

SPRI



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Research Institute

Newsletter

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Sharif Policy Research Institute
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Preface

Welcome to the monthly English language edition of the Sharif Policy Research Institute (SPRI) newsletter, covering our activities and achievements during August of 2025 and English Highlights for Global Readers. This comprehensive report showcases our ongoing commitment to bridging the gap between academic research, policy development, and practical implementation in key areas of policy making. This newsletter is published in collaboration with the Sharif Policy Research Institute and Khana House.

Sharif Policy Research Institute (SPRI)

The Sharif Policy Research Institute, affiliated with Sharif University of Technology, stands as a premier research institution dedicated to advancing policy studies and fostering evidence-based decision-making processes. Our institute operates through specialized think tanks focusing on critical domains including energy, water and environment, sustainable industrial development, and national branding. Through rigorous research methodologies and collaborative approaches, SPRI strives to create effective linkages between academic communities, society, and governance sectors.

Our mission encompasses the development of comprehensive policy frameworks that address contemporary challenges facing Iran and the broader region. By leveraging the intellectual capital of Sharif University of Technology and fostering partnerships with national and international research institutions, we aim to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of science, technology, and innovation policies. This institute, utilizing specialized think tanks in the fields of energy, water and environment, industry, sustainable development, and national branding, strives to create effective communication between academics, society, and governance sectors.

KHANA House

Khana serves as a dynamic house for the presence and dialogue of thinkers and policymakers dedicated to shaping the future of our country since 2021. We are committed to fostering an environment that encourages critical thinking and collaborative discussion, bridging the gap between innovative ideas and actionable policies.

As an accelerator for ecological thinking, we emphasize sustainable practices and solutions that address the pressing environmental challenges of our time. Our mission is to inspire and equip individ-

uals, organizations, and communities with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of ecological issues, ensuring a better future.

We work to enhance the effectiveness of think tanks. By providing resources, expert guidance, and a collaborative platform, we empower these organizations to amplify their impact on policy formulation and implementation. Our goal is to cultivate a rich ecosystem of ideas that drive progress and innovation. Intellectual and thought-provoking activities are at the core of our endeavors. We focus on addressing current and future strategic issues through seminars, workshops, and discussions that engage diverse voices and perspectives. Our commitment to exploring complex challenges ensures that we remain at the forefront of thought leadership.

We also take pride in cultivating the political elites of tomorrow. Through mentorship programs and networking opportunities, we nurture emerging leaders who are passionate about making meaningful contributions to society. By investing in their development, we aim to create a new generation of informed policymakers equipped to tackle the issues of our time.

Partnership and Collaboration

This newsletter represents the fruits of our collaborative partnership with the Khana House. While the primary content focuses on SPRI's research activities and outputs, the publication framework reflects our commitment to broader community engagement and knowledge dissemination. This partnership enables us to reach wider audiences and ensure that our research findings contribute to the larger ecosystem of policy research and development in Iran.

Activities

In this newsletter, the Sharif Policy Research Institute reports on its activities from August 2025:

Events:

- » Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in Wartime
- » "Policy Responses to Population Aging
- » "Media on the Battlefield
- » World Bank in Multilateralism and Development Finance Policy Responses to Population

Publications:

- » Book Publications and Scholarly Articles
- » Journal Publications

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Events

Event report: Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in Wartime



The 38th Event in the “Sustainable Development for Iran” series, titled “Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in Wartime,” was held virtually through collaboration with the Sharif School of Sustainable Development and the Center for Responsible and Social Business at Sharif University of Technology, during which speakers and participants examined the roles and responsibilities of Iranian companies under wartime conditions. The session opened with a presentation by Hamoun Tahmasebi and continued with a discussion panel composed of Mr. Sameni, Mr. Saki, Mr. Ghavami, Mr. Shahrabi-Farahani, and Ms. Haghighati. What follows is a summary of the most important points raised in the session.

What Corporate Social Responsibility Is and How It Operates in Wartime Conditions

Part I: What dimensions does the social responsibility of Iranian companies encompass under wartime conditions?

In the opening section, Hamoun Tahmasebi, a faculty member at Sharif University and a practitioner in the field of corporate social responsibility, drew on global experiences, academic research, and a preliminary review of the recent imposed war to underscore the importance of corporate social responsibility during wartime. He emphasized that this issue has a long history and that, in crisis conditions, companies have duties that go beyond the interests of their shareholders. Tahmasebi divided companies’ responsibilities into three categories: protecting the core business stream, protecting employees, and protecting the homeland.

1 - Protecting the core business stream

Tahmasebi stressed that the most important duty of companies in wartime is to maintain business continuity and provide the goods and services needed by society. A halt in operations can lead to disruptions in supply chains, hardship for the public, even disorder, and a rise in stress and despair across society. He set out several key dimensions for protecting the business:

» Passive defense and safety: companies must pay maximum attention to passive defense, consider

the possibility of sabotage or attacks on infrastructure, hold emergency training sessions, and prepare safety guidelines for dealing with potential incidents (such as explosions in adjacent areas).

» Sustainability in management and headquarters: anticipate remote-work conditions, designate deputies for senior managers, create alternative IT gateways for internet outages, manage rumors, prepare backups of sensitive information, and review insurance contracts to ensure wartime coverage.

» Finance unit: preserving cash flow in the face of cyberattacks or internet disruptions is vital; companies should take preventive measures to avoid interruptions to payments to contractors and employees.

» Continuity of production: manufacturing firms should secure essential reserves, anticipate supply-chain disruptions, and have needed spare parts on hand. Tahmasebi suggested that, in wartime, luxury production should be reduced and the focus placed on essential goods.

» Pricing and customer relations: companies should understand the difficult economic circumstances of customers, adopt fair pricing, communicate in a timely manner via SMS or other channels, and monitor the distribution network to prevent hoarding or price gouging.

» Maintaining revenue streams: diversify sources of income, cut non-essential costs, strengthen financial discipline, improve productivity, and - under specific circumstances - cooperate with competitors.

» Tahmasebi emphasized that, in wartime, companies should see themselves not only as belonging to shareholders, but as entities that affect the morale and conditions of society.

2 - Protecting employees and their families

Supporting employees in wartime is a priority for companies. Tahmasebi recommended that firms avoid layoffs except in necessary cases, since such actions can increase psychological pressure on employees and their families. Other recommended measures included:

» paying salaries and benefits on time;

» providing for remote work or making the workplace safe;

» supporting the mental health of employees and their families through initiatives such as holding competitions, cultural events, or creating participatory content to preserve motivation and hope.

3 - Protecting the homeland

Tahmasebi emphasized social responsibilities that go beyond the business itself, including:

Part II: Panel discussion

In the second part, a panel discussion was held with several practitioners in the field of corporate social responsibility: Mr. Sameni, Mr. Saki, Mr. Ghavami, Mr. Shahrabi-Farahani, and Ms. Haghighati. Each presented views and experiences regarding companies' social responsibilities during war.

Mr. Sameni

Mohammad-Amin Sameni, CEO of IMECO, emphasized that in crisis conditions, companies must

first define their target community. In his organization, employees and their families were considered the primary priority. Actions taken by his organization included:

- » creating a clustered communication chart to keep contact among employees limited yet effective so that, in case of internet outages, effective phone contact is maintained;
- » appointing first and second deputies for the CEO;
- » accurately recording the entry and exit of all employees, including the CEO;
- » paying salaries early and creating an alternative bank account to ensure employees' access to funds;

Mr. Saki

Reza Saki, a social activist and Director of the Golvani news outlet, regarded the 12-day war as a new experience that could be an opportunity for meaning-making. He believed that the experiences of Iran's eight-year war were not well documented and that companies should record their current experiences so that others can make use of them. He also proposed that companies strengthen patriotism by holding events and workshops on the history of war and love of country.

Mr. Ghavami

Hossein Ghavami, Director of Communications, Brand, and Corporate Social Responsibility at Pasargad Energy Group, considered social responsibility in wartime to be equivalent to defending the homeland. He stressed the importance of recalling the ultimate purpose of the concept of sustainability and warned against allowing it to go astray through disregard for human beings, international law, and war crimes (such as those that occurred in Gaza and in the 12-day war, in full view of the world and by governments that claimed to uphold sustainability). His key points included the following:

- » preparedness for crisis is essential, but war must not be normalized;
- » social responsibility in wartime should not be confined to a single unit, but must be institutionalized across all parts of the organization;
- » risk analysis, passive defense, timely communication, data protection, and investment in local communities are key pre-crisis measures;
- » in wartime and at moments of crisis, transparency and continuous engagement with stakeholders are vital;
- » some organizations made their accommodation facilities available for use in emergency conditions;
- » despite its negative effects, war strengthened the sense of unity and social capital around the idea of "Iran."

Mr. Shahrabi-Farahani

Mohammad Shahrabi-Farahani, Head of Recruitment at Aftab Oil Refining Company, emphasized the importance of communication planning suited to crisis conditions. He believed that the spirit of self-sacrifice and cooperation increases in wartime and that companies can use this opportunity to strengthen employee morale. He also pointed to weaknesses in IT infrastructure in many Iranian organizations and emphasized the importance of scenario planning for crisis preparedness. In response to a question about stagflation, he said that maintaining hope during crises prevented runs on stores and shortages of necessities.

Ms. Haghighati

Nazila Haghighati, social consultant to AriaSasol and Head of CSR at the Iranian Public Relations Association, saw social responsibility as giving meaning to wartime conditions and creating hope among employees. She believed that complete shutdowns or organizational passivity intensify feelings of despair among employees and in society. Rather than fully suspending activities, companies should maintain communication with their employees, assure them that any closures are temporary, and signal that efforts to improve conditions are ongoing.

Conclusion

This event demonstrated that companies have multiple roles under wartime conditions: from maintaining business continuity and supporting employees to assisting the homeland and society. These responsibilities require careful planning, cooperation with government authorities, and attentiveness to societal needs. The speakers emphasized that through responsible actions, companies can not only contribute to their own sustainability but also help reinforce national morale and hope within society.



Event Report: “Policy Responses to Population Aging”

The first event in the international series “Population Aging Policy,” titled “Policy Responses to the Phenomenon of Population Aging,” was held on Wednesday, 15 Mordad 1404, from 15:30 to 17:00 (Iran time) by the Sharif Policy Research Institute at Sharif University of Technology. Participants from Belgium, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Bahrain, Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, and Iran attended this event.



In this session, Dr. Ayman Zohry, founder and director of the Egyptian Migration and Population Studies Center (EGYMIG); Ms. Jennifer Morikeni, founder of OWIT Belgium; and Dr. Waqar ul Hasan, representative of Professor Dr. Asghar Zaidi, professor at LSE and the Oxford Institute of Population Aging, presented their perspectives under the session themes. Mr. Amir Shahra'ini, a researcher in innovation policy at the Sharif Policy Research Institute, served as the host and secretary of the session.

A set of key topics related to population aging was discussed at the event. These included: the importance of redesigning social security systems to preserve the sustainability of pensions and retirement systems; integrated strategies for eldercare and the workforce in aging societies; and building governmental capacity for demographic foresight. Emphasis was also placed

on migration policy as a key tool to compensate for labour shortages, as well as international cooperation in aging policy through comparative approaches and successful global models.

At the beginning of the session, Mr. Shahra'ini introduced the event topic and the panel members and provided an overview of the series held by the Sharif Policy Research Institute. In general, the issues raised in this session fell under the following six categories:

- » Redesigning social security systems: maintaining pensions and retirement systems under the pressure of aging
- » Integrated strategies for eldercare and the workforce in aging societies
- » Institutional and governmental preparedness: building institutional capacity for demographic foresight
- » Intergenerational solidarity and political consensus: balancing the needs of older and younger generations
- » Migration policy as a demographic tool: strategically using migration to address labour gaps
- » International cooperation in aging policy: comparative approaches and successful global practices

Part I

Dr. Zohry presented his policy studies on the phenomenon of population aging. He first outlined

definitions of population aging and then reviewed Egypt's status in this regard. Egypt is among the countries that will face population aging in the coming decades; therefore, consultation and dialogue on policies concerning this phenomenon are currently essential social priorities in the country.

At present, Egypt's total fertility rate in 2025 is 2.5 children per woman, which represents a sharp decline compared to the average of six children per woman in the 1960s. In addition, life expectancy in Egypt has reached 73 years, accelerating the trend of population aging. Projections indicate that by 2050 the population aged 60+ in Egypt will double relative to the current level.

Dr. Zohry further stated that although population aging is invariably accompanied by numerous economic and social challenges, there are also opportunities that can be harnessed through successful policymaking. Less-cited opportunities include:

- » Leveraging the knowledge and skills of the older generation through consulting, mentoring, and training for younger cohorts
- » Developing silver tourism, health tourism, and related cultural products
- » Broad demand for elder-related products and services as a driver of innovation and new businesses; growth of home care, rehabilitation, and health technologies
- » The role of older adults in transmitting values, culture, and oral history; active seniors can play a major part in social and cultural projects
- » Political participation and social engagement by older adults that can deepen democracy in societies

He then outlined the socio-economic challenges arising from population aging. The most salient challenges include:

- » Increased pressure on pension systems; a falling worker-to-retiree ratio and higher pension outlays
- » Rising health and care costs; growing demand for medical, caregiving, and rehabilitation services
- » Greater intergenerational dependency; increased pressure on families to provide care
- » Social isolation and loneliness; reduced physical participation of older adults due to health or mobility limitations
- » Changes in family and societal structure; smaller families and diminished traditional support
- » Intergenerational gaps; differences in attitudes, lifestyles, and technology use that can weaken social cohesion and widen cultural divides

Dr. Zohry believes that population policymakers should focus primarily on the sustainability of social security and health systems, as these two sectors will bear the greatest impact - or damage - from population aging. He concluded this part by emphasising that sustainable economic development will not be possible without considering the complex dimensions of population aging.

Part II

Ms. Jennifer Morikeni discussed expanding older adults' access to health services. She highlighted the role of digital health tools in improving access for seniors and underscored the need to expand tele-services for them. Ms. Morikeni added that numerous research institutions in Europe are currently working on the development of services required by older adults.

She further noted that, with the expansion of aging in some European countries, new forms of inter-generational co-living have emerged. For example, in the Netherlands, some students and employed individuals who cannot afford separate housing have turned to living in seniors' homes in exchange for providing care. It appears that such forms of co-living will spread as aging advances.

In some European countries, dedicated villages for older adults have been designed with state-of-the-art recreational, health, and care facilities. Ms. Morikeni stated that seniors from Canada and the United States also migrate to these villages to spend their later years. Such approaches show that, in addition to the economic changes brought by population aging, the phenomenon will also bring changes in lifestyle and social interactions.

Part III

In another segment of the panel, Mr. Waqar ul Hasan stated that to respond effectively to population aging, long-term government policy in planning and budgeting must be comprehensive, forward-looking, and grounded in demographic data. These two dimensions should simultaneously both reduce long-term costs and capitalise on the opportunities of aging. Establishing Elderly Trust Funds to finance long-term services for older adults; revisiting the retirement age, contribution rates, and pension payment models for financial sustainability can be effective measures in this regard.

At the end of the panel, Mr. Hasan stressed the need to learn from successful experiences in aging policy worldwide. He stated that developing countries can better address population aging by using successful global models through an adaptive learning approach - that is, not mere copying, but selecting, localising, and integrating best practices into their own socio-economic structures. In this context, examining the experiences of countries that have already faced advanced aging - such as Japan, Sweden, Germany, and South Korea - is highly important. Analysing policy data, quality-of-life indicators, and care models; identifying transferable policies (e.g., Japan's home-care system or the Netherlands' multi-pillar pension system); and adapting models to demographic structure, culture, financial resources, and domestic political priorities can be instructive.



Event Report “Media on the Battlefield”

Overview of the Session

The fourth installment of the “Media on the Battlefield” series centered on the concept of Iran’s national brand during the context of the 12-Day War. It attracted a broad audience of media, political science, and international relations students, as well as experts, researchers, cultural managers, and intellectuals at Ara Research Institute. The session aimed to explore the role of media and narrative-building in shaping Iran’s national brand image during a crisis and facilitated dialogue among academia, think tanks, and cultural policy domains.



Key Themes from the Speakers

Dr. Hojjat Niki-Maleki

Emphasized that a national brand is meaningful only when a country’s past, present, and future are coherently presented through a comprehensible narrative. He highlighted the lack of coordinated national narrative mechanisms during wars - including the 12-Day War - as a major challenge in forming

Iran's national brand. He also pointed to the convergence of Iranian and Islamic identity during the war and its role in reinforcing national solidarity.

Dr. Mahbubeh Davoudi

Approached national branding from a discursive perspective, arguing that a national brand is not built by marketing tools alone but must be grounded in civilizational capacities and semantic meanings. She described regional crises as opportunities to showcase cultural resilience and historical endurance. She called for redefining media policy around public diplomacy and national narratives.

Dr. Alireza Nasr Esfahani

Presented the national brand as a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and strategic project. He stressed the necessity of reconstructing Iran's image within the emerging world order, analyzing dominant narratives from the 12-Day War - such as defeat, division, despair, resistance - and defining precise concepts like 'resistance.' He also critiqued terms such as "12-Day War" and proposed alternatives like "civilizational defense."

Q&A Session

The Q&A section engaged students, media analysts, and faculty in active discussion. Questions addressed the relationship between resistance narratives and international perception, comparisons of Iran's national brand with regional examples, the role of official media during crises, and futures thinking around Iran's brand in a new global order. Speakers responded with deep analytical insights.

Summary

The session on Iran's National Brand during the 12-Day War emphasized the critical role of narrative unity, media diplomacy, and conceptual identity-based design in national branding under crisis. It served as a platform for scholarly and policy exchange among academia, think tanks, and media practitioners, contributing meaningfully to a deeper national understanding of Iran's brand in times of upheaval.



Report on the Event: “The Role of the World Bank in Multilateralism and Development Finance”



policy event of the Sharif University of Technology Policy Research Institute titled “The Role of the World Bank in Multilateralism and Development Finance” was one of the main events of SPRI in August. This event hosted Dr. Ali Maleki, Iran’s representative to the World Bank.

At the beginning of the program, Amir Shahrayini, innovation policy researcher serving as the session secretary, introduced the event topic and provided explanations about this series of events by the Sharif University of Technology Policy Research Institute.

In the first part of the event, Dr. Ali Maleki, defining the role and importance of the World Bank in the multilateral system, referred to the history of this institution’s formation. After World War II in 1944, at a conference called “Bretton Woods” held with representatives from various countries including Iran, the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank was approved. The initial objectives of these two international institutions were to rebuild war damages and create stability in the global economy. The missions of these two institutions, while different, complement each other. Specifically,

initially the IMF’s mission was primarily defined in the field of creating international financial stability and resolving countries’ financial imbalances. In contrast, the World Bank’s mission was primarily in rebuilding sectors destroyed in World War II.

Dr. Maleki continued by describing the opportunities and challenges arising from the expansion of international institutions and governance of the multilateral system. Generally, creating the possibility of collective response to global and common challenges among countries and creating infrastructure for cooperation and coordination among countries are among the strengths of the multilateral system. The global confrontation with COVID-19 and the development and distribution of vaccines for this disease worldwide is one of the most prominent examples of such infrastructure. Among the challenges of the multilateral system, one can point to issues such as power asymmetry and veto rights held by some advanced powers, lack of sufficient cohesion, and geopolitical competitions, all of which fuel the spread of discoordination among countries in this international order.

Dr. Maleki continued by referring to the current structure of the World Bank and the evolution of this organization. The World Bank currently considers its mission to be international development and assistance to developing countries within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The current structure of the World Bank consists of five groups or subsidiary organizations. For this reason, in official literature, the World Bank is called the “World Bank Group.”

The five main groups constituting the World Bank are as follows:

- » International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) with the mission of providing loans to middle-income countries and low-income countries with creditworthiness.
- » International Development Association (IDA) with the mission of granting interest-free loans or grants to poor countries.
- » International Finance Corporation (IFC) with the mission of supporting the private sector in developing countries through investment, advisory, and financial services.
- » Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) with the mission of providing insurance and guarantees to investors to reduce political risks in investing in developing countries.
- » International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) with the mission of handling legal disputes between governments and foreign investors.

These five institutions together constitute the “World Bank Group.”

In another part of the event, Dr. Maleki, referring to the development of the multilateral system, introduced several regional development banks that operate similar to the World Bank and IMF, but on specific scales and geographical regions. The African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Latin American Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and Islamic Development Bank are examples of these cases. Additionally, BRICS member countries have recently created a bank called the “New Development Bank” to expand economic cooperation among member countries. Dr. Maleki continued by comparing the roles, missions, and functions of the World Bank and other development banks with the IMF and other similar international institutions such as UNDP, WTO, and OECD.



The cooperation model between Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) was then explained. In joint and multiple projects between banks, one of these banks is designated as the lead and other partner banks in the project jointly play the role of financial provider. At the operational level, the United Nations often acts as the executor of such projects due to its level of authority and international credibility. The subjects of such projects are mainly defined under the areas of water, climate, energy, and health.

The outlook for developing cooperation in the multilateral system was the next topic of Dr. Maleki's presentation. In the future of this cooperation system, there is the possibility of creating banks competing with the World Bank, as explained in the case of BRICS. Also, redefining the share and voting power of developing countries is among the probable scenarios for the outlook of cooperation in the multilateral system. Transition to green energies and financing climate change-related projects will be among the most important focus points and attention of country cooperation in this model in the future. Additionally, cooperation among developing countries will be an emerging wave of cooperation

models in the multilateral structure.

In summarizing his presentation, Dr. Maleki explained the opportunities and challenges facing Iran in the multilateral system. Iran has been among the founding members of both the World Bank and IMF institutions from the beginning. Iran is also one of the effective members and the third-largest shareholder of the Islamic Development Bank. Given current conditions and in the scenario of continued sanctions, the outlook for the country's cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank and Asian Development Bank seems more probable and possible. In this scenario, international tensions are among the challenges of cooperation with international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, because cooperation with these institutions somehow requires consensus among influential members who also have veto rights.

In the final part of this event, Dr. Maleki provided explanations in response to an audience question about financing methods in the multilateral system. The financing method has a different model depending on each institution or each project and does not necessarily follow a fixed pattern. Each of the mentioned development banks has initial capital that has been injected into the bank by shareholders. Additionally, banks can provide necessary financing by issuing bonds.

Dr. Maleki also responded to a question about the confrontation between the New Development Bank created by BRICS and the World Bank and our country's policies regarding membership in these two groups, noting that currently, the size of the New Development Bank is twenty to thirty times smaller than an institution like the World Bank. In the New Development Bank, the process of removing the dollar from transactions has begun in some BRICS member countries, but this process has not yet become a mainstream trend, and it seems that as this process becomes more serious, the United States would intervene in this area.

Dr. Maleki, noting that the World Bank's structure is similar to the UN structure in some aspects, emphasized the necessity of our country's prominent presence in these institutions, because strengthening the country's presence in these institutions can help make better use of existing capacities and cooperation opportunities. Dr. Maleki also stated in response to another question that the World Bank currently believes in local development and, unlike its previous approaches, does not believe in public reforms and uniform prescriptions for all countries.



Book Publication and Scholarly Articles

Knowledge Management and Innovation in the Digital Age

Authors: Mohammad Hasanzadeh, Sanaz Shafiei, Fatemeh Hasabi

Publisher: University Publishing Center

Print Edition: First, 2024

Abstract:

In today's complex and turbulent world, knowledge management is no longer merely a competitive advantage, but has become a vital necessity for moving toward sustainable innovation and digital transformation. The book "Knowledge Management and Innovation in the Digital Age" seeks to provide a clear picture of the position and function of knowledge management in the era of new technologies with a comprehensive and forward-looking approach. This work traces an analytical journey.



Successful Global Experiences in AI Governance: Lessons for Future Policymaking

Author: Mahboubeh Nourzadeh

Type: Scientific-Conference Paper

Conference: 16th Pioneers of Progress Congress

Date: June 2025

Organizer: Center for the Islamic-Iranian Model of Progress



Abstract

In recent years, AI governance has emerged as a strategic and sensitive area at the international level, as countries seek to leverage the transformative capabilities of this advanced technology while managing and mitigating its associated risks and challenges. An examination of successful global experiences in this field highlights the necessity of designing and implementing a comprehensive governance framework. Such a framework not only prioritizes ethical considerations but also fosters public trust and, by promoting collaborative approaches among various stakeholders, guides the development and regulation of AI systems to ensure collective benefits are achieved. This research synthesizes diverse studies conducted in this area to precisely explain and clarify the key dimensions influencing successful AI governance. Consequently, it provides a clearer understanding of the principles and approaches that can lead to the responsible and beneficial utilization of this technology.

The Vicious Cycle of Symbolic Research and Development in Iran: A Case Study of State-Owned Companies

Author: Ali Babaie, Seyed Reza Mirnezami

Type: Journal Article

Journal: Science and Technology Policy Letters, Sharif University of Technology

Publisher: Sharif Policy Research Institute

Date: July 23, 2025

Abstract

The aim of this qualitative research is to analyze the seemingly invisible feedback loop among “financial rent stemming from energy subsidies,” “controlling bureaucracy,” and a “venture capital void” in Iran’s state-owned companies. This cycle is largely overlooked by the linear literature on “technology realization through financial support.” The prevalent notion, rooted in paradigms such as “strategic technology projects based on subsidized budgets” and the “Triple Helix model of government, industry, and academia,” implicitly assumes innovation growth through cheap financial injections or legal mandates. However, the findings of this study reveal hidden causal loops behind this facade that, if not understood systemically, steer innovation towards bureaucracy and rent-seeking. This research clarifies three fundamental gaps in the dominant literature: First, it overlooks the behavioral mechanism resulting from financial rent, which diminishes motivation for market-driven research and increases inclination towards low-risk projects. Second, it reduces administrative bureaucracy to a ceremonial variable, without explaining its connection to venture capital failure. And third, it neglects the venture capital void or reduces it to an external variable. In contrast, this qualitative study, by integrating interview data and Gioia methodology for coding, proposes a “feedback framework” that interlinks financial rent, administrative bureaucracy, and the venture capital void within a synergistic cycle. This cycle demonstrates that rent reinforces bureaucracy, drives away venture capital, and the absence of venture capital, in turn, makes government rent the sole financing option, ultimately leading to “symbolic R&D and closed innovation.” Relying on Gioia’s



approach and analyzing semi-structured interviews with senior managers of state-owned companies, sixteen explanatory themes were extracted across three institutional, interactive, and technological axes. The research findings indicate that rent-seeking R&D is a behavioral-structural phenomenon that leads to superficial R&D.

Journal Publication

The Journal of Science and Technology Policy Letters

ABOUT

The Journal of Science and Technology Policy Letters (JSTPL) is a peer-reviewed, open-access, quarterly scientific journal that provides a professional and scholarly venue for discussion of ‘public policies for science, technology, research, and innovation’ as well as ‘science, technology, and innovation for policy’ at the local, national, and international levels.

The JSTPL seeks to advance public policy and governance expertise in a variety of fields via the use of evidence and experiences from Iran and developing nations, as well as to propose innovative solutions to public and social problems. The journal, which focuses on the dynamics of Iranian public policy, encourages a diverse range of social science methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative. The JSTPL embraces a broad definition of public policy and is open to novel ideas and approaches.

Types of articles and topics

It publishes original research, literature and book reviews, methodology, policy analyses and reports, case studies, approaches to education and training, strategy and practice reports, translations, and conference reports. It frequently publishes articles in Persian with an English abstract and title. It does, however, accept articles written in English.

The Journal’s primary policy areas of coverage include, but are not limited to:

- » Public policy, governance, regulation, policy evaluation, policy analysis, and public policy comparative studies;
- » Policies for growth, regional and local development, and sustainability;
- » Innovation policies, technology policies, research policies, science and technology studies (STS), science and technology cultural studies, and knowledge management;
- » Energy policy, media policy, economic policy, trade policy, socioeconomic systems, industrial policy, water policy, environmental policy, infrastructure and transportation policy, urban policy, migration policy, intellectual property (IP) policy, and information and communication technology (ICT) policy.
- » Publisher, owner, and indexing

Sharif Policy Research Institute (SPRI) owns the JSTPL published by the Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran. The Iranian government issued the publishing license in 2008 and later reissued it in 2019 as a Scientific Journal. This quarterly is indexed in Iran’s Civilica, Noormags, Magiran, SID, ISC, and Ensani national databases.

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With great honor and gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and editorial board members, we are pleased to announce that the The Journal of Science and Technology Policy Letters published by the Sharif University of Technology Policy Research Institute has successfully achieved Scientific Grade A in the evaluation and ranking of scientific journals by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) in 2024.

Additionally, the quarterly «The Journal of Science and Technology Policy Letters» is published as a specialized bilingual journal (Persian-English) with open access and based on a double-blind peer review system, with the aim of facilitating the exchange of views and theories in the field of science, technology, research and innovation policy, as well as examining the applied dimensions of science, technology and innovation in public policy processes.



This monthly report demonstrates SPRI's continued commitment to producing high-quality policy research, facilitating meaningful stakeholder engagement, and contributing to Iran's policy development processes. Through our diverse portfolio of events, publications, and research initiatives, we strive to address critical challenges facing Iranian society and provide evidence-based recommendations for policy improvement.

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