

## Political Theories & Islamic Ideas of Al-Farabi for State and Government: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract:** Renowned Muslim philosopher Al-Farabi (870–950 AD) was well-versed in astrology, physics, and the cognitive organization of logic. He is regarded as the second-greatest philosopher after Aristotle, who promoted philosophy education as a means of enhancing one's life. Farabi's political theories have influenced Western thought as well as the Islamic world significantly. According to him, the state exists to protect the well and happiness of its citizens. Additionally, he thought that the state had an obligation to foster an atmosphere that allowed people to reach their greatest potential. According to Farabi, a virtuous state where people live by reason and knowledge and where justice and peace are prevalent among the populace is the ideal state. He thought that a wise ruler who prioritizes the well-being of his people should be in charge of a rich state. The political theories of Farabi, which are based on Islamic principles, are still highly relevant today. He is the earliest Muslim philosopher to outline his theories on state government in a methodical manner. Farabi argues that the Madinah state is the finest instance of an ideal state since it upholds the values outlined in the Madinah al-Fadilah law in addition to providing for fundamental requirements.

**Key Words:** Political philosophy, virtue, Madinah, wisdom, ethics, harmony, and justice are all attributes of Farabi the Philosopher.

### Introduction

The idea of creating a structured group tasked with meeting all of its inhabitants' basic needs is at the center of the contemporary conception of the state. Although this need from a societal perspective is not new, the state's establishment as well as growth serves as a concrete example of how it is being met. Political philosophers and intellectuals have always been essential to maintaining the effectiveness, strength, and success of the state. But practically speaking, it has issues because of the unbalanced views of people. One Muslim philosopher and scholar in particular stands out among those who investigated Islamic political philosophy in the context of their time by offering a comprehensive outline of the contemporary welfare state and suggesting a course of action for a successful state. Nonetheless, it is sure that this welfare state blueprint both represents Islamic political beliefs and serves as a foundation for the creation of fresh political concepts. It is important to keep in mind that the political philosophy of Islam primarily stems from the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (may the blessings and peace of Allah rest upon Him) and the way in which the rightfully chosen Caliphs, who profited directly from it, governed. We offer two essential components as secondary sources: the Islamic precepts that Muslim rulers followed as well as the Ijtihad to Muslim scholars, which was carried out in light by the Qur'an along with Sunnah.

### Research Objective

To emphasize the distinction between state and government that is analyzed by Al-Farabi's Islamic ideas.

### Literature Review

#### Al-Farabi: 870-950

In the year 870 AD, Farabi was born in Turkestan, Turkey, in the Farab region, which is located along the Jaihan River's shore. As a result, he was given the name Farabi. Muhammad bin Tarkhan was his full name, while Abu Nasr was his surname. Even though Farabi's early years were marked by tremendous poverty and misery, his insatiable curiosity and will to study remained unaffected by these difficult circumstances. Farabi left his early childhood home of Farab to pursue his education in Baghdad after completing his elementary schooling there. He began studying the Arabic adaptations of Greek philosophy once he had become fluent in the language. He subsequently relocated to Damascus as a result of sectarian turmoil in the Islamic State. Following the Hamadanis' victory, in 946 AD, he established his permanent residence in Damascus and became close to Saif al-Dawlah's court. He died in 950 AD (339 AH) in Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

#### Books and Enhancements

One of the most well-known philosophers in the Islamic world is Al-Farabi. Christian instructors Yohanah ibn Jablan and Abu -Bashar Mati bin Yunus taught him logic during his stay in Damascus. He studied the sciences, philosophy, physics, reasoning, chemistry, magic, mathematics, and music in addition to these subjects. Farabi is recognized for having made important advances in the study of logic.<sup>2</sup> He is

frequently recognized as Aristotle's second-greatest philosopher. In addition to his notable work on the presence of space in physics, he was also acknowledged for his contributions to sociology and political science. He was dubbed the a "second Master and Mentor" because of his explanations on the majority of Aristotle's writings, which demonstrated his profound influence from both Plato and Aristotle. Notably, he is well-known for his interpretations of Ptolemy's "Al Majisti" and "Isaghuji" (logic).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to being a wise man and philosopher, Al-Farabi was also knowledgeable about astrology, physics, and music. The book "al-Musayqi al-Kabeer," which he wrote and which became prominent, criticized Greek music for its flaws and presented a new instrument known as the "Rabab."<sup>4</sup> Alongside Abu Bakr al-Shabli & Mansoor al-Hajj, he had been a well-known medical authority at that period. Europeans applauded Bacon's work on Euclid, and he acknowledged his proficiency in mathematics. His work "Ihsa' al-Ulum," which is split into five chapters and discusses language, logic, mathematical information, physical science, politics and social economy, demonstrates his substantial contributions to a variety of scientific subjects.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most influential intellectuals of medieval Islam, and a Muslim philosopher, according to Encyclopedia Britannica:

*In the Islamic world of the Middle Ages, he was considered the second most important philosopher after Aristotle.*<sup>6</sup>

Kitab al-Ikhlaq, Al-Kimiyay Tabish (concerning the study of alchemy and the science of power), Al-Samaa wa Al-Alam, Kitab al-Aql, Siyasat al-Madnyah, Ara-Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah, Jawami' al-Siyasah, Ijtima'at al-Madnyah, Kitab al-Nafs, Al-Musiq al-Kabir, Kitab al-Mantiq, Kitab al-Huruf,<sup>7</sup> Al-Sirat-ul-Fazlah, and Tahsil al-Sa'adah are a few of Farabi's well-known works. Siyat al-Madinah is an overview of Plato's book, whereas Kitab al-Akhla & Asma' wa al-Alam were criticisms of Aristotle's writings.

He has produced hundreds of pieces. Farabi wrote poetry as well. Another well-known and lengthy supplication of his is one that a few of his analysts have imitated<sup>8</sup>. Farabi urged individuals to pursue philosophical studies in order to live better lives.

### Research Methodology

The present study utilizes qualitative research methodology to thoroughly examine the fundamental concept of state and government as enunciated by Al-Farabi's Islamic ideas.

### Textual Analysis

The some of Farabi's works that demonstrate his political ideas are:

Ijtima'at al-Madnyah; Ara-Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah Jawami' as well as al-Siyasah, and Siyasat al-Madnyah.

### Idea of the State

Farabi contends that man is a kind creature with a sharp mind and intellect rather than a social animal. He believes that the government as well as civilization is essential, which leads to the establishment of a community as a way to deal with internal challenges, settle disputes, and uphold the law. This community is the result of free choice and the pursuit of pleasure; it is comparable to a social compact, which was formed on the basis of people's willingness to live in peace while attending to their individual needs. This viewpoint has been well presented by Farabi in his work Ara-Ahl al-Madinah Fadilah.<sup>9</sup>

Political organization is explained by Al-Farabi in his writings Tahsil al-Sa'adah and Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah. He emphasizes that because man cannot do these things on his alone, he instinctively feels the need for other people's help and forms political organizations to work toward shared goals. Having defined greatest 'Madinah' being the smallest dimension in which an individual may live and experience happiness, he applies this theory to the state, saying that an ideal state need not be the largest in terms of qualities in order to be excellent.<sup>10</sup>

### Human Society Concepts

According to Farabi, people form vast groups and societies by working together to acquire the needs of life and choose the progressive route. According to Farabi, all people on the planet comprise a single vast society, which he divides into two groups: complete societies, or congregations that are fully formed, and incomplete societies, or congregations that are not fully formed.<sup>11</sup>

Consensus in this culture refers to working together on issues that actually lead to enjoyment.

A community that strives for mutual collaboration in order to actually achieve true pleasure and wealth is known as a complete society<sup>12</sup>.

**Incomplete Society:** Villages, streets, and residential areas are all considered to be parts of incomplete societies, according to Farabi. The human group living on Earth is only a fraction of a full society, while the city is the biggest example of an imperfect society.

Complete societies and imperfect societies are the two basic categories into which Farabi divides societies. It is the streets, roads, and residential areas that unite incomplete and full communities. Streets are a part of neighborhoods, which are a part of cities, which are a part of countries, and which are a part of people. Farabi lists many impediments to human associations:

Geographical variations: These variances have an impact on human behavior and help shape diverse cultures and traditions.

Climate and its effects: The climate has a significant impact on how people behave and how they develop as individuals.

Cultural differences: Differences in traditions serve as roadblocks to international cooperation.

Linguistic differences: These differences make it more difficult for groups to get along<sup>13</sup>.

According to Farabi, the best kind of state is one that is made up of whole societies. According to him, there are individual disparities around the world due to theoretical, linguistic, cultural, and geographic factors. He suggests breaking society up into little communes in order to improve social growth and structure. He says that a state with a ruler who embodies exemplary characteristics is desirable.

### States' Types

Farabi's seven states provide a potent and enduring conception of the perfect community. They give a framework for considering the nature of law and governance and a window into the various ways that individuals might be motivated. According to Farabi, the following categories of states exist:

#### Firstly, **Madīnat al-Ġarūrīyah**

The Situation of Demand: The only goal of urban life in this kind of condition is to acquire requirements of existence. As neither Plato nor another philosopher had addressed it before him, Farabi defines the notion of this kind of a state to himself. Of the seven nations that the Muslim scholar Abu Nasr al-Farabi describes, the condition of need is the lowest. People in this stage are driven by their fundamental necessities, which include access to food, water, and shelter. People in this state are continuously at war with one another, and there is no rule or order.<sup>14</sup>

#### Secondly, **Al-Fāḍilah Madīnat**

The State of Good: According to Farabi, this is the perfect state. Its monarch is not just well-versed in state issues but also in good physical and mental health. Everyone within such a state obtains justice, and the monarch has sympathy for the populace. It is a serene and peaceful retreat. Thus, of the seven realms that Farabi describes, the virtuous condition is the highest. People are driven by morality and reason in this state. In this city, people coexist peacefully and there is order and security.

#### Thirdly, **Al-Jamā'ah Madīnat**

The Community's status is as follows: its people live in total freedom inside a democratic state. The people's

will is carried out by the monarch. Between the condition of need and the virtue state lies the state of community. People are driven by both their higher goals and their fundamental necessities in this stage. This city has some law and order, but it also has some turmoil.

#### Fourth, **Madīnat al-Fāsiqah**

People who are driven by their own desires and wants are said to be in the condition of vice. In this state, there is no rule or order, and individuals are always giving in to their primal desires. This state is fraudulent, its citizens are jealous, spiteful, and evil, and its ruler is incapable.

#### Fifthly, **Al-Mutabāḍilah Madīnat**

The State of Trade and Transformed: At first, this is a perfect state, but as time goes on, changes in its administration take place, which affects how its citizens behave. People who live in a state of trade are driven by their longing for power and riches. In this state, there is some rule of law, but it is built on the principle of the strongest person ruling.<sup>15</sup>

#### Sixthly, **Al-Dalālah Madīnat**

The State of Failure: People make mistakes even if they appear to be in a perfect situation. Despite the ruler's incompetence, the populace regards him as having received revelation from God. As a result, they are misled. When ignorance and superstition drive individuals, they are said to be in the state of mistake. People in this state are always at the whim of their feelings and there is no rule or order<sup>16</sup>.

These divisions reflect Farabi's philosophical stances on various state structures and modes of government.

### Characteristics of the Perfect Ruler

In his writings *Kitab Ara-Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah & Siyasat al-Madniyah*, Farabi lists the characteristics of a perfect monarch.

According to him, a great leader ought to possess the following characteristics: "He has flawless limbs, good in comprehending and thinking, good and acute in memories, good in thoughts, smart, good in expression, loves studying and improving staying away from prohibited and illegal beverages, food, and getting married, loves truthfulness and honesty, kind, loves justice, strong-willed."<sup>17</sup>

Physical Well-Being: It is essential that the ultimate ruler be physically well and free from all illnesses. If he is ill or has any physical limitations, he might not be able to do his job well. In addition to reducing one's physical power, illness also decreases bravery.

Mastery of insight and comprehension. To lead the operations of the state wisely, he ought to possess the qualities of reflection and careful thought.

**Good and Clear Memory:** The ruler's ability to remember specifics about state issues depends on their memory. Being aware of problems all the time enables them to make decisions quickly and avoid wasting time.

**Devoid of Psychological Wants:** There must be no impure psychological desire in the ultimate ruler. It is impossible for a ruler subservient to strong emotions and irrational wants to achieve justice in the eyes of the people.

**Expert in Psychiatry and Strong Orator:** Farabi proposes that in order to better comprehend the issues facing the populace, the ruler ought to be a competent psychologist. His position should be clear to listeners from the start, and his remarks should make an impact.

Fairness and compassion are essential qualities for a monarch to possess. The sovereign's impartial actions bring about peace in the nation. He ought to hear the arguments from all sides objectively and make an informed choice.

**Soft-Hearted:** A kind heart is appropriate for the monarch. It is crucial that he refrain from tyranny and brutality for this. Preventing tyranny and oppression is essential because the nation's internal instability and unrest are caused by the supreme ruler's harshness, which breeds hatred and inspires thoughts of retaliation.

**Owner of Abundant Wealth:** The ultimate ruler needs to be extremely wealthy. There should always be gold and gems in their treasury. Furthermore, managing the treasury is essential because careless people have the potential to harm the state by squandering its resources. The treasury's utilization should be entirely within the ruler's authority.

**Purity in Heart:** The monarch needs to have an open heart and a guilt-free conscience. It is his responsibility to pardon transgressors and impose suitable penalties on offenders. People's hearts can be won over by acting honorably.

**Prevents Controversy:** The monarch should confer with experts to settle state concerns rather than becoming involved in conflict by himself. By doing this, difficulties are avoided and the people's respect for the king is preserved.

**Concentrate on State matters both internal and external:** Ensuring the nation's internal and exterior well-being is the main objective of appointing a ruler. To stop any opponents, internal or foreign, from harming the state, the monarch must be on guard. In these situations, interpersonal harmony and collaboration among the populace thrive. When

necessary, the monarch should respond defensively right away.

Farabi believed that the Prophets, who were the source of law, were the perfect rulers. It is only under their direction that states may become models and norms. He states that people differ in their levels of intelligence in the chapter on the responsibilities and qualities of the Supreme Leader. He should appoint the most capable leader from all the department heads in the kingdom to head each department independently. The person in charge will be at the top, followed by the second and third leaders, who will supervise the subordinate leaders, in that order. The principal and foremost leader need to be flawless, prudent and knowledgeable, equitable, well-off, and devoid of any psychological urges. He should have a keen memory and a passion for learning. A monarchical system of administration is ideal, but in the event that it is not feasible, the individual who possesses the majority of these qualities need to be recognized as the head of state. If this isn't feasible, a kind of democracy can be established by electing five or six individuals who have been trained by someone possessing these attributes, such as philosophers and sages.

### **Ideas Regarding Human Intelligence**

Farabi asserts that intelligence, particularly agent cognition, is what sets humans apart from other species. The agent intelligence elevates humans and makes use of their minds; he recalls this as the Gained intelligence, which enables people to advance and reap rewards. Man possesses a multitude of hidden energies and forces. Farabi classifies these powers into the following categories:

The capacity to discriminate between right and wrong by information is known as the power of reason.

**Thinking Power:** Thinking power highlights emotions in the mind via the use of imagination.

The power to touch is referred to as the "power of feeling."

Emotions like love, hatred, truth, deception, rage, lying, tranquility, and serenity are all based on the power of contention<sup>19</sup>.

Farabi states that the comprehension of the creator is the goal of philosophy. Philosophy must lead people to conduct as nearly as possible in accordance with God's instructions, better them, change their communities, and concentrate on the advancement of the state.

People acquire information, learn by doing, and are able to discriminate between right and wrong. The fundamental distinction between humans and other animals is our growth, development, and status as the finest creatures in the world—all of which are useless without intellect. Humans are capable of feeling love, anger, and grief due to the power of disagreement.

Humans can regulate their nature thanks to reason, and communication has the potential to reveal human nature and encourage self-discipline. The philosophical writings of Farabi had a significant influence on the both Islamic and Western cultures. Farabi made a significant contribution to the development of Islamic philosophical and scientific thought by bringing Greek philosophy with the Muslim world.

In his ethics, Farabi has distinguished between moral virtues and vices<sup>20</sup>.

### **State Sovereignty**

Farabi asserts that certain people are better than others at deriving meaning from occurrences and drawing conclusions. These individuals guide others, and he asserts that a ruler need not guide people in every endeavor. People who possess these skills, traits, attributes, and credentials can function as the first or second leader in any field. The initial leader and ultimate leader should possess the following attributes:

"He has perfect arms and legs, good in comprehension and thinking, good and acute in memory, excellent in mind, savvy, good in expression, loves studying and getting something, staying away from prohibited and illegal food, drink, and a marriage, adores openness and truthfulness, kind, loves justice, strong-willed."<sup>21</sup>

According to Farabi, those who possess more of these attributes should be given precedence if it is not feasible for a single individual to possess all of these attributes. Alternatively, a group of people who meet these requirements ought to be assembled and led by the ultimate ruler. Farabi is the initial and sole political philosopher and thinker to have so thoroughly outlined the traits and qualifications of the ideal leader of the state, seemingly equating them with the concept of the Muslim Caliph. For every ruler, though, the underlying ideology can help create the perfect state. The idea of the perfect head of state may sound simple, but it might be difficult to put into practice in the actual world. Although the idea of such a leader of authority is simple, it is undoubtedly challenging to locate one in the real world.

By portraying this quality of Kind Talut, the ruler of Israel (King Saul is his Hebrew name), the Holy Quran reinforces the idea of such a leader of state via The Prophet. This idea presents a monarch with these attributes as competent and effective in upholding good government and defending human rights, displaying a lovely fusion of the contemporary and the ancient<sup>22</sup>.

### **Organization of the State**

Farabi claims that because the ultimate ruler learns from the Lord's system of authority, which holds that everything in the cosmos is arranged in its proper places, he is similar to Allah Almighty. Farabi

compares the human body to the political system. He claims that the ruler and the emir of the nation should be as perfect and faultless as possible, much as the coronary artery is the most vital organ in a person's body and must be in good health. Furthermore, the state's ruler analyzes and protects the rights of diverse groups in the same way as the heart decides the significance and proper operation of distinct bodily parts<sup>23</sup>. Farabi asserts that an organ's relative importance decreases with its distance from the heart. In this sense, the importance of officials in the state is determined by how close or how far they are from the head of state. The ultimate monarch sets up the proper framework for all government operations.

### **Idea of Democracy**

Farabi has split the empires into standard and non-standard sectors nearly in line with Aristotle's ideas, but he has gone into great depth to define the traits of the leader of state and government. Similar to Aristotelian ideas, Farabi permits private ownership in the hands of the government, as in democratic countries. He does, however, provide a middle ground between both extremes of socialism and capitalist regimes. Farabi does not agree with Plato's position that all things should be held in common, even if he thinks that common commodities should be owned by the residents of an ideal society<sup>24</sup>. People ought to be free to pursue their own interests and gain their own knowledge while maintaining shared ownership of their own private property, according to Farabi. He asserts that collectivism is against the nature of humans and that it cannot be practiced, placing a high value on individual rights.

### **Conclusion**

The Muslim philosopher Farabi, who lived in the third decade hijri, is well recognized for his expositions of Aristotle and for being a Second Master and Mentor. He is perhaps the first Islamic philosopher and thinker to methodically express his opinions on state matters, yet it is undeniable that his political theories are drawn from Islamic teachings. The concepts and qualities of the Umrani Covenant, also known as the social pact, were first detailed by Farabi in the tenth century AD. He views the state being the outcome of the social compact that exists between individuals. By laying the groundwork for the state and transferring certain rights of individuals to the highest authority, Farabi's social compact (also known as the Umrani covenant) creates a Republican, and democratic society. As the foundation of a stable society, Farabi advocated a social compact among humans that is based on mutual collaboration to attain happiness. This idea became the cornerstone of the state seven centuries later when Western political theorists and intellectuals like Locke, Rousseau, recognized it. Hobbes thought that the joint defense of rights and mistrust between parties formed the cornerstone of this agreement. Later philosophers and intellectuals who founded their social theories on

the writings of Al-Farabi were greatly impacted by his views. According to Farabi, an ideal state adheres to the values set out within the Madinah Al-Fadhila legislation rather than only providing for people's fundamental necessities. Since Madinah founded the ideal state's guiding principles, it is the finest instance of an ideal state. The golden age that it brought in for global history is proof positive of its accomplishment.

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