



Asian Journal of Basic Science & Research

E-ISSN: 2582-5267

Volume 7 Issue 2 2025

The Development of Political Doctrines in the Context of Medieval Central Asian Civilization

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.38177/AJBSR.2025.7203>

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Article Received: 19 February 2025

Article Accepted: 25 April 2025

Article Published: 05 May 2025

ABSTRACT

The history of political doctrines indicates that the political views of the great thinkers of Central Asia made an unparalleled contribution to the development of global political thought. In particular, during the 9th-12th centuries, the region was home to renowned encyclopedic scholars such as Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, al-Khwarizmi, Mahmud Zamakhshari, Muhammad Narshahi, Rudaki, and Abul Qasim Firdawsi, who contributed to the theoretical foundations of political doctrines.

In this context, this article examines the views of philosophers who lived and worked during the early Renaissance regarding the origins of the state, politics, and law. It also analyzes their perspectives on justice, humanism, the just ruler, social equality, the just society, and the virtuous citizen as reflected in their political doctrines.

Keywords: Law; Society; Justice; Development; Governance; Humanity; Freedom; Rulers; Contract; Stability.

1. Introduction

The development of an extremely complex political situation, along with social and economic changes that took place in Transoxiana and Khorasan between the 9th and 12th centuries, stimulated the further advancement of political and legal doctrines in these regions.

It is known from history that in the 9th century the East became the center of renaissance, and the scientific academy of that time “Bayt al-Hikma” (“House of the Wise”) was founded in Baghdad. Meanwhile, in Transoxiana, the independent Samanid state emerged, fostering the growth of scientific and cultural ties in cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Urgench, Merv, and Nishapur.

Madrasahs were established in Bukhara and other central cities to teach the fundamental sources of Islamic religious doctrine, as well as Sharia law. Graduates of these institutions not only became judges but also engaged in secular sciences, mastering subjects such as medicine, geometry, mathematics, chemistry, philosophy, logic, and history. Khorezmshah Abul Abbas Ma'mun was a highly learned and enlightened ruler who supported scholars and poets during his reign. In Urgench, alongside the great thinkers of his time, Ibn Sina and Al-Biruni, scholars such as Abu Sahl al-Masihi, Abu Nasr ibn Iraq, Abul Khair ibn Hammar, and Abu Abdullah al-Khwarizmi gathered at the palace of the Khorezmshahs. As a result, the “House of Scholars” was established under the patronage of Khorezmshah Mamun, and this center made a significant contribution to the development of science.

1.1. Study Objectives

Abu Nasr al-Farabi's “City of Virtuous People” was used in the study of political doctrines during the Early Eastern Renaissance. In particular, this work explored the concepts of a just society, a just ruler, and a prosperous city. Additionally, the works of the encyclopedist Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, “India” and “Geodesy”, were analyzed, highlighting his valuable insights on just state governance, geopolitics, and universal human values.

Furthermore, the views of Abu Ali ibn Sina in his work “Ash-Shifa” were examined, particularly his perspectives on the state and its functions in society, social hierarchy, and the importance of strong social protection.

2. Research Methodology

This article aims to analyze the political doctrines that emerged in Central Asia between the 9th and 12th centuries and to explore their socio-economic, cultural, and legal dimensions. To achieve this goal, the study employs the historical-comparative method to identify the distinctive aspects of political doctrines from the 9th to 12th centuries and their connections with both earlier and later periods. Furthermore, the political and legal perspectives of Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, and Abu Ali Ibn Sina are examined. The article also applies the legal-analytical method to investigate how concepts such as state administration, justice, and the rule of law were interpreted by various thinkers from a legal perspective.

3. Discussion

The emergence and development of the state during the Eastern Renaissance were studied at a high level of scientific inquiry in the political and legal teachings of Abu Nasr al-Farabi. He was honored with the titles Al-Muallim al-Sani (“The Second Teacher”, after Aristotle) and Aristotle of the East for his deep knowledge of Greek philosophy, his commentaries on it, and his role in its dissemination to the world. Additionally, his extensive knowledge of the sciences and his significant contributions to their advancement further strengthened his legacy.

Socio-political and ethical considerations also play a crucial role in Farabi's worldview. The concept of humanity occupies a central place in his works, such as *On Achieving Happiness*, *The City of Virtuous People*, *A Treatise on the Paths to Achieving Happiness*, *Sayings of Great People*, *The Great Book of Music*, *Civil Politics*, and others, which are devoted to issues of society and its governance, morality, ethics, and education.

The socio-political views of this great philosopher were deeply imbued with a humanistic spirit. In his social, moral, and humanistic perspectives, he analyzes fundamental issues such as the relationship between society and the individual, humanity, justice, the perfect community, the ideal person, and the attainment of happiness. He approaches these topics from theoretical-philosophical, rationalistic, humanistic, and universal perspectives.

One of Al-Farabi's most valuable contributions is that he was the first among philosophers from the Near and Middle East to develop a doctrine on the origin of society, its goals, and its objectives. Al-Farabi argues that society arose naturally in medieval times and that an individual cannot overcome life's challenges without the assistance of others.

“Every person, says Al-Farabi, is so constituted by nature that he requires many things to survive and reach a higher level of maturity. He cannot acquire such things alone; a community of people is needed to obtain them... The collective activities of the members of such a community ensure that each individual receives what is necessary for survival and growth. Therefore, humans multiplied and settled in the inhabited parts of the earth” (Abu Nasr Farabi, 2004. -P.4.). Cities, in Al-Farabi's view, represent the highest form of human community, where the necessary conditions for the harmonious development of individuals are created. He emphasizes that people unite and form communities as a result of natural needs.

As a great humanitarian philosopher and humanist, Al-Farabi opposes societies that degrade human dignity and are based on the conquest of other nations. He calls on people to live in peace and cooperation and to uphold humane values. “The primary foundation that unites people is humanity; therefore, as part of the human family, people should live in peace with one another”, he asserts.

One of Al-Farabi's notable ideas is the role of the geographical environment in the development of society. According to him, the geographical environment meaning the specific region where people live shapes their lifestyle, customs, morals, and behavior, ultimately helping them unite into a community. In his doctrine of a perfect society, he categorizes people into different groups. In doing so, he considers not only their religious beliefs or race but also their intellectual abilities, knowledge, and interest in science.

Al-Farabi divides city-states into virtuous and ignorant ones. A virtuous city should guide its people toward happiness, and its leader should be just, moral, and enlightened, possessing all positive qualities.

However, Al-Farabi states that there are cities or nations whose inhabitants are driven by lust and whose primary concern is the accumulation of wealth. He refers to such cities as ignorant cities. The leaders of ignorant cities are also solely focused on amassing wealth.

“The leaders who emerge from them,” the scholar emphasizes, “view leadership as a means of increasing wealth. That is why they are always preoccupied with accumulating wealth. Under such leaders, all kinds of depraved habits—lust, hatred, robbery, enmity, and strife—arise among the people of the city”.

According to Al-Farabi, a city that strives to achieve true happiness, fosters mutual assistance, and unites its people is a virtuous city. People who support one another and unite in pursuit of happiness form a virtuous community.

According to Al-Farabi, a ruler who governs a state should be distinguished by virtue, character, and decency. In particular, he should possess six essential qualities. Such a leader must be just and wise, care for others, fully comply with the laws, have the ability to create laws, and foresee the future.

Al-Farabi asserts that a virtuous city will be highly civilized, and its inhabitants will be able to pursue the professions they desire. In such a society, complete freedom and equality will prevail.

The thinker was a great humanist and humanitarian of his time. He placed the study of humanity, its goals and aspirations, and the path to achieving moral perfection and happiness at the center of his socio-philosophical, political, and ethical views. In discussing moral perfection, he emphasized good deeds and noble human qualities. Conversely, negative traits that hinder moral maturity include laziness, idleness, ignorance, lack of awareness, and incompetence.

In his work *The City of Virtuous People*, Abu Nasr Al-Farabi reflects on the concept of the perfect individual, stating that, above all, the leader of a city (or state) should embody all noble human qualities. According to Al-Farabi, a virtuous ruler must possess twelve essential qualities:

1. Be in good health
2. Be sharp-witted

3. Have a strong memory
4. Possess a keen intellect
5. Be eloquent
6. Be knowledgeable and enlightened
7. Be moderate in eating and drinking
8. Love truth, justice, and righteous people
9. Be noble, honorable, and dignified
10. Be indifferent to wealth, dinars, and dirhams
11. Be just, fight for goodness, and oppose oppression and tyranny
12. Be determined, brave, and courageous (Abu Nasr Farabi, 2004. -P.43).

Al-Farabi also extensively discusses the concept of justice in his works. In his view, justice signifies equality among people. The scholar explains this concept in a broad sense, similar to the way he defines goodness. Justice, in his interpretation, does not solely refer to material equality but also encompasses spiritual equality. A person must fully adhere to the principles of justice in all aspects of life, including their interactions with others. Al-Farabi's broad understanding of justice is clearly reflected in the following statement:

“Justice is expressed, first and foremost, in the proper distribution of the benefits that belong to all the inhabitants of the city and in the full preservation of the wealth allocated to them. These benefits include wealth, health, honor, respect, positions, and similar attributes, of which each person should receive a share that is rightfully theirs. It is unjust to receive either more or less than what is due. If one receives less, it is an injustice to that individual; if one receives more, it is an injustice to the people, that is, to others”.

Al-Farabi's socio-philosophical and political ideas were widely disseminated in Muslim countries between the 16th and 20th centuries, and scholars from these regions studied his philosophical heritage with great interest. The thinker's humanistic and moral ideas continue to serve humanity in its pursuit of happiness, the establishment of world peace, the development of future generations as mature and well-rounded individuals, and the advancement of science and enlightenment.

Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni, in works such as *Geodesy*, *India*, *Mineralogy*, and *Monuments of Ancient Peoples*, explored the necessity of ensuring social justice and upholding the rule of law in society. Al-Biruni did not perceive the state as the absolute rule of kings but rather as governance led by enlightened rulers. According to him, a state must adhere to principles like mutual assistance, peaceful coexistence, and universal well-being in order to function successfully. He strongly advocated for the harmonious coexistence of states, considering it the key to the happiness and prosperity of the people.

In his work *India*, Al-Biruni analyzed the differences between Muslim and Hindu customs and suggested that these differences were also influenced by geographical conditions. Continuing his examination of the role of geography, Al-Biruni argued that even linguistic diversity is shaped by geographical factors.

“The reason languages differ is that people are separated into groups and remain distant from one another,” he observed. In this context, Al-Biruni explains linguistic diversity as a natural consequence of the diversity of human life. He acknowledges that geographical factors play a crucial role in shaping human life and society.

The greatness of Al-Biruni lies in his ability to recognize the diverse needs of people within the context of society's emergence. He states:

“Man, due to his nakedness and helplessness, and the lack of protective supports, suffered at the hands of others. He felt a constant need for someone who could satisfy his needs and safeguard his interests”.

Thus, it becomes evident that material factors such as the need for protection, as well as other basic necessities like food and clothing encourage people to live together. Al-Biruni further emphasizes:

“Needs are diverse and innumerable. Only a collective of people can fulfill them together. For this reason, people must establish cities”.

He concludes: “Due to the abundance of human needs, the lack of restraint, the absence of protective weapons, and the prevalence of enemies, people are compelled to protect one another and engage in essential work to provide for themselves and others. As a result, they are forced to unite with their kin and form a society”.

Al-Biruni describes the process of society's actual emergence, recognizing that social life is structured on the basis of a kind of “contract.” A person begins to recognize these needs and understands the necessity of living together with others like him. Therefore, individuals enter into a “contract” of mutual consent.

“Thank God a thousand times that He created the diversity of desires in order to grant people free will that is, the right to unite, gather, and settle”.

This statement highlights the significant role that people play in shaping their own social lives, as well as the fact that they live together with others, thereby forming a society.

Consequently, this led to the emergence of social centers such as villages and cities, where people could fulfill their various needs. The intellect bestowed upon humanity by God facilitates the union of people. However, their collective life alone does not bring true power or the fulfillment of their needs; for this, they must also engage in labor.

Al-Biruni opposed this view, arguing that intelligence, labor, and free choice determine a person's life and social status. The philosopher-scientist recognized humanity's most noble motives: the need for mutual assistance, reciprocal benefit, and the fulfillment of common needs as fundamental to the emergence of society and the foundation of shared human interests. Al-Biruni viewed the role and functions of individuals in society as closely connected to these motives. Based on this understanding, he argued that society arose from the necessity of cooperation among people. He asserted that individuals should always consider the happiness of others, stating: “The necessity of fulfilling certain tasks is the principle of human activity for life”.

Expanding on this idea, Al-Biruni further wrote: “The dignity of a person consists in fulfilling his duty perfectly; therefore, the most important duty and place of a person are determined by labor”. He concluded: “A person achieves his desires through labor”.

The thinker defines the role of humans in society and states that the diversity of human nature and customs causes their desires and goals to differ. As a result, he asserts, “as people's goals and intentions became different, arts and crafts also began to differ,” which ultimately leads to the division of labor.

Rooted in humanistic ideas, Al-Biruni viewed the emergence of money as initially linked to the division of labor. He explains: “The increasing need and its occurrence at different times lead people to seek a common measure instead of various values at different times. For this reason, people have chosen something that dazzles with its appearance and brilliance, is unique, and can be preserved for a long time”.

Regarding governance, Al-Biruni emphasized that society should not serve the king, as state patrons believed; rather, the king should serve society. He states: “The essence of governing is to protect the rights of those who suffer under oppressive rulers, to sacrifice one’s own peace for the peace of others. This consists of the physical exhaustion of protecting and guarding one's family, their lives, and their property”.

According to Al-Biruni, the state and its laws should serve the happiness of humanity, and the state should be governed by an enlightened ruler. Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni recognised that the criterion for a society’s humanity is determined by the extent to which people's daily needs are met. The most important factor in ensuring the well-being of citizens is adherence to the principles of social justice (Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni, 1963, pp. 31-32.).

Abu Pli Ibn Sina (970–1037) developed his own legal framework for issues pertaining to family, society, and state governance by incorporating several traditions of scientific and Islamic thought into his socio-political and legal views. In particular, Ibn Sina’s perspectives on human rights and freedoms, their social protection by the state, social justice, and the role of fair state governance are reflected in his work, *Al-Shifa fi al-Ilahiyya*.

In this work, the thinker:

- a.** Examine the relationship between the state and the law, focussing on how religion and the prophet contributed to the development of a legal society.
- b.** As a lawgiver, the prophet communicates divine and traditional laws and makes sure that the country and the city are taught them.
- c.** Classifies the community living in the city into three hierarchical categories: rulers, artisans, and soldiers.

When analysing Ibn Sina's political and legal views, the thinker links the existence of the state to the structure of society, emphasising that it consists of three interconnected components. The primary objective of the legislature in creating laws and administering the country is to ensure that society is divided into three categories:

- Rulers
- Artisans
- Soldiers

It is emphasized that the legislator should appoint a leader over each group, with subordinate leaders assigned to those below them, continuing this hierarchical structure until a unified rule is established.

4. Results

The author claims that in order to keep stability and peace in the state, all aspects of governance must be regulated by law, and those responsible for this must represent the three key societal components:

Government officials. Ibn Sina emphasises that governance inherently consists of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, which are responsible for creating and enforcing rules of governance.

Entrepreneurs and businessmen. He describes them as planners, organisers, and implementers of economic activities within the country.

State guards, military personnel, and politicians. He interprets them as organisations responsible for being responsible for ensuring national security and protecting the state.

According to Ibn Sina, the role of the state in society and governance includes the establishment of law within the state. The government must develop economic policies aimed at stabilizing the economy to ensure the rule of law in society. If this is not done, numerous issues such as forced labor, persecution, oppression, and corruption arise. Therefore, the government must develop and enforce regulatory and legal frameworks related to the economy. Ibn Sina emphasises the government should be responsible for enacting laws that prevent extortion and injustice in economic transactions.

If the security of the state is unstable, foreign investors and entrepreneurs may hesitate to conduct business within the country. To achieve political and economic stability, Ibn Sina highlights in Madinaal-Fazila the necessity of regulating the structure of society. He asserts that the three fundamental components of the state government, economic operators, and state guardians are responsible for achieving Madinah al-Fadila (The Virtuous City).

The state's policy on employment. While discussing employment within the state, Ibn Sina argued that each person in the city should have a specific task, profession, and role, ensuring that each individual contributes to society based on their assigned duties.

In particular, he proposed that idleness and unemployment should be prohibited by law. He stated that the law must ensure that no person satisfies their daily needs at the expense of others and that everyone should avoid excessive exertion. If a person is identified as having a physical disability or illness, the legislator must provide a designated space and necessary support for such individuals.

The inclusion of citizens in social protection.

Ibn Sina suggested that in order to provide jobs for its citizens, the state should put the following policies into effect:

- a. Ensuring that people operate productively and profitably while they are fit and healthy.
- b. Providing a training program to encourage productive labour.
- c. Ensuring that people who are unwell have access to effective, cost-free healthcare.
- d. Ensuring the basic needs of citizens with disabilities due to natural circumstances beyond individual control, such as illness, widowhood, unemployment, old age, or being a minor (Sobirovich, 2023).

5. Conclusion

A deeper study of the political and legal views of Central Asian thinkers from the 9th to 12th centuries helps us understand how their perspectives on state governance relate to contemporary political systems. The political ideas of Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, and Ibn Sina provide a basis for comparing modern concepts of democracy, the rule of law, and social justice with the principles of constitutional law, as well as their views on state governance with modern theories of the state.

Additionally, such an analysis helps establish connections between the governance models of today's international organisations and historical traditions, facilitates a deeper understanding of the influence of mediaeval political philosophy on contemporary political strategies, and identifies promising research directions. It also creates opportunities to integrate these historical perspectives into modern political, legal, and economic processes and apply them in practice.

Declarations

Source of Funding

This study did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing Interests Statement

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The author declares that he consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Author's independent contribution.

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