

## Analysis of the Implications of Shiite Islamism in Contemporary Afghanistan and Its Capacity Assessment in Overcoming the Current Situation

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This paper aims to analyze the political implications of Shiite Islamism as one of the significant political thought movements in contemporary Afghan history. It seeks to answer the question of what implications this movement possesses in the political and social arena of Afghanistan and what weight it carries in organizing the current situation.

**Method:** The analysis of this issue is conducted within the framework and methods of “comparative discourse analysis.” Based on the conceptual framework, each thought entails at least four implications: explanatory, foundational, normative, and strategic, each addressing part of the political issues and collectively depicting a coherent system for establishing an ideal order and standard. This paper also briefly compares this movement with the majority of political Islam in Afghanistan to make research findings more tangible.

**Findings:** Although Shiite political Islam in Afghanistan, due to being a minority, has been subjected to systematic and deliberate neglect, it possesses important implications in the socio-political arena, from explaining crises to offering alternatives and strategies. Attention to these implications could aid in overcoming the current situation and achieving the desired ideal condition.

**Conclusion:** Research findings indicate that the political implications of Shiite Islamism, given its focus on concrete issues in explaining the current situation, have managed to provide better alternatives. Therefore, compared to the majority movement, it possesses greater capacity in organizing positively, and attention to it could facilitate revisiting the thought of political Islam in Afghanistan and finding solutions to the current problems.

**Keywords:** Islamism, Shiite Islamism, Political Implications, Contemporary Afghanistan, Intellectual Movement.


**Article Type:** Research

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## Introduction

This paper is written to analyze the political implications of Shiite Islamism as one of the significant political thought movements in Afghanistan's contemporary history and seeks to answer the question of what implications this movement possesses in the political and social arena of Afghanistan and what weight it carries in organizing the current situation. In seeking an answer to this question, the hypothesis underlying the research posits that despite being a minority, Shiite Islamism in Afghanistan has processed significant implications across various political arenas, from explaining the existing crisis to offering an alternative and specific strategy, thus carrying a considerable weight in the organization of the ideal and overcoming the current situation.

Political Islam in Afghanistan, based on the theoretical foundation of "establishing government based on Shari'ah," has not succeeded in creating an ideal order in its political record; the chaos and internal wars among Islamic factions following the fall of the communist regime and the failure of the Taliban to form an inclusive and acceptable government testify to this lack of success. Nevertheless, the traditional and religious contexts of Afghanistan provide a suitable framework for political Islam compared to secular leftist and liberal competitors, enabling it to reconstruct and present an ideal alternative in accordance with existing crises through critical reflection and offer a consistent order based on rational Islamic principles.

In the background of the research, aside from general materials on this topic, there has not been a specific and meaningful study. Nevertheless, a paper titled "Analysis of the Discourse of Islamic Governance Influenced by the Islamic Revolution," a collaborative work by Amanullah Shafai and Mohammad Ali Mirali, specifically examines Shiite Islam in Afghanistan centered on Wilayat-e Faqih and other signifiers such as the Islamic Revolution, Imamate, Ashura, etc. This work relies on discourse theory aiming to introduce the distinct identity of Shiite Islam from other forms of political Islam and is content-focused on the initial stages of the formation of Shiite Islamism. Therefore, the current paper differs from the aforementioned work in both framework and content.

## Methodology

The methodology used in this research is based on "comparative discourse analysis." In this method, any political statement or concept that is expressed in writing or speech and contains a political expression can be considered as an implication. Each political thought comprises at least four implications: explanatory, foundational, normative, and strategic, each addressing a segment of political issues and collectively portraying a coherent framework for forming an ideal order:

**Explanatory Implication:** This implication contains an explanation of the existing situation, considered to be a crisis. In the history of political thought, explanatory implications in various political schools reflect crises such as economic crisis, moral crisis, security crisis, and legitimacy crisis. Important

crises of figures like Machiavelli (crisis of stability), Hobbes (crisis of power), John Locke (crisis of legitimacy), and Marx (crisis of capitalism) are examples of crucial crises in the thought of these political thinkers.

**Foundational Implication:** Every thought and idea is based on foundations that serve as assumptions; other implications are formulated based on them. At the forefront is the perception held by individuals and schools regarding existence, humanity, and, overall, worldviews that form the basis of thought and ideas, identifying the sources of existing problems and, based on them, formulating normative implications. Important epistemological levels through which political dimensions of a thinker can be assessed include their anthropological perspective, which plays a decisive role in shaping that thinker's thought system.

**Normative Implication:** The dominant aspect of political thought is its normative nature. Norm means a standard for delineating an ideal condition that does not yet exist and can be established. In essence, normative implications emerge in contrast to explanatory implications and arise in the context of a crisis; for instance, Plato's ideal society is founded on justice, Hobbes' ideal society emphasizes security, and Rousseau's vision centers around morality.

**Strategic Implication:** In every political thought, an appropriate arrangement of power, in the form of a model of legitimate authority, is articulated. The strategic implication is the theoretical model of authority (government theories) based on other implications and is recommended to realize ideal standards. In other words, the strategic implication represents the type of authority or political system deemed as the most suitable means for creating a good order. Each school of thought prioritizes specific norms while structuring the political system to serve those norms, thus achieving a good arrangement.

This paper also provides a comparative view of this movement with the majority political Islam in Afghanistan to make research findings more tangible. The analysis of the research data utilized library methods, emphasizing credible sources to collect and analyze data.

## Findings

Since political Islamism in Afghanistan emerged in opposition to leftist ideology, the majority of political Islam has primarily focused on the identity aspects of the crisis while neglecting the tangible issues facing society. Consequently, the proposed alternatives did not align with the criteria for an ideal order, perpetuating a cycle of failures. Similarly, in foundational and strategic implications, the majority political Islam has been unable to present reasonable and effective interpretations that address contemporary demands, thus resorting to violence and force rather than satisfaction in implementing an ideal order.

However, research findings indicate that Shiite Islamism has processed significant and noteworthy implications. In explanatory implications, Shiite Islamism has critically addressed the tangible crises faced by society, such as discrimination and exclusivity. Furthermore, it has introduced social justice and freedom as key indicators of an ideal condition. Shiite Islamism has managed to

harmoniously relate rationality with tradition in foundational implications, suggesting that democratic values can be compatible with religion in strategic implications.

**Outcome:** In examining the performance of political Islam in Afghanistan and its failures, it is particularly important to note that aside from the complexities of the political landscape in Afghanistan—including ethnic diversity, religious differences, unique geographical conditions, and foreign interventions—political Islam has also faced numerous intellectual shortcomings. It lacks the capability to resolve the existing crises. For instance, as mentioned, the majority of political Islam does not have a clear understanding of the current crisis in Afghanistan and has largely ignored a significant and vital aspect of this crisis: discrimination in various social fields and the absence of civil liberties, beliefs, religion, expression, etc. As a result, they have failed to outline an alternative that is based on justice and promotes freedom. Throughout the intellectual journey of Sunni political Islam, a purely imitative state influenced by external contexts and the thoughts of figures like Sayyid Qutb can be observed, which often does not align with the realities of Afghanistan.

That said, alongside the official interpretation, Shia Islamism contains significant implications that this writing aims to examine. Shia political Islam is not without its own weaknesses and deficiencies, and it must share in the responsibility for the current situation. However, compared to the majority, Shia Islam has considered the realities of society during its intellectual stages and has distanced itself from being purely abstract and imitative. For this reason, it has been able to focus on introducing alternative and desirable conditions based on concepts such as social justice, which is not only one of the fundamental goals of a system based on Islam but also an essential necessity for the discriminatory and unjust society of Afghanistan. Therefore, this writing believes that political Islam, due to the traditional-Islamic structure of Afghan society, is in a better position than secular movements in forming Afghanistan's future system. Hence, it is suggested that the intellectual capacities of Shia Islamism be utilized to review and improve the intellectual state of political Islam and to draw on them as a way out of the current situation.

**Conflict of Interest:** No

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