

wine drinking, it ends by provoking in us questions that are much more salient. An alumnus of IIUM Kulliyah of Law, Shahab Ahmed tragically passed away months prior to the release of the book. May Allah provide him with peace and happiness in the next world.

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**Governance in South, Southeast and East Asia: Trends, issues and challenges.** Edited by Ishtiaq Jamil, Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman, and Sk. Tawfique M. Haque. London: Springer, 2015, pp. 285, ISBN: 978-3-319-15218-9.

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This book offers a comparative analysis on governance in South, Southeast, and East Asian countries. It provides extensive conceptual, theoretical, and empirical discussions on governance with rigorous comparative studies of how governance is practised in different countries across those contexts. The authors present broad analyses on the discrepancies of governance reforms on the basis of real and practical problems and examine the factors that drive and challenge governance based administrations. The tune of the book is to measure the impact of governance on public management reforms, country developments, and economic growths. The by-product of the adoption of the governance model is thoroughly analysed. The book is divided into 15 chapters, opening with a conceptual discussion on governance. The chapter is completed with arguments on the relevance of the governance model in South Asia and beyond. Descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory analyses are presented using reliable primary and secondary data with sound methodological foundations.

The book discusses the concept and model of governance based on specific indicators as developed by international bodies. Governance entails multi-dimensional indicators to measure notions such as good governance, sound governance, network governance, and so forth. The concept signifies a network of interconnectedness of government, private sectors, civil society organisations, and the public. The

World Governance Indicators (WGI), developed by the World Bank, is used as a benchmark to measure the achievement of countries on governance reforms. As argued by the authors, the emergence of the concept of governance and good governance in particular has brought phenomenal changes in public administration and governance. The shift in the landscape of governance is contingent upon respective countries' histories, institutional legacies, and administrative and political cultures. The analysis reveals that a one-sized model is irrelevant, as governance based administration is influenced by those factors. Ignorance and exclusion of these factors may hamper transition towards good governance.

The book devotes substantial discussions on antecedents and outcomes of the establishment of governance. Internal and external pressures have been identified as contributing factors which lead to the process of transition. This includes the rise of globalisation, corporate capitalism, engagement of third parties in governance as major stakeholders, and improved efficiency and administrative capacity as embodied in New Public Management (NPM). The emergence of NPM is seen as a building block which expedites governance reforms (Chapter 4). A case study on Hong Kong demonstrates the positive contributions of NPM towards the development of good governance. Apart from internal factors, the authors also recognise the pervasive role played by international actors such as the UN Development Program (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, global corporations, and Western governments in disseminating this idea. For the third world countries, the adoption of the governance model became a pressing requirement for international assistance. Many perceived the situation as a new form of colonialism which accounted for massive structural adjustments in administration.

This new form of colonialism has intensified dependency on Western powers, thus putting the third world countries at a disadvantage. In response to this, the authors have justifiably encouraged the adoption of "sound governance" as an alternative to the global idea of good governance. It provides more inclusive technical, rational, and normative ideas. The concept of "soundness" is used to characterise governance with superior qualities, which denotes a systemic process of government that is both domestically and internationally sound in its interactions with other nation-states on an independent and self-

determining fashion: sound organisational and managerial performance that is not only current and competent but also anticipatory, responsive, accountable, transparent, and self-corrective (p. 29). Further analysis in the book on the theories of governance analyses different descriptive models of governance from Hindu and Islamic perspectives (Chapter 3). Theories of governance from Hindu and Islamic doctrines provide a balanced view on systems of governance. Both religious models emphasise building and maintaining societies based on collective interests and ethical-moral social orders.

On measuring policy outcomes, the authors explore the relationship between good governance and economic growth, public service delivery, human development, and social capital. In general, the authors accept the complex and vague relationship between good governance and economic growth. Statistical analysis shows weak correlations between good governance and economic growth and development in developing countries. Case analyses on China, India, and Bangladesh reveal indiscernible relationships between these two variables, thus implying that poor governance does not constrain high level of economic growth and vice versa. As such, governance does not always promote economic growth, but economic growth may stimulate governance reform. In addition, concerns on government effectiveness, accountability, and voice have shifted market-based governance to network-based governance. Network governance entails independency, collaboration, and consensus between autonomous stakeholders and a high degree of compromise in promoting policy development. As claimed by the authors, this flexible and hybrid policymaking approach with pluralist engagement, empowers people and democratic practices. Moreover, further analysis suggests that the endeavour to create good governance enables social capital to be built. Good governance resurrects trust towards political leaders and public institutions. This direct relationship implies that weak governance erodes trust and good governance elevates trust. The practical evidence of Bangladesh and Nepal (Chapter 10) confirms the existing correlation of deficit good governance on trust generation.

Transition towards good governance is accentuated by the increasing roles played by non-state actors such as the international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGO), and civil society organisations (CSO). Joint task actions (co-governance) between government

and civil society organisation (CSO) are seen as a means to improve government effectiveness (Chapter 11). Comparative analysis reveals that Bangladesh and the Philippines have rigid rule-based CSO's compared to South Korea and Japan. A collaborative relationship in the form of co-governance would facilitate effective governance, but it requires the granting of autonomy and equal partnership between government and CSO. Similarly, increasing co-governance practices can be seen in China. This shows that even a country with a highly centralised administration like China has shifted its rigid structures in response to inner and outer pressures from the market and society (Chapter 12). Current changes in administrative trends in China can be seen through decentralisation, deregulation, and privatisation. Despite administrative transition, China's primary aim is to maintain appropriate balance between efficiency, effectiveness, and equitable provision of basic public services with a strong government foothold.

Further, an analysis of the relationship between good governance and Human Development (HD) discloses a positive relationship between the World Governance Indicators (WGI) and the Human Development Index (HDI). Among all factors, the strongest variable affecting HD is government effectiveness. Correlations between inaccessibility and poor education, vulnerable employment, and income levels and the lack of healthcare facilities explain why South Asia ranks second lowest in all HDI and scores poorly in good governance indicators. A comparative analysis of South Asian countries reveals that with large populations and high poverty levels, people are trapped in vulnerable employment positions that are low paid and insecure, poor quality of education, and inadequate healthcare facilities, especially in rural areas. The authors argue that the problems raised by the HDI scores are so ingrained that they cannot be changed overnight. Governments from the South Asian context therefore must come up with sound policies on health, education, and economic wellbeing (p. 138).

The book also devotes a chapter to discussing the role of women and gender rights in public employment. Improvement of women's access to public employment in some South Asian countries, like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, has been observed, although not at an accelerating rate. The establishment of good governance is expected to provide equal access to public employment without gender discrimination. Therefore, the empowerment of women is achievable

through good governance by incorporating stakeholder views in the policymaking process (Chapter 9). Increasing stakeholders' participation in the policy process improves governance. However, the presence of external factors such as development aid has reduced and disempowered policy makers because of "guided ownership". Donors' intervening and meddling in policy affairs has weakened state credibility and authority in the policymaking process. Dependency on policy advice from donors remained strong. The Bangladesh experience discloses that public policymaking is extensively influenced by donors' conditions, technical assistance from donors, political will, and continuity of leadership (Chapter 13). Improving the government through the practice of policymaking is essential by enhancing the state's authority in the governing process. What matters is a government's capacity to adopt and adapt the best practices to account for a country's contexts and realities.

Does governance matter? The answer is yes, no, or maybe. The authors' analysis acknowledges the importance of governance and recognises the limitations of a generic notion of governance as a guide for development. The reader is taken on a journey of governance reforms among developing countries, where contextual analyses, and interesting discussions are offered throughout the chapters. This book is a great addition to existing literature on governance especially on South, Southeast, and East Asian countries. Varied practical experiences among countries reveal that the contextual setting of a country does matter. Resource constraints, leadership continuity, and political will are among determinant factors in governance reforms. The adoption of good governance does not necessarily become the independent variable that explains HD, economic growth, social capital, and increase co-governance and network governance among South, Southeast, and East Asian countries. Overall, the comparative analysis on governance enhances the reader's understanding of conceptual and theoretical aspects of governance as well as the impact of international practices on developing countries. The chapters in this volume significantly contribute to the body of knowledge, especially in the field of governance and public sector management studies.

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