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Governance and Social Justice in the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

One of the challenges of the Islamic Republic of Iran during her forty years since the 1979 revolution is the bewilderment for the realization of social justice. Although it is argued that the lack of social justice during the Pahlavi regime finally resulted in the Islamic Revolution, failure in the improvement of social justice indices after the revolution, especially after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq in 1988, has resulted in governance policies that are contrary to social justice. Given that social justice in Iran is not desirable and the current situation in Iran, forty years after the revolution, does not resemble much the ideals of the revolutionary leaders for establishing social justice, the present article, by referring to reliable data and using analytical-descriptive method, attempts to show that the governance practices in Iran have not been able to realize social justice which entails taking into consideration the successful international experiences and implementation of the good governance practices.

Keywords: Iran; Social Justice; Good Governance; Islamic Revolution.

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1. Introduction

Social justice is one of the most important ideals of the present Iranian society. Following the Islamic revolution and due to its emphasis on the realization of social justice, and the circumstances under which different spectrums of political thoughts and ideologies in Iran had always been expressing the ideal of social justice as their main motto, realization of this concept became more and more complicated. Meanwhile, considering a set of theories on good governance, with an adjustment-oriented look to the role of the government, a specific pattern of governance from developing countries is to be implemented to achieve the same. By good governance, we mean exercising economic, political and administrative powers based on the law along with accountability and effectiveness. One of the important goals of good governance is to develop social and people-oriented justice. Accordingly, the present article is seeking an answer to this question: How much has governance practices in the I. R. of Iran led not only to the realization of the ideals of the social justice of the revolutionary leaders but also to the improvement of the social justice indices in the country? For this purpose, the features of the theory of good governance are mentioned and using documented data, the analytical-descriptive method and discourse analysis of the revolutionary leaders of Iran in the social context, the following hypothesis is going to be examined: It seems that the ideals of the revolutionary leaders of Iran for social justice are not realized due to the structural weakness of the good governance indices. To this aim, using the theory of good governance, and by reviewing the ideals of present leaders of Iran to establish social justice, the effects of governance practices on social justice in the I. R. of Iran will be assessed.

2. Theoretical Framework

Governance means the act or way of governing and exercising control and authority over the citizens through a system of rules. Therefore, the content of managing and governing can be considered not only as the way of ruling the people but also as the way of managing and administrating the government (Griffiths, 2010).

Good governance has been introduced by the World Bank since the late 1980s. The World Bank, for the first time, defined good governance as public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to its public (World Bank, 1989; See also Stone and Wright, 2007; Williams and Young, 1994).

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) definition of good governance was set out in a 1997 UNDP policy document entitled Governance for Sustainable Human Development. The document states that governance can be seen as an exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Good governance comprises the existence of effective mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Its essential characteristics are: Participation, Rule of Law; Transparency, Responsiveness; Consensus-orientated Equity, Effectiveness and Efficiency; Accountability and Strategic Vision (IFAD, 1999).

Overall, good governance comprises mechanisms and processes which are at the

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service of the realization of democracy and human rights. In this respect, therefore, good governance can be considered as a desirable type for the realization of the ideal of democracy, human rights, rule of law and economic development. In this regard, the United Nations High Commissioner includes the following important fields and goals: full respect for human rights, multi-actor partnerships, political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, an efficient and effective public sector, legitimacy, access to knowledge, information and education, political empowerment of people, equity, sustainability, attitudes and values that foster responsibility, solidarity and tolerance (OHCHR, 2018).

The concept of good governance has been clarified in the work of the former Commission on Human Rights. In the resolution 2000/64, the Commission identified key attributes of good governance: transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness (to the needs of the people).

By linking good governance to sustainable human development, emphasizing principles such as accountability, participation and the enjoyment of human rights, rejecting prescriptive approaches to development assistance, resolution stands as an implicit endorsement of the rights-based approach to development (OHCHR, 2018).

A better and more comprehensive recognition of good governance requires suitable indices. In this regard, Kaufmann, in the project of WGI or Worldwide Governance Indices, considers the following as elements of good governance: accountability and participation, political satiability, lack of violence and terrorism, effectiveness and efficiency of the government, quality of the rules, and rule of law and corruption control (Kaufmann et al., 2014). On the other hand, John Graham regards five principles for good governance, i.e. legitimacy and voice, leadership and direction, performance, accountability and fairness as the most important ones. The comparative comparison of these with the above mentioned attributes and elements clarifies that his suggested indices not only include instances of establishing social justice but also emphasize equality of rights and rule of law as instances of social justice. In this article, through studying Graham's indices for good governance in the 21st century, these indices are going to be ratio metrically surveyed with the outcomes of the current situation in the I. R. of Iran.

3. Good Governance Indices in 21st Century

Table 1 shows five principles of good governance, which have been compared with the content of the texts relevant to these principles:

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Table 1. Five Principles of Good Governance

The Five Good Governance Principles	The UNDP Principles and related UNDP text on which they are based
1. Legitimacy and Voice	Either participation – all men and women should have a voice in decision-making, directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively. Consensus orientation – good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.
2. Direction	Strategic vision – leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.
3. Performance	Responsiveness – institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders. Effectiveness and Efficiency – processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
4. Accountability	Accountability – decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external. Transparency – transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.
5. Fairness	Equity – all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing. Rule of Law – legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

According to table 1, legitimacy means the acceptance and justification of shared rule by a community. The question of legitimacy concerns who is entitled to make rules and how authority itself is generated. Legitimacy, therefore, is a key factor in the ethical acceptability of governance arrangements (Lockwood, 2010: 758). In this regard, legitimacy can be assessed as a kind of 'legitimate influence', as called by Robert Dahl (Dahl, 2003). On the other hand, legitimacy can be divided into the quality of

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participation and the quality of problem solving; in other words, input legitimacy controls the quality of participation in the process of decision- making about the rules and regulations and output legitimacy refers to the amount of the quality of problem solving of the rules and regulations, both of which guarantee the legitimacy of justice as an instance of political order (Risse, 2004: 8). Meanwhile, good governance seems to have been based on the right to self-determination. From this perspective, inherent rights to select the political system follow economic activities and rights for cultural and social development are fundamental rights to exercise and enjoy other human rights (HRC, 15 July, 2014). On the other hand, good governance comprises people's fundamental rights for full and effective participation during decision-making about the issues influential in their rights, life, land, territory and resources (Johnston, 2013:5).

For the second index, it can be said that for realization of good governance, there should be a common understanding of leadership and the goal of participation between the public and leaders. In some cases, government takes the initiative by considering a significant budget. In other cases, this goal may come from the civil society and be commonly developed between leaders and the civil society (Edgar et al., 2006:12). The leadership plays a major and undeniable role in promoting the quality of life of citizens. One of the most important duties of the leader is bringing people together for the common good and tackling difficult changes (Porter, 2002).

Leadership codes also show that leaders should exceed other people in personal characteristics, to have strength on top, be above average at least in territories where the leadership is weak, and finally have more skills than their rivals (Ulreich et al., 2008). On the other hand, some studies point that the effective leadership entails that leaders should possess mobilized support, and authority to provide resources for the implementation (Shipley and Kovacs, 2008:217).

Realization of the third index of the good governance requires processes and institutions to provide services for all the members in a reasonable time span which, results in supplying the needs of society, and at the same time, enables making the most of the provided resources (UNSCAP, 2009: 2-3).

Accountability and transparency of the political authorities and government agencies to the public depend on the issues such as information accessibility, liberty of the press, decision-making transparency and accountability mechanisms of the institutes to the public for behavior measurement. Government should possess accountability and information systems in order to promote the transparency of its function and manage the protests and objections and control itself through the feedbacks gained from the democratic procedures. The public awareness of the key policies improves the quality and the effectiveness of the government attempts. Institutional hierarchy in each country is different, depending on the kind of culture, tradition and history of the society, and, therefore, appropriate plans should be prepared based on the above mentioned features (OECD, 1993:2-8). On the other hand, accountability entails observing the principle of transparency, which is broadly defined as the accessibility of the information related to the policies and governance strategies to the public.

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Finally, the realization of the index of fairness in good governance implies rule of law and the equality of citizens before the law which results in establishing government actions on legitimate authority and the rights of citizens to pursuit of legal claims (Graham, 2003:5). In societies where the rule of law is strong, people support the law not out of fear but due to their major role in its effectiveness. In other words, while corrupt and suppressor regimes legislate on their own, legal governments believe in the cooperation with the society (Johnston, 2013:2). Furthermore, in this index, the assessment criterion is the amount of practical respect of government officials and citizens of a country to the institutions which are established to legislate and implement law and dispute resolution. Based on what is discussed about good governance, it is considered that good governance is closely related to establishing social justice, and establishing social justice is not possible without regarding the indices of good governance. What follows is the ideals of the leader of the I. R. of Iran, and the assessment of their practical outcomes to realize social justice in Iran.

4. Social Justice and Governance in Iran

During the Pahlavi regime, some intellectuals and theologians, as the social opposition which later engaged lead Iran, were not only with criticizing denouncing the discriminatory and unfair policies of the regime but, also formulated their idealized versions for changing the political system. In this regard, we can mention Ayatollah Khomeini, Ali Shariati, Morteza Motahhari, Mahmood Taleghani and Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Shariati, inspired by European Protestantism, believed in Islamic reformism through providing contexts for Shia renaissance (Shariati, 2014) and freeing up religion from the trusteeship of the intellectual tyranny by two mottos: social leadership and class justice or into other hands Islamic revitalization, which he believed was the way to take the country out of its problems including injustice (Shariati, 2014). Shariati considered Islam as a means which, his ideals including freedom, justice and responsible society were met.

The realization of which takes place when Islam is regarded, as an ideology, which can set an example for the people of the world. (Shariati, 2014).

On the other hand, Ayatollah Khomeini considered every non-Islamic political system as idolatry and polytheistic in his writings (Khomeini, 2007). In this regard, he advised Islamic scholars to fight against monopolization, tyrants, and oppressors' illegitimate use of public resources, and rescue the hungry and deprived people from the grasp of the marauder and disbeliever oppressors who live in luxury (Khomeini, 2007). He believed that:

> Islamic government is not royal, let alone be imperial and an empire. In these governments, the governors dominate people's lives and properties and arbitrarily interfere in them. Islam is pure of this way of governance; therefore, in an Islamic government, unlike the royal, imperial and empire regime, there is no evidence of large palaces, so-called mansions, service and retinue, special office, prince's office and other royal accessories on which half or more than half of the country's budget is spent (Khomeini, 2007).

In his belief, the aim of establishing an Islamic government was the realization of higher goals, i.e., implementing the right and destroying the wrong (Khomeini, 2007).

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Another revolutionary leaders was Hojjatoleslam Ali Khamenei, who in 1975, during 28 sessions, discussed the outline of the Islamic thought in the Holy Quran, whose aim was constructing the beliefs based on the teachings of the Quran. In his book, Khamenei describes two kinds of society: class society and classless society (Khamenei, 2018). He points out that since the Islamic society is classless, those who benefit from social class differences and gather wealth by exploiting people such as usurers and, in the current society, banks and usury institutes are opponents of such a society and divine system… (Khamenei, 2018). He introduces Islam as a classless religion and believed that in an Islamic society with an Islamic government, under Islamic regulations, one does not need connections to study, work, learn, earn money, recruit and get employed, even to the highest levels, this is the Islamic society; it is a vast field with millions of ways for millions of people through which they can travel and use them; they can all run towards their material and spiritual goals and objectives; there is no problem, the way is open for everyone; unlike non-monotheist and ignorant systems that make the road asphalted for some but full of thorns, stones and obstacles for others, which is not the case in an Islamic society (Khamenei, 2018).

Moreover, Morteza Motahhari, a few months before the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, in 1979, discussed the Islamic government with his students, he actually denied what had been mentioned as the goal in Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi's book, *Toward the Great Civilization*, and clarified that [f]or us, the goal is to live under monotheistic rules, to live with monotheism and Islamic teachings, it is not only a means for the day when the society enjoys public welfare and there is no oppression. We certainly are searching for a society where there is no oppression. We surely want a society where there is no oppression, and justice is established. In such a society, we can live as human beings, and living as human beings means true understanding of the universe and overall system of existence and being, knowing God and discovering divine teachings and understanding attributes of God (Motahhari, 2018). Motahhari also believes that in Islam, justice is supposed to be "complete" because it is related to khatammiat, i.e., Mohammad was the last of the prophets, and that religion is eternal, and justice, according to religious beliefs, is one of the eternal goals of the prophets. If it varies with time, a single rule cannot be issued (Motahhari, 1996). Meanwhile, one of the most important groups which possessed ideals for the governance was the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization that was formed after anger and hatred towards the political system of Pahlavi. The members of this organization, formed by Mohammad Hanifnejad, Saeed Mohsen and Abdorreza Nik-Bin Roodsari, were university students or graduates and were mostly familiarized with the religion and political campaign by Islamic associations and the Freedom Movement at universities (Jafarian, 2013: 549). The Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization defined their thought and ideal in an irreconcilable conflict with the ideology of the Pahlavi regime and believed that the conflict between the imperialism-dependent regime and people, and also the conflict between laborers and the capitalists, and generally the exploited and the exploiters cannot be solved peacefully (Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization, 1972: 81).

Mojahedin-e-Khalq members employed keywords such as imperialism, laborer, capitalist and exploitation and tried to show

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themselves as supportive and proponents of the working class. Noticeable among the social ideals of the fighters against the Pahlavi regime is similarity of all the groups in the realization of social justice. Revolutionary groups considered the challenges and irregularities similarly and they all agreed to the dependency of the Pahlavi regime on imperialism, increasing corruption among the court and banality in society (Behrouz, 1999). In this regard, Hamid Enayat believed that reconciliation of Islam and Marxism was due to their common ideals of social and economic justice, and the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization was the representative of such insight (Enayat, 1982, 153). Based on Thomas Spragens's model as illustrated in the Table 2, which emphasizes observing irregularity, diagnosing the pain, ideal and finally the prescription (Spragens, 2008), the ideals of the revolutionary leaders of Iran to realize social justice can be formulated as follows:

Table 2. Analysis of Iranian Revolutionary Leaders' Social Utopia, based on Thomas Spragens's Theory

	Armed fighters: **Mojahedin-e-Khalq**	**Theologians:** **Khomeini/ Khamenei/ Motahhari**	**Intellectuals:** **Shariati**
Observing irregularity	Autarchy, suppression, poverty, injustice	Injustice and diversion from religion	**Injustice and diversion from religion**
Pain diagnosis	Bad governance	Bad governance	**Bad governance**
Ideals and dreams	Classless system- Maoist system	Classless monotheistic system Justice-oriented	**Classless monotheistic equity- and freedom-basedsystem**
Prescription	Marxist revolution	Islamic revolution	**Revolutionary Shia**

Based on the mentioned points, it can be considered that the Iranian revolutionary leaders who had always been the critics of the governance practices of the Pahlavi regime, treated bad governance and lack of social justice as the main pain, and their prescription to solve the problems and difficulties was political and revolutionary solutions. They suggested different governance practices to solve the problems in Iran, which were mostly based on mottos which stated general points and were based less on pathological or modeling topics.

In the rest of the article, the outcomes of the indices of these governance practices are followed regarding the superior signifiers mentioned in the ideals of the revolutionary fighters in Iran. It is also shown how much of the ideal of social justice intended by the leaders after following up these governance practices has been realized after forty years.

5. Outcomes of the Governance Practices in the I. R. of Iran

Social justice is a political and philosophical concept which means that all people should

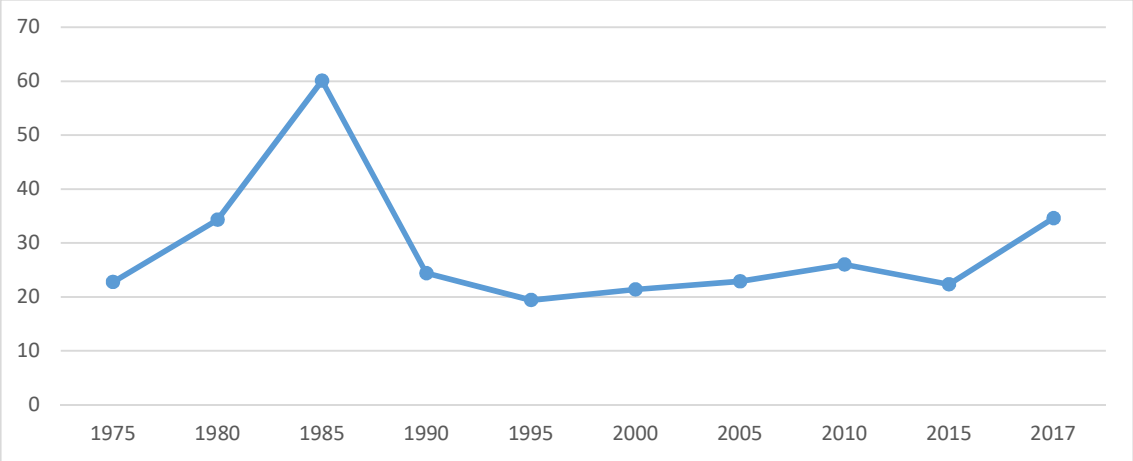
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have equal access to wealth, health, wellbeing, justice and opportunity. From this point of view, social justice can be considered as the goal of good governance

A comprehensive recognition of the concept of social justice is bound to the teachings of good governance theories; in other words, understanding that how much social justice is realized requires the understanding of the components of good governance and the understanding of this important point can lead to taking correct strategies to the advancement of affairs in a country, As mentioned, different institutions have embarked on realization of good governance in developing societies and promoting it to provide measurable indices, in most of which applied items such as accountability, consensus orientation, participation, rule orientation, effectiveness and efficiency, fairness and equity, responsiveness and transparency have been emphasized. In the following parts of this article, the rank of the I. R. of Iran in the four indices of misery index, GDP per capita index, corruption vulnerability index and the Legatum Prosperity Index is studied to show the scorecard of this political system in the realization of social justice. In this framework, it should be noted that although oil revenues have to some extent realized the industrialization program of the government, slow procedure and governmental nature of the development programs in Iran have not had desirable effects on the concrete realization of social justice yet. Furthermore, undesirable foreign relations with its consequent imposing limitations such as capital and technological sanctions, are all factors that, after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq in 1988, have reduced the production capacity and competition power of Iran and have increased the acceleration of economic isolation of Iran in the world. This procedure has caused the misery index not to be better at all on the average compared with that of the years before the revolution, which in its simplest form is the result of linear combination of the inflation rate and the unemployment rate and in some cases, show even much worse conditions. Chart 1 shows the variations of the misery index in Iran from 1975 to 2017:

Chart 1. Iran's Misery Index (1975-2017)



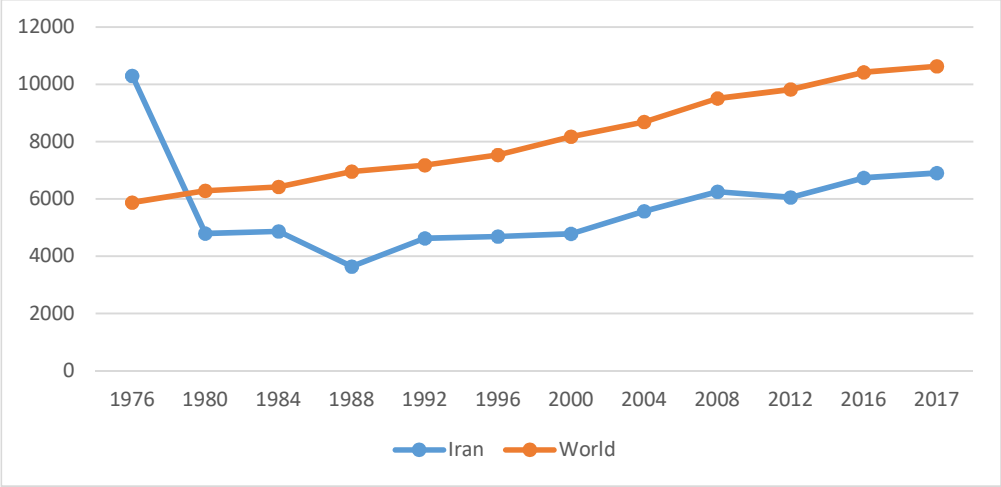
Source: Iran Central Bank in different Years and the Author's Calculation

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The Chart 2 shows the variations of the GDP per capita index in Iran after the revolution compared with that of the world average and is based on the World Bank data and constant United States dollar rate in 2010.

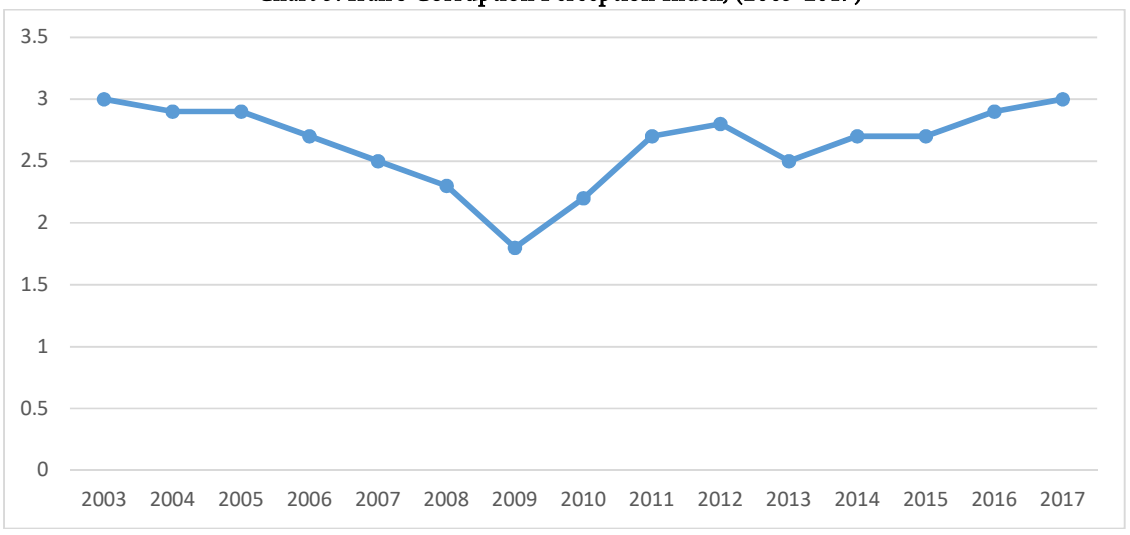
Chart 2. Iran and World GDP per Capita, (1975-2017)
Constant 2010 US$



Source: World Bank Data, 2018

The Chart 3 shows the variations of corruption vulnerability index in Iran since 2003. It is notable that regarding this index, unfortunately no information is available for the years before 2003, and the available information can reveal few and unsatisfactory fluctuations. It also shows the corruption perception index in Iran, which is lower than the average in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

Chart 3. Iran's Corruption Perception Index, (2003-2017)



Source: Transparency International, (Different Years)

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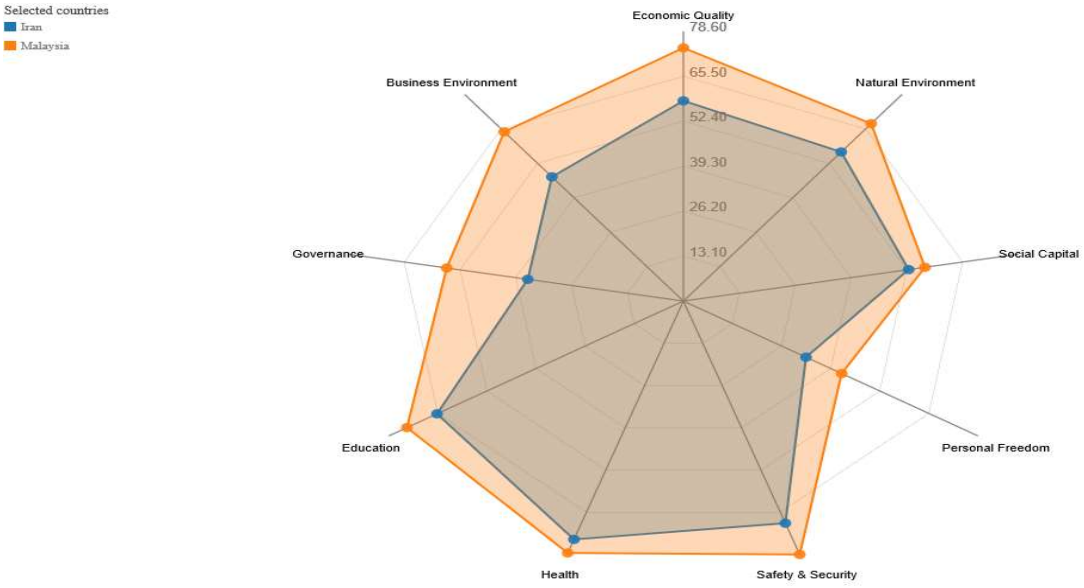
Table 3 shows the position of Iran in four indices: governance, economic quality, personal freedom, social capital based on Iran's rank in the Legatum Prosperity Index. It should be noted that the situation in Iran based on these indices have been reported since 2009 and there is no document illustrating the situation of Iran before then. (The Legatum Prosperity Index)

Table 3. Iran's Legatum Prosperity Index, (2009-2018)

Year	Governance	Economic Quality	Personal Freedom	Social Capital	Total Countries
2009	93	79	101	82	104
2010	105	78	108	106	110
2011	107	76	107	107	110
2012	126	70	125	121	142
2013	120	91	126	120	142
2014	120	114	128	111	142
2015	122	105	131	115	142
2016	136	114	145	74	149
2017	133	103	144	70	149
2018	126	94	142	55	149

Source: The Legatum Prosperity Index (Different Years)

The following chart shows the situation of Iran compared with Malaysia, an Islamic country, according to the Legatum index in 2018. It should be noted that the situation of Malaysia in the last fifty years has not been comparable with that of Iran.



Source: The Legatum Prosperity Index (2018)

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Relevant statistical data also indicate that actions such as nationalization of industries, governmentalization of the economy, privatization, foreign borrowing, etc., for reasons which cannot be mentioned here, have not been positively influential much in improving social justice in Iran. Although some positive actions in the current governance practices in Iran have led to the increase of some production capacities of the country, many capacities of the country have not been used. Whereas, regarding the potential domestic talents, resources and power, Iran can easily have more effective presence in the world markets and prevent economic isolation and extension of social gap and poverty.

6. Findings and Conclusion

As shown in the article, the situation of governance in Iran, despite the ideals of the revolutionary leaders, has not led to a tangible increase of social justice in the country. The article indicates that one of the important reasons of such a situation can be attributed to low indices of good governance in Iran. Furthermore, it shows not taking good governance seriously, has caused only a small percentage of the country's workforce to really produce, leaving the rest to be practically just consumers and thus dissatisfied. As mentioned in this article show, the government in Iran has not been successful in a satisfactory degree of the realization of social justice

Furthermore, it also seems that due to the weakness of the supervisory institutions in this respect, the current trend is going to lead to even more injustice in the future. As shown in Chart 1, the economic growth in Iran, in a period of forty years, has not been as much as the population growth and GDP per capita; it has even been reduced to 50 percent since 1997, while the world average is continuously increasing. It is notable that this variation in Iran is significantly correlated with oil revenues, and it can be predicted that in case of falling oil price and harder international sanctions against Iran or similar factors, Iran's average income per capita, as one of the related and effective indices in assessing social justice, will be reduced further. Moreover, regardless of the sanctions and war damages, the relative increase of the gap between average income per capita in Iran and the average income per capita around the world cannot result in the realization of wealth creation correlated with global development and, as a result, with the realization of sustainable justice in Iran. Overall, it can be said that the process of establishing social justice in Iran is dependent on strategic, fundamental and comprehensive reforms including encouragement and creating real space for following good governance.

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ویژه‌نامهٔ عدالت

حکمرانی و عدالت اجتماعی در ایران

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چکیده

یکی از چالش‌های جمهوری اسلامی ایران طی چهل سال پس از پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی، تلاش برای تحقق عدالت اجتماعی است؛ بر این اساس هرچند استدلال می‌شود فقدان عدالت اجتماعی در نظام سیاسی پهلوی درنهایت به انقلاب اسلامی منتهی شد، اما ناکامی در بهبود شاخص‌های عدالت اجتماعی پس از انقلاب اسلامی و به‌ویژه پس از پایان جنگ همواره موجب شده است، که سیاست‌های حکمرانی در ایران مغایر با شاخص‌ها و اهداف عدالت اجتماعی ارزیابی شود؛ این مقاله با مفروض داشتن این نکته که وضعیت عدالت اجتماعی در ایران مطلوب نیست و شرایط امروز جامعه ایرانی چهل سال پس از انقلاب اسلامی شباهت چندانی به آرمان‌های رهبران انقلاب اسلامی ایران درباره ایجاد عدالت اجتماعی ندارد، ضمن بررسی مولفه‌های حکمرانی خوب و با استناد به داده‌های معتبر به روش توصیفی و تحلیلی می‌کوشد تا نشان دهد که شیوه حکمرانی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران به واسطه در نظر نداشتن شاخصه‌های مطلوب حکمرانی، نتوانسته است فرایند تحقق عدالت اجتماعی را محقق سازد و ایجاد عدالت اجتماعی در ایران مستلزم در نظر گرفتن تجربیات موفق بین‌المللی و اجرای شاخص‌های حکمرانی خوب برای ایجاد کارآمدی و رفع فساد است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: ایران، عدالت اجتماعی، حکمرانی خوب، انقلاب اسلامی

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