

The Islamic–Hikmah-Based Model of Governance from the Perspective of al-Fārābī, the Two Leaders of the Islamic Revolution, and Martyr Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi (RA)

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Abstract

Good governance—recognized today as a central concept in public administration and policymaking—occupies a profound and elevated position in various schools of thought, including the Islamic and Iranian philosophical tradition. This is especially evident in the works of al-Fārābī, the thought and teachings of the two Leaders of the Islamic Revolution, and the practical conduct of Martyr Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi. This article examines the model of good governance from the perspectives of these three influential thinkers. For al-Fārābī, governance is the process of guiding human beings toward felicity and perfection within the structure of the *Virtuous City*. The Supreme Leader likewise emphasizes the inseparable link between power, ethics, and service to the people. Martyr Raisi, through his practical approach—particularly in executive and judicial arenas—embodied a goal-oriented, field-based, and teleological method of governance. Through an analysis of the foundational principles and defining features of good governance in the thought of these three figures, this study proposes a unified model grounded in justice, ethical conduct, popular participation, and continuous purposeful pursuit within Islamic governance. Unlike many Western governance theories that focus primarily on worldly administrative efficiency, this model is rooted in spiritual and moral foundations and offers a path toward effective and value-driven governance in Islamic societies.

Keywords : Good governance; Islamic governance; Justice; Public participation; Teleological orientation; Practical conduct (sīrah).

Extended Abstract

Judicial independence is widely recognized as a precondition for the rule of law and a fundamental guarantee of fair trial. The article starts from this premise and asks how the dual dimensions of judicial independence—personal (individual) and institutional (structural)—are conceptualized and protected in three normative frameworks: Shia (Imāmī) jurisprudence, the positive law of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and contemporary international human rights instruments. It also investigates the tensions that arise between independence and other values such as accountability, political oversight, and public order, and seeks to clarify the scope and limits of independence in the Iranian legal system.

Methodologically, the research adopts a descriptive-analytical and normative approach. It relies on classical and modern fiqh sources (including Nahj al-Balāgha, *Ghorar al-Hikam*, *Toḥaf al-'Oqūl*, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, *al-Kāfī*, *al-Rawḍa al-Bahiyya*, (the Qur'an and hadith, the Iranian Constitution and ordinary legislation (such as the Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code,

Judicial Security Charter, Judicial Transformation Documents, and internal judicial regulations), as well as international documents such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICCPR, the ICESCR, the UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, and the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct. Through textual analysis and comparison, the author reconstructs the concept, foundations, and guarantees of judicial independence in each of these frameworks and evaluates their degree of convergence.

The article first defines judicial independence as the freedom of judges and courts to decide cases exclusively on the basis of law, facts, and conscience, without improper influence, pressure, or interference from any external actor—be it governmental, political, social, or personal. It stresses the need to distinguish institutional (or structural) independence of the judiciary as a branch of government from personal independence of individual judges in decision-making. Institutional independence refers to the judiciary's status as an autonomous branch alongside the legislative and executive powers, with sufficient guarantees regarding its organization, budget, and administration. Personal independence refers to each judge's freedom from pressures by superiors, parties, public opinion, or political authorities, and presupposes moral virtues such as piety, courage, and self-discipline as well as legal protections such as security of tenure, immunity, and protection against arbitrary transfer.

In the Iranian constitutional order, judicial independence is framed within a system of “relative separation of powers” under the overarching concept of *velāyat-e amr*. Article 57 of the Constitution acknowledges three powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—that are independent from one another yet under the supervision of the Leader. Article 156 explicitly declares the judiciary an independent power responsible for administering justice, securing individual and social rights, and supervising the proper implementation of laws. At the same time, Article 157 provides that the Head of the Judiciary is appointed by the Leader for a five-year term, and Article 164 protects judges against removal or transfer without their consent, except in cases of conviction or disciplinary decisions. The article interprets these provisions as establishing a strong normative commitment to judicial independence, tempered by a constitutional model in which ultimate sovereignty is vested in divine law and represented by the Leader.

The analysis also reviews the ordinary legislation and policy documents that reinforce or qualify judicial independence. Article 3 of the 2013 Criminal Procedure Code declares that judicial authorities are independent in adjudicating crimes and disputes and that no authority has the right to interfere in their decisions. The 2012 bylaw on inspection, oversight, and evaluation of judicial conduct identifies “courage and independence” as key criteria in assessing judges. The 2020 Judicial Security Charter describes judicial independence as a cornerstone of judicial security and fair trial, and prohibits any form of undue influence on judges. The 2020 and 2024 Judicial Transformation Documents and the 2021 Instruction on Preserving the Dignity and Status of Judiciary Personnel further emphasize that no executive or administrative authority may impose opinions on judges, and that judicial managers must refrain from applying pressure in specific

cases. At the same time, the article notes that certain laws—such as the 1997 Law on Judicial Competence and parts of Article 164—may potentially be used to undermine independence if not interpreted restrictively, and calls for doctrinal and legislative refinement.

From the perspective of Shia jurisprudence, the article shows that although the modern term “judicial independence” is not used in classical fiqh, its substantive content is deeply embedded in the doctrines governing the office of judge) *qāḍī*. (Two main fiqh conceptions are identified. According to the first, judging is a form of *wilāya* (delegated authority) over disputes; whoever is vested with *wilāya* must be shielded from interference by others, because only the *walī* possesses the mandate to decide. According to the second, judging is an indispensable means to achieve justice; therefore any interference that obstructs access to justice must be prohibited. In both conceptions, the judge must be insulated from external pressure, and any directive that would compel him to deviate from his understanding of law and evidence is illegitimate.

The article then examines a series of foundational narrations and historical examples that illustrate the expected independence and impartiality of judges. Imam ‘Alī’s letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, as reported in *Nahj al-Balāgha*, instructs the ruler to select judges who cannot be manipulated by litigants, are not dependent on others in their livelihood, and are the most firm when the truth becomes clear. Numerous hadiths, compiled in *Wasā’il al-Shī’a*, *Kanz al-‘Ommāl*, and *Mizān al-Hekma*, demand equal treatment of litigants in greeting, seating, gaze, and tone of voice, and condemn any form of favoritism. The Prophet’s refusal to accept intercession in the case of the noblewoman from Banu Makhzūm, and his declaration that even if his own daughter Fāṭima stole he would apply the penalty, is presented as a paradigmatic assertion of judicial impartiality. Stories of Imam ‘Alī’s litigation before his own appointed judge, Shurayḥ, and his objection to being addressed by his honorific “Abu al-Hasan” in front of the opponent, serve to underline the symbolic and practical dimensions of equality before the court.

Classical jurists, including Shahīd Thānī, Ibn Idrīs, and later Imām Khomeini, are cited as requiring the judge to equalize between litigants in all outward forms of respect and interaction, while recognizing that inner inclinations of the heart are not subject to legal duty. They also emphasize that the judge must not coach either party on how to argue or how to prevail over the opponent. Contemporary religious authorities further deepen this line: Imām Khomeini repeatedly insisted that judges are independent and that no recommendation, even from his own office, should influence their decisions; he forbade judges from acting on unjust recommendations and demanded that they “throw such letters on the wall.” The Supreme Leader likewise has stressed in speeches that no one, including the Leader himself, has the right to interfere in judicial decisions, and that judges must be able to adjudicate freely without media or political pressure.

On the international plane, the article reviews the incorporation of judicial independence in major human rights instruments. Article 10 of the UDHR and Article 14(1) of the ICCPR guarantee the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal established

by law; the ICESCR and UN Charter are also invoked as part of the broader normative context. Particular attention is given to the 1985 UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, which set out 20 principles addressing the independence of courts, adequate resources, conditions of service, appointment and tenure of judges, and freedom of expression and association. The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct are discussed as a more detailed ethical elaboration, structuring judicial conduct around values such as independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, and competence. The article argues that these instruments largely align with the core *fiqh* and constitutional requirements identified earlier, especially regarding independence from external influence, equality of parties, and fair trial guarantees, although there are differences in institutional design and in the relationship between judiciary and supreme political authority.

In its evaluative part, the article concludes that there is a broad normative convergence between Shia jurisprudence, Iranian constitutional and statutory law, and international human rights standards on the essential content of judicial independence. All three frameworks insist that judges must decide freely, without improper interference, and that courts must be protected as institutions from domination by other branches. However, gaps remain at the level of implementation and institutional design. The judiciary's financial and administrative dependence on other state organs, the central role of political authorities in appointing high-level judicial officials, possible misuse of disciplinary mechanisms, and social or media pressure on judges are identified as persistent challenges. There is also a risk that an overly hierarchical internal culture within the judiciary may replace external interference with internal pressure from superiors.

The article recommends a set of reforms aimed at strengthening both institutional and personal independence. These include enhancing budgetary autonomy of the judiciary; increasing transparency and merit-based criteria in appointment, promotion, and discipline of judges; refining laws that could be used to arbitrarily relocate or remove judges; fully operationalizing the guarantees contained in the Judicial Security Charter and Judicial Transformation Documents; and integrating the ethical content of *fiqh* narratives and international standards into judicial training. It also stresses that legal guarantees, while necessary, are insufficient without an inner, ethical independence: judges must cultivate resistance to personal desires, fear, and worldly temptations—*nafs*, *shayṭān*, and love of status or wealth—which are highlighted in religious teachings as the main internal threats to independent judgment.

Overall, the study argues that a robust concept of judicial independence in Iran must be built on three mutually reinforcing pillars: the *fiqhī* conception of the judge as a trustee of justice under divine law; the constitutional and statutory guarantees of structural and personal independence; and the universal language of human rights and fair trial as embodied in international instruments. Strengthening the coherence among these pillars can help consolidate public trust, protect rights and freedoms, and move the Iranian judiciary closer to an ideal in which both institutional structures and individual judges are capable of administering justice without fear or favor.

You said:

الگوی حکمرانی اسلامی-حکمی از منظر فارابی، امامین انقلاب اسلامی و شهید آیت الله سید ابراهیم رئیسی (ره) نیما نوروزی 1 گروه فقه و حقوق خصوصی، جامعه المصطفی العالمیه و سطوح خارج و عالی حوزه، حوزه علمیه قم، قم، ایران (نویسنده مسئول) چکیده. حکمرانی خوب به عنوان یکی از مفاهیم مهم در مدیریت و سیاست‌گذاری جوامع، در اندیشه‌های مختلف از جمله فلسفه اسلامی و ایرانی به‌ویژه در آثار فارابی، امامین انقلاب اسلامی و شهید رئیسی، مفهومی عمیق و متعالی دارد. این مقاله به بررسی الگوی حکمرانی خوب از منظر فارابی، امامین انقلاب اسلامی و شهید رئیسی می‌پردازد. فارابی حکمرانی را به عنوان فرآیند هدایت انسان‌ها به سوی سعادت و کمال در مدینه فاضله می‌داند. مقام معظم رهبری نیز بر اهمیت پیوند قدرت با اخلاق و خدمت به مردم تأکید دارند. شهید رئیسی نیز در سیره عملی خود به‌ویژه در عرصه‌های اجرایی و قضائی، رویکردی هدف‌محور، میدانی و غایت‌گرا را در حکمرانی دنبال کرده است. این مقاله با تحلیل اصول و ویژگی‌های حکمرانی خوب از منظر این سه اندیشمند، به ارائه الگویی مبتنی بر عدالت، اخلاق، مشارکت مردم و پیگیری مستمر در حکمرانی اسلامی می‌پردازد. این الگو بر خلاف نظریه‌های غربی که بیشتر بر مدیریت دنیوی تأکید دارند، بر مبانی معنوی و اخلاقی استوار است و می‌تواند راهگشای حکمرانی مؤثر در جوامع اسلامی باشد. کلیدواژه‌ها: حکمرانی خوب، حکمرانی اسلامی، عدالت، مشارکت مردم، غایت‌گرایی، سیره عملی

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Extended Abstract (≈1500 words)

The present article seeks to conceptualize and articulate a model of “Islamic-Ḥikmī governance” by drawing on three complementary intellectual and practical sources within the Islamic-Iranian tradition: the political philosophy of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, the theoretical and practical teachings of the two Leaders of the Islamic Revolution (Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei), and the administrative and judicial conduct of Martyr Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi. While the notion of “good governance” has become a central concept in contemporary political science and public administration—often framed in terms of efficiency, accountability, transparency, rule of law and participation—this article argues that, in the Islamic framework, good governance cannot be exhausted by managerial-technocratic criteria. Instead, it must be re-grounded in a teleological and ḥikmī (sapiential/philosophical) vision in which worldly management is subordinated to the quest for human perfection, justice, and proximity to God.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. It relies on textual analysis of Fārābī's main political works—particularly *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* and *al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*—alongside speeches, writings and policy documents of Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, and official statements, judicial and executive practices of Ayatollah Raisi. The research also makes selective reference to the broader literature on “good governance” and Islamic political thought in order to clarify commonalities and differences. The key aim is not merely to juxtapose these three perspectives, but to synthesize them into a coherent normative model that can inform governance in contemporary Islamic societies, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The first theoretical anchor of the article is Fārābī's conception of the virtuous city) *al-madīna al-fāḍila*. (For Fārābī, governance is essentially the art of guiding human beings from potentiality to actuality, from mere biological survival to intellectual and spiritual perfection. The ruler of the virtuous city is at once philosopher, prophet, and lawgiver; his legitimacy stems not primarily from social contract or popular consent, but from his unique access to true knowledge and his capacity to order the city in accordance with the hierarchy of being and the ultimate end of human life, which is happiness) *sa'āda*. (The article shows how in Fārābī's framework, good governance is inherently teleological (goal-oriented): all institutions, laws and policies must be evaluated in terms of their contribution to the cultivation of virtuous souls and the realization of justice both within the individual and in the polity. Administrative efficiency, economic prosperity and social order are necessary but not sufficient; they are means, not ends.

The second pillar is the political thought of Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, understood collectively as the “Imamayn of the Islamic Revolution.” Imam Khomeini, in his theory of *velāyat-e faqīh* (guardianship of the jurist), emphasizes that legitimate governance in the age of occultation must be grounded in the implementation of divine law and in the moral-spiritual qualification of the ruler. The Islamic state is not a neutral apparatus, but an instrument for realizing *tawḥīd*, justice and the defense of the oppressed. At the same time, he repeatedly stresses that power is meaningful only as service to the people and that officials must see themselves as servants, not rulers. Ayatollah Khamenei further develops this line by articulating the concept of “Islamic-Iranian model of progress,” which integrates material development with spiritual growth, cultural independence and resistance to global injustice. In his extensive discourse, the key parameters of good governance include justice-centeredness, anti-corruption, popular participation, youth empowerment, and a permanent *jihad* of reconstruction and reform within the state.

The article argues that, like Fārābī, the Imamayn of the Revolution conceive governance as essentially value-laden and teleological: the criterion for success is not mere GDP growth or bureaucratic order, but the degree to which the state brings society closer to justice, ethical refinement and resistance against arrogance) *istakbār*. (However, unlike Fārābī's largely idealized and top-down vision, the revolutionary perspective places greater emphasis on the active role of the people) *mardom*, (the mechanisms of republicanism (elections, public oversight) and the

dialectic between leadership and popular participation. Thus, the Islamic-ḥikmī model must integrate both principled leadership and genuine popular involvement.

The third axis of the study is the practical trajectory of Martyr Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, particularly in his roles as head of the Judiciary and later as President of the Islamic Republic. The article does not engage in political appraisal in the narrow sense; rather, it treats Raisi's conduct as a concrete instance of an attempt to operationalize ḥikmī-Islamic norms of governance in the fields of justice administration and executive management. Three key characteristics of his style are highlighted.

First *,field-oriented governance)* *hokmrānī-ye meydānī* : (Raisi consistently emphasized presence “on the ground,” visiting provinces, courts, and marginalized areas, listening directly to citizens’ grievances, and demanding that officials leave their offices to confront realities. Second *,justice-centeredness* : his tenure at the Judiciary saw a strong rhetorical and institutional focus on combating corruption, accelerating judicial procedures, protecting public rights and drafting the Judicial Security and Judicial Transformation documents. Third *,targeted and purposeful management* : in both judiciary and executive roles, he articulated specific missions such as reducing case backlog, easing business conditions, stabilizing the economy, and confronting structural corruption. The article interprets these traits as an attempt to translate macro-ethical principles—justice, service, and responsibility—into operational plans and institutional reforms.

Having outlined these three perspectives, the article proceeds to synthesize them into an “Islamic-ḥikmī governance model” characterized by four core pillars: (1) justice, (2) ethics and spiritual orientation, (3) popular participation and social responsibility, and (4) continuity and perseverance in pursuing long-term goals.

Justice is treated not merely as distributive fairness or equality before the law, but as a comprehensive ordering of rights and duties in accordance with divine norms. From Fārābī's perspective, justice is the harmony of parts within the whole soul and society; from the Imamayn's viewpoint, it is the central mission of the Islamic state; from Raisi's practice, it appears as relentless anti-corruption efforts and protection of public rights. The model therefore situates justice as the organizing principle of institutions, policies, and resource allocation.

Ethics and spiritual orientation form the second pillar. All three sources converge on the idea that governance cannot be morally neutral: the character of rulers and officials—their piety, honesty, humility, and courage—is decisive. Fārābī's philosopher-king, Imam Khomeini's pious faqīh and revolutionary official, Ayatollah Khamenei's emphasis on *taqwa* and “pure life,” and Raisi's personal image as a simple, hardworking servant of the people all point to a conception of governance in which spiritual virtues are not private matters but public preconditions for legitimate authority. In this model, professional competence without moral integrity is insufficient for good governance.

The third pillar is popular participation and social responsibility. While Fārābī devotes less space to mechanisms of participation, the revolutionary discourse and the constitutional structure of the Islamic Republic place great weight on the role of the people, both as the ultimate addressees of governance and as active participants in policy-making, elections, and social oversight. Raisi's field presence, direct encounters with citizens, and insistence on responsive bureaucracy embody this orientation. Thus, Islamic-ḥikmī governance rejects both authoritarian paternalism and liberal individualism: it envisions a participatory community guided by divine law and wise leadership, where people's voice is heard and their agency is respected, but within a moral-spiritual framework.

The fourth pillar is perseverance and strategic continuity. Both the Imamayn and Raisi insist that governance in an Islamic system is a long-term project, often confronted with external pressures (sanctions, hostility) and internal obstacles (bureaucratic inertia, cultural weaknesses). Good governance, therefore, requires not only correct principles but also endurance, institutional learning, and the capacity to pursue long-range goals beyond short-term political cycles. This element enriches the concept of good governance with a temporal dimension: the state must remain steadfast in its orientation towards justice and spiritual progress, even amid fluctuating conditions.

In the comparative discussion, the article contrasts this Islamic-ḥikmī model with mainstream Western theories of good governance, which generally focus on procedural and institutional criteria: rule of law, accountability, transparency, participation, effectiveness, and efficiency. While acknowledging the importance of these criteria—and indeed integrating many of them—the paper argues that they remain insufficient unless anchored in a substantive vision of the good life and human perfection. In secular frameworks, governance is often reduced to “managing the world” (administration of interests within immanent horizons), whereas in the Islamic-ḥikmī perspective, managing the world is subordinate to guiding humanity towards nearness to God and realization of justice as a divine command.

The article concludes by proposing that the synthesized model of Islamic-ḥikmī governance can serve as a conceptual and practical guide for Islamic societies seeking to reform and improve their institutions without imitating Western paradigms. It calls for further research on operationalizing this model in such areas as constitutional design, public administration, judicial reform, economic policy, and civic education. The study suggests that by drawing deeply from its own philosophical and spiritual heritage, the Islamic world can articulate a distinctive yet globally relevant vision of good governance: one that harmonizes reason and revelation, leadership and participation, justice and mercy, and worldly management with eternal aims.

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