and standards. In this framework, good can denote two concepts: good direction and good strategies. These concepts can be defined procedurally, indicating universal counter to specific events, with neutrality as a prime standard. The consequence of good governance is a positive resemblance between political purposes and their execution, in similar way as good administration in a business improves the obligation and the output of the personnel. This does not in itself pledge wellbeing because political intent can be considered to be an effect of (for example) lack of acquaintance and evidence. Nevertheless, no government constitutionally provisions corruption, even though we can see that corruption is widespread in many countries. The unintended consequence of good governance is a feedback from wellbeing, or from the practice of devotion and loyalty of directions, based upon the likings, standards, and principles of the players. This impacts their approaches and the strategies by which they govern, not

only to define conduct but also their selections regarding lawful order and financial strategy (Wagener, 2011). Therefore, good governance is ultimately about improving peoples' privileges, including the right to safety, to an attired life, to elementary facilities, for instance health, education, and clean water, the opportunity to vote, to form and spontaneously express views, and the opportunity to be treated with esteem, to pursue recompense and to due procedure in law. The global community has a common legal concern under global law to encourage and defend these civil rights (Aid, 2009).

Over the last two decades, many countries in Asia, the biggest continent, have been determined to execute the concept of good governance, especially in South Asia. However, bad and poor governance characteristics are quite obvious in numerous South Asian states. For example, some portions of India have been recognized to have poor governance. The nonappearance of solid democratic organizations in these states is caused by a lack of proficient and skilled civil servants, administrative and political exclusivity, immense corruption, nonaccountability of government servants and politicians and in some situations consistent, direct and unintended military interference into the

democratic procedure (Vartola et al., 2013). In many South Asian states, the challenge of governance is to encourage more public/community participation, evidently make clear decentralization strategy, and hold these philosophies and activities of inclusive governance. This could improve the trust level on institution, and provide an impartial and fair arrangement of governance. The states of the areas have tracked nearly alike styles of governance reform interference, as recommended by the development associates and to a large degree have attained constant economic growth over nearly a decade through opening markets, liberalizing rules and dealings, privatization, enticing foreign direct investment, delivering inducements to investors, and defending the rights and possessions of stakeholders. These efforts have led to constructive economic progress, a comparable decrease of poverty, better organization services, and improved education and health facilities. It is also clear that in relations of democratic power, openness, and social differences, the states of South Asia are still behind. There are indications of little institutional trust in government organizations, weak or ceremonial participation procedures, and low status of esteem and trust in public bureaucrats and public organizations. These problems can be stemmed through improved transparency,

accountability, neutral decision making, and supported democratic principles. The policymaking procedure in several South Asian states still appears to reflect support-based politics, in contrast to the pressure to play an active, progressive role (Aminuzzaman, 2018).

#### **IV. Governance in South Asia**

There are key variances in South Asia amongst states, for instance Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in terms of regional size, populace, religious configuration, and language, even though they have certain shared historic and cultural inheritances and politico-economic arrangements. To the extent that the political setting of governance is concerned, these states differ with respect to their philosophical predispositions, constitutional arrangements, democratic institutes, political parties, and government edifices. Although India has a conventional practice of secular democracy, in spite of its political culture exaggerated by caste and religious conflict, Bangladesh and Pakistan have experienced recurrent periods of military interference and infrequent civilian administrations. Nepal has an extensive past of inherited monarchy with a current evolution to multi-party democracy, while the practice of democratic politics in Sri Lanka has

progressively encouraged an executive presidency (co-standing with a voted parliament) that is grounded on centralized influence (Haque, 2003). When compared to other developing states, Sri Lanka and India are two of the eldest, and have gone through the democratic process and have become developing states. Moreover, these four South Asian states have stimulated working and enthusiastic democracies through comparatively free and impartial elections (Vartola, 2013). Bangladesh has achieved an incredible economic achievement, in addition to social progress, becoming a lower middle-income state. The rate of GDP growth has continued over 6 per cent for the last few years, in spite of political disorder that acquired room in the later part 2013 and initial part of 2014. However, persistent corruption at all heights of governance, the incompetence of the administration and politicization of management are deterring the procedure of formation of good governance in the state. Therefore, good governance is required to yield a proper form in the state. Unquestionably, it may not be prudent to make an absolute refusal of the element that certain basics of good governance happen in the state (Panday, 2017). In spite of these variations in political arrangements amongst South Asian states, they share substantial resemblances in the total approach of governance. Despite

these positive variations, the excellence of governance in these states is not reasonable. In its place, the difficulty of governance has increased throughout the previous two decades.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) are an extensive research scheme to progress cross-country pointers of governance. The WGIs contain six amalgamated pointers of comprehensive extents of governance over 200 states and they have been collected since 1996. The WGIs include voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann et al., 2011). The WGI is grounded in prevailing perception-grounded governance data, composed from 35 databases provided by 32 diversified organizations. These include surveys of firms and houses, in addition to particular calculation by a diversity of viable business data benefactors, non-governmental establishments, and a quantity of multidimensional groups and other public segment bodies (Huque & Jongruck, 2018), as follows:

1. Voice and accountability (VA): apprehending observations of the scope to which a state's citizens are gifted to contribute in choosing their government,

along with freedom of speech, liberty of association, and freedom of press and media.

2. Political stability and non-appearance of violence/extremism (PV): apprehending insights of the possibility that the government will be undermined or defeated by undemocratic or violent means, as well as politically-inspired violence and intimidation.

3. Government effectiveness (GE): apprehending the quality of public facilities, the excellence of the civil service and the grade of its freedom from political burdens, the excellence of policy preparation and execution, and the reliability of the government's obligation to such plans.

4. Regulatory quality (RQ): apprehending the aptitude of the government to articulate and instrument sound plans and guidelines that authorization and endorse private sector expansion.

5. Rule of law (RL): apprehending the degree to which representatives have self-confidence in and stand by the directions of society, and particularly the excellence of contract execution, assets rights, the courts, and the police, in addition to the probability of crime and fierceness.

6. Control of corruption (CC): apprehending the extent to which public influence is working for private advantage, as well as both minor and grand arrangements of corruption, along with "detention" of the government by elites and personal interests.

These six events of governance deliver a valuable mode of thinking about governance matters, along with a valuable method of forming the events of governance.

**Table 1:** Governance Indicators in South-Asia, 2017.

Indicators	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Governance Effectiveness	36.06	79.81	66.83	57.21	32.69	42.31	59.62
Voice and Accountability	33.99	54.19	67.49	50.25	46.31	32.02	51.23
Political Stability	16.19	98.10	29.05	69.52	33.33	3.81	57.62
Regulatory Quality	31.73	55.29	56.73	57.21	36.06	40.87	60.58
Rule of Law	36.06	79.81	60.58	50.48	36.06	33.17	62.02
Control of Corruption	29.81	95.19	54.81	44.23	38.94	31.73	48.08

Source: World Bank, 2018.

(N. B.: Upper bound of 90% confidence interval for governance, in percentile rank terms)

The governance indicators issued by the World Bank that are shown in Table 1 reveal that South Asia is falling behind on a number of issues, such as governance effectiveness, voice and accountability, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. However, we can also see that there are massive regional disparities: whereas Bhutan scored the uppermost (i.e. out of six it

ranked best in four indicators in South Asia), Pakistan scored the lowest in three indicators of the WB's governance indicators. The state of affairs of Bangladesh is vulnerable in most indicators of governance; for instance, we can realize the score did not cross 50.0. It is fascinating to point out that Bhutan is the one state in South Asia that is still ruled by an absolute monarch.



**Table 2:** HDI and CPI indicators in South Asia

	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Human Development index: 2018 <sup>a</sup> (UNDP)	136	134	130	101	149	150	76
Corruption Perception index: rankings 2017 <sup>b</sup> (TI)	143	26	81	112	122	117	91

<sup>a</sup> Ranking of nations among 189 entries, Human Development Report UNDP, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>, accessed on 17 January 2019

<sup>b</sup> The scale varies from 0 to 10, where 0 denotes highly corrupt and 10 as clean. The numbers in parentheses is ranking of nations among 180 countries, [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017), accessed on 17 January 2019

These indicators display that South Asia is not doing well in these indicators. In the Human Development Index, South Asian states, excluding Sri Lanka, are at the bottom of 189 nations involved in the UNDP study. Furthermore, all South Asian states, excluding Bhutan, score high in the corruption perception index of TI—this is not a good sign for South-Asia.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) have progressed an innovative form of the worldwide Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The worldwide MPI includes 105 states,

which are home to 77 per cent of the biosphere’s populace, or 5.7 billion people. Of this, 23 per cent of individuals (1.3 billion) are acknowledged as poor from diversified magnitude. MPI was first advanced at the University of Oxford in 2010 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) for the UNDP leading publication—the Human Development Report. Multidimensional poverty reflects the various overlapping deficiencies that underprivileged people experience. Elucidating their shortcomings, individuals living in poverty frequently define deficiency of education, deprived health

and nutrition, unsafe water, unsafe housing and so on. These deficiencies mirror the lived practices of numerous deprived individuals and the difficulties that they face in attaining valuable proficiencies. They stimulate the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on focusing poverty in entirely its procedures and extents. The global MPI is collected of three magnitudes (for

instance, health, education, and living standards) and they are divided into 10 indicators. Every dimension is correspondingly weighted, and every indicator within each dimension is also correspondingly weighted. An individual is acknowledged as multidimensionally deprived if they are disadvantaged in as a minimum one third of each weighted indicator (OPHI, 2018).

**Table 3:** The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 2018.

Country	Health		Education		Living Standards					
	Nutrition	Child mortality	Years of schooling	School attendance	Cooking fuel	Sanitation	Drinking water	Electricity	Housing	Assets
Bangladesh	24.3%	2.4%	25.0%	9.5%	39.4%	30.2%	4.3%	26.2%	38.1%	28.0%
Bhutan	12.7%	12.7%	29.7%	8.7%	27.8%	22.1%	3.3%	20.6%	30.9%	18.7%
India	20.5%	2.4%	11.6%	5.5%	25.8%	24.2%	6.1%	8.5%	23.3%	9.4%
Maldives	1.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%
Nepal	27.5%	2.2%	19.5%	4.8%	33.9%	20.5%	4.5%	7.8%	33.0%	14.6%
Pakistan	30.7%	8.6%	25.5%	27.2%	37.8%	29.0%	9.0%	6.3%	35.6%	17.2%

Source: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2018.

<https://ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-country-briefings/>, accessed on 17 January 2019

Table 3 shows the censored headcount ratio of the apiece pointer at the national level. In MPI, individuals in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Bhutan, and Nepal have a strong influence on poverty in diverse indicators. This expresses that poverty is prevalent in South Asia and the percentage of poor public is higher than in any other area in the world. However, the ratio of individuals in poverty in the

Maldives is significantly less equated to other portions of South Asia.

### V. Concluding Remarks

The existing governance indicators support the presence of poor governance in South Asia. The World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (i.e., voice and accountability, political stability, governance effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of

corruption) show that South Asia's governance excellence has worsened in current years. Given the contemporary governance situation in South Asia, a rapid fix is not probable to come willingly. A progressive state requires a solid political promise to increase family and partisan benefits. Simultaneously, rule of law or the restoration of Weberianism (e.g., presenting merit, performance-grounded administration, and clear difference between domestic and official life) is indispensable to patterned patron-clientelism, and excessive granting of indulgence. Democratic reforms would be fruitless if the directions of the government, social, and specific levels are not appropriately implied out, experienced, and observed. Democracy must associate both sovereignty and freedom of activities, but in the frontier of what is suitable, proper, and valid. Some of the South Asian states have presented a "Right to Information Act" to confirm transparency

and accountability of the administration's performance and choices. However, without a purposeful democracy, the right to information could persist as a meager pomposity reflecting figurative politics (Jamil et. al., 2013). An evaluation of the perception of governance, their understanding by scholars and international organizations, and a deliberation of the framework of certain non-Western states reveal the difficult task to evaluate and link them. Policy-makers go to the simply accessible group tables equipped by the World Bank and additional international organizations to make serious choices that have an effect on the physical and mental welfare of people and finance of states (Huque & Jongruck, 2018). This plays an influential role in generating the degree of advancement, noticeable and measurable, to inspire states to progress towards liberty and citizen involvement in public functions.

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