

GOOD GOVERNANCE

A Critical Introduction

Governance is both a very new and very old subject in political science. It marks a return to the conception of political study organized around key words like constitution, government, polity, politics and other related themes. While 'Good Governance' agenda as introduced by Bretton Woods' institutions according to the Washington Consensus is a result of conventional developmental theories, and represents the contemporary kernel of truth on how to develop. This small book aims to bring to the readers a general conceptual idea of Good Governance as part of Washington Consensus products and to understand critics launched against it from different point of views. This small effort is dedicated to the beginners who are trying to understand the basic idea of Good Governance from a holistic point of view and from its bigger picture.

Dr Maszlee Malik, graduated his studies at Jordan in 1994. He is an undergraduate in the field of fiqh and usul fiqh at al-Bayt University, Jordan and holds a master's degree in the same field from the University of Malaya. He obtained his doctorate degree (PhD) in the United Kingdom in Political Science. Maszlee also experienced teaching at Durham University in the years 2008-9. He was also invited to be a guest speaker for SOAS summer school on 'Political Islam' for the two consecutive years of 2009-2010 for the topic 'Political Islamic Movements in South-East Asia'. He posses vast experience doing NGO charity works in Lebanon and Jordan since the year 2004, that gave him a myriad of experience in dealing with political literatures in Arabic language and the political situation in the Middle East. Furthermore, Maszlee is also frequently invited as guest speaker by many Malaysian media to talk on the issues relate to Political Islam, Middle Eastern Politics and Arab Spring. Currently holding the post of assistant professor in the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. His research area is in Islamic jurisprudence, Contemporary Islamic Political Thoughts and Movements and Good Governance.

ISBN 978-967-418-374-5



9 789674 183745

IIUM Press

Tel : +603 6196 5014 / 6196 5004
Fax : +603 6196 4862 / 6196 6298
Email : iiumbookshop@iium.edu.my
Website : <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>



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First Print, 2015
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(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Maszlee Malik, Dr.

INTRODUCTION TO GOOD GOVERNANCE : A CRITICAL INQUIRY /
MASZLEE MALIK.

ISBN 978-967-418-374-5

1. Management. 2. Leadership. 3. Title.

658.4

Published by:

IIUM Press

International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Printed in Malaysia by:

Card Information Sdn. Bhd.

49, Jalan 31/10A

Taman Perindustrian IKS,

Mukim Batu,

68100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

CHAPTER ONE

Governance: Definitions and Conceptual Framework

The ‘governance’ phenomenon indeed is another big idea that has re-emerged in the past decade. The term was first introduced as a panacea for underdevelopment and poverty in the early 1980s, and was suggested as a remedy for many other problems and challenges, as well as being viewed as another ideological excuse for certain power groups to dominate others. At the same time, the term ‘governance’ currently connotes a myriad of meanings depending on the context in which it is being used and what adjectives are added to it. The term undeniably has its significance and philosophy, so it became very popular and a favourite term of many. Hence, this introductory chapter attempts to locate the origin of the term, its meaning, framework and philosophy. An unambiguous understanding of the concept is crucial in order to comprehend its implications for the framework of this research.

Defining the Concept

After the World Bank’s report on the underdevelopment of Sub-Saharan Africa in 1989, the term governance took on a new dimension. It has since become a multi-usage phrase in diverse fields and areas. The term which was once firmly linked to the political setting of government has now become common in the fields of political economy and development. The definitions of governance, therefore, are manifold.

To begin with, the term governance is etymologically connected to the Greek verb *kubernân* which means ‘to pilot or steer’. Plato used the verb regarding how to design a system of rule. The Greek term gave rise to the Medieval Latin *gubernare*, which bears the same connotation of piloting, rule making or steering (Kjær, 2004: 3).

differs in terms of usage from one context to another (Williamson, 1989: 11). These differences are elaborated further in the following sections.

Conceptual Framework

Although governance has only recently entered the standard Anglophone social science lexicon, it has become a buzzword in various circles. A closer look at the subject will uncover the diverse usage of the term, which is applied to different contexts and different connotations. However, the semantic meaning of governance as ‘steering’ is still present in all the usages despite the differences. The following sections deal with those different usages based on the diverse definitions. The definitions imply clearly that the concept of ‘governance’ is not an exclusive terminology but rather can be applied to a variety of organizations and institutions, and is thus not limited to politics or economics as might be expected (Rhodes, 1996: 47–56; Rhodes, 2000: 55–63; Hirst, 2000: 13–35).

(i) Governance as Policy Instrument

Despite its various and inconsistent usage, the term governance as defined by political scientists refers to two of the most basic questions: ‘Who governs?’ and ‘How well?’ The former refers to the issue of power, its distribution and resources in the community and political structure, while the latter, referring to the issue of ‘Good Governance’, focuses on effective institutions, efficient methods of operation and equitable policy outcomes (Jreisat, 2004: 1004). This basic understanding of governance deconstructs the very fundamental concept of the use of the term governance, which can be found in Hyden’s (2001) definition:

Governance is the stewardship of formal and informal political rules of the game [which] refer to those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and settling conflicts over such rules.

the term will give a clearer picture of this demarcation: “Governance comprises the traditions, institutions and process that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern.”¹

The current use, however, no longer deals with the term governance as a synonym for government. Rather, it refers to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed (Rhodes, 2003: 46), or it might also signify the modes and manner of governing, of the institutions and agents in charge of governing. This new broader dimension of the recent use of the term still engulfs its literal meaning of “the art of steering societies and organizations” (Graham, *et al.*, 2003: 2). The new use of the term ‘governance’, hence, departs from its original meaning, which exclusively connotes the political guidance or steering to the non-hierarchical control model focusing on cooperation between state and non-state actors, and the participation of larger actors. This new understanding of ‘governance’ is broader than that of ‘government’.

A very detailed concept of governance, produced by the Commission on Global Governance (1995: 2), clarifies the term as: “The sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is the continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken”. Consequently, this new paradigm also represents an alternative for the old framework of government for hierarchical control, on the level of national, inter-state policy (*i.e.* EU policy) and in international relations (Kooiman, 1993; Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992).

However, a thorough investigation of the contemporary utilisation of the term governance indicates that it has shifted enormously from its initial usage. Not only has the separation between governance and government become exacerbated, governance is also no longer confined to the political realm. The term has become a concept that

1 Canadian Institute on Governance, (www.iog.ca)

Lexicographically, governance is derived from the Latin ‘*cybern*’ which means ‘steering’, the same root as in ‘cybernetics’ (the science of control). Cadbury (2002: 1) relates this meaning to Cicero (106 B.C.–43 B.C.) who in his *De Senectute* (On Old Age) states “[h]e that governs sits quietly at the stern and scarce is seen to stir”. Later, the term evolved to be used in French (*gouvernance*) in the fourteenth century to refer to ‘seat of government’ or the royal officers rather than to the process of governing or ‘steering’ (Pierre, 2000: 23).

The term ‘governance’ was used extensively in the earlier modern day to mean the act of governing, as in the function and performance of ‘government’ and the word ‘government’ was defined as the “form of organization of State” or a “body or successive bodies of persons governing a State; ... and administration or Ministry” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2009). The term governance denotes the performance or conduct of governing; the office or function of governing; sway, control. Hence, to govern is to “rule or control with authority; to be in government” and also refers to the relationship between the governors and the governed, such as that between the government and the people, and has at its basis the decision-making powers ceded by individuals to those in authority so that the common interests of society can be served (Iqbal and Lewis, 2009: 2). For a long time, the usage of the term was mainly limited to constitutional and legal issues concerning the conduct of ‘affairs of the state’ and/or to the direction of specific institutions or professions with multiple stakeholders (Jessop, 1998: 30).

Within this framework, the words governance and government differ from each other, since government in its technical usage focuses on the political system with its institutions (electoral system, type of government, political parties, bureaucratic, *etc.*), while governance implies “general conduct of which power is exercised by governments and authorities at national, regional and local levels, and the way in which they fulfil their duties of care and accountability in managing and dealing with the economic, social, ecological and cultural resources and institutions for which they are responsible” (Van Dok, 1999: 10). Perhaps the redefinition by the Canadian Institute on Governance of