

Examining the Opportunities and Challenges of Shi'a Culture and Religion in the Political Development Process of Iraq After Saddam Hussein

Toktam Shahrestani¹, Ali Shirkhani^{2*}, Mashallah Heydar Pour³

^{1, 2*, 3} Department of Political Science, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran

Received: 10 May 2024 ; Accepted: 13 June 2024

Abstract

The present research aims to examine the opportunities and challenges of Shia's culture and religion in the political development process in Iraq after Saddam. The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the results indicate that post-Saddam Iraq provided a new opportunity for Shia to participate in power and incorporate their cultural and religious components into governance and forward-looking politics. Shia religion, due to its distinct principles of justice and imamate, sets it apart from other Islamic sects, principles that result in rationality, dynamic jurisprudence, and freedom, aligning with political development. The approaches of Shia authorities in recent years indicate the existence of rationality as a key element and indicator of political development. The attention of the people and obedience to the institution of authority in various fatwas and numerous crises witnessed by Iraq are evidence of political maturity and the growth of customary reasoning among the Shia community in Iraq. However, Shia in Iraq, due to years of staying away from power, lack of political governance experience, different interpretations of Shia jurisprudence regarding intervention and participation in politics, and realities of society and the international system imposed on Shia culture, have not been entirely in harmony with the Western concept of political development with Shia religious components in this post-Saddam era.

Keywords: Opportunity, Challenge, Shia Culture, Shia Religion, Political Development

*Corresponding Author's Email: shirkhani@qom-iau.ac.ir

Introduction

Opportunity is defined as a potential or hidden benefit. Similar to other concepts in the humanities, we face multiple definitions when defining this term. Culture and context place conditions and situations that can lead to progress and development in the definition of opportunity. The Oxford culture defines opportunity as the time or desirable conditions for accepting the accomplishment or implementation of something. In general, opportunity can be understood as a factor or situation that can have a positive and desirable impact on an individual, or assist them in performing tasks or achieving goals. It is worth noting that such a definition also applies to institutions, organizations, or legal entities.

Regarding the meaning of challenge, there is not much consensus. Dehkhoda interprets challenge as war, conflict, attack, and assault, while Moein sees it as clash and confrontation. Challenges can be defined as new conditions and situations that expose the future path of society to external attacks, making its balance difficult to maintain and requiring a difficult and fate-making effort. Therefore, it is essential to note a few points: firstly, not every challenge should be considered a threat, and secondly, not every crisis is considered a challenge, but challenges can be inferred from current crises. Thirdly, challenges are both risky and opportunistic.

The concept of culture is intertwined with various components in the realm of ideas, and sociologists have approached it from various perspectives. In the humanities, it is rare to

find a word that has a consensus in its meaning. Culture (Farhang in Farsi) is composed of "Far" meaning light and greatness, and "Hang" meaning heaviness, dignity, intention, and will. In terms of terminology, culture is defined as a broad concept that includes beliefs, values, and behaviors by social values and norms.

Edward Burnett Tylor defines culture as a complex set of knowledge, elements, arts, laws, ethics, and habits that are transmitted to the next generation through education and can vary from one region to another. Otto Klineberg considers culture as an inherent ability that an individual has acquired as a member of society. Guy Rocher sees culture as a continuous set of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, used in both tangible and symbolic ways to distinguish and specialize a group.

Regarding culture, Herskovits presents a triple characterization of the theoretical views on culture. He considers culture a general phenomenon, but each social group defines its own specific rules. He also sees culture as variable but constant, as despite the ability to change all social phenomena, this process is so slow and gradual that it appears constant. Regarding the third feature of culture, he considers the acceptance of culture compulsory but optional, meaning culture casts its shadow over all aspects of our social life but rarely explicitly imposes itself on us (Rahbar, 2014, p. 69).

The characteristics of culture, gathered from various opinions, are observable in the following diagram:

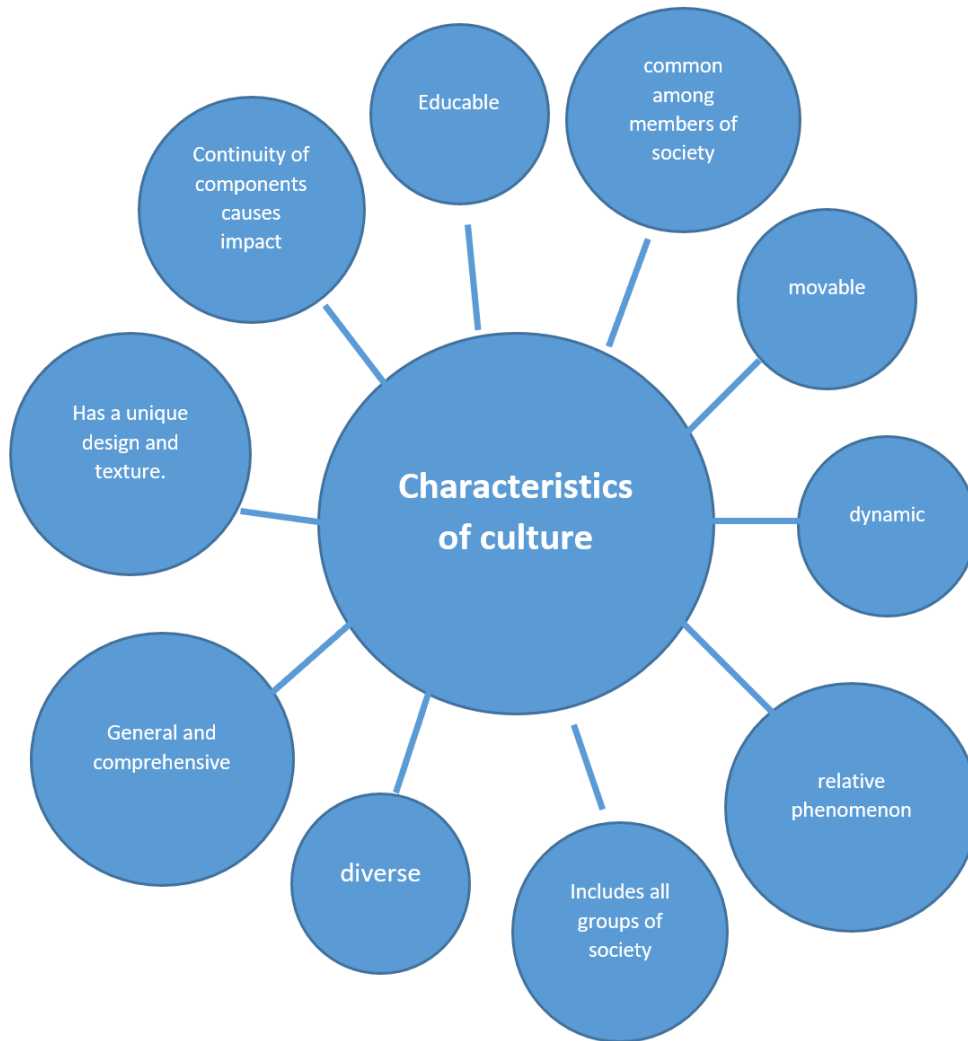


Diagram 1- <https://images.app.goo.gl/WuAosk5QxWYYRY5j9>

The cultural indices must be explored in beliefs and aspirations, interests and attitudes, etiquette and customs, religion, and language. One of the most important components of culture is religion, and the role of beliefs and convictions in shaping it, as well as the process of

its influence and impact, should be emphasized.

Considering the presence of religion and the role of beliefs and convictions as a key indicator of culture, and given the universality and finality of Islam and the Shia sect as the only

correct path, and the attention of this sect to the individual and social dimensions of human life, it is now time, after defining culture, to take a specific look at the Shia sect as one of the indicators of Shia culture.

After clarifying the discussion and concepts, the focus will shift to exploring the opportunities and challenges of Shia culture and religion in the political development process in Iraq after Saddam.

In the literal sense, Shia means follower, supporter, and coordination of two individuals or two groups in belief and action. In terminology, it refers to the followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) or those who believe in his immediate succession after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and also believe that the issue of succession, like prophet hood, is a divine matter. Shia, like other Islamic sects, has branched into various factions such as Zeidiyah, Waqifiyyah, etc., throughout its existence. The purpose of Shia in this discussion is the Twelver sect, i.e., those who believe in the leadership of Ali (peace be upon him) and his eleven descendants after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Sadeqi Fardani, 2022, p 44).

The components of Shia religion should be sought in its principles of belief. The two principles of Imamate and Justice, which are the distinguishing features of this sect from other Islamic sects, are based on rationality and independence in this religion, and for this reason, the followers of Sunni Islam, the followers of the Shia sect are recognized as just and rational (Feyrahi, 1998, p. 134). Ijtihad is another indicator separate from the principle of Imamate and in line with it in the era of

occultation. Therefore, the components of the Shia religion can be specifically evaluated in the existence of rationality, freedom, and dynamic ijtihad.

After presenting the reasons and documents for these indicators, in the next section, we will address the main question of the present research and discuss the opportunities and challenges of the culture and Shia religion in the political development process in Iraq after Saddam.

Political development is a concept that emerged in the literature after World War II and constitutes an important area of discussion in political science and political sociology. The concept of political development emphasizes the realization of economic efficiency, government efficiency, and functional concentration. Various theorists, such as Lucian Pye, refer to political development as an enhancer of the values of democracy in the Western capitalist system. Martin Lipset considers economic development and political legitimacy as necessary conditions for achieving political development. Gabriel Almond sees the transformation of democracy into a structured institution, public mobilization, and the expansion of civil society as necessary conditions for political development. In summary, political development is a process that provides the necessary groundwork for institutionalizing organization and political participation, resulting in the increased capacity of a political system. Due to its multidimensional and highly qualitative nature, political development is the most complex level of societal development. Generally, key elements of political development can be categorized around three axes: the people, the political system, and the government organization. The

individual refers to the shift from widespread dispersion to a form of coherence expanding from active citizens. The foundation of political development lies in this key element's subset, ultimately realized by presenting the phenomenon of triadic development (equality and participation, political capacity for stability, and specialization in structures and functions).

The system's capacity expansion refers to a system for public administration, conflict control, and addressing public demands. Almond & Powell associate political development with the influence of the system's performance and its responsiveness, citing five capabilities (extractive, regulatory, performance, distributive, symbolic, and responsive).

Government organization entails increasing structural differentiation, centralizing all organizations and institutions, and specializing functions. Huntington's attention to institution-building to realize these principles, with his definition of political development as the creation of political institutions with features of complexity, independence, and coherence to attract and regulate the participation of new groups, and promote social and economic change in society, can be placed under this key element (Aminzadeh, 1997, p. 110).

The significance of another point is that, as Sari'al-Qalam asserts with the presentation of 12 principles (encouraging positive individualism, emphasizing thinking as a common asset and expertise as a specific asset, highlighting independent and collective identity, the attention of the governing body to the interests and welfare of the people rather than their interests, emphasis on education and encouragement of the rationality of collective decisions, etc.), political development has been realized

in the context of rationality (Sari'al-Qalam, 1992, p. 26). Without paying attention to this element, discussing political development is a futile endeavor. Therefore, the components of political development should be pursued in rationality, participation, responsiveness, structural differentiation, and specialization of functions at three levels: individual, systematic, and governmental organization.

As for Iraq, it is a country that, in 1920, came under the mandate of Britain during the process of the partition of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Iraq went through periods of various forms of authoritarian, republican, coup, and repeated violence until finally, after years of deprivation, following the occupation of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and its allies, and the fall of Saddam, the Shia, who had been suppressed and deprived in previous periods, began a new era of political life. Since the behavior of countries in the domestic, regional, and international arenas without considering their political development and their strategies to embark on this path is not analyzable, this research examines the opportunities and challenges of Shia culture and religion in the process of political development in Iraq after Saddam. It seeks to clarify whether political development, in its common sense, is compatible with the theoretical foundations of the Shia faith or not. Can Shia culture facilitate the path of development in a country like Iraq or not? This can serve as the basis for other researchers to investigate the success or failure of the Shia faith in good and successful governance.

Research background

The research related to the present study can be categorized into three general groups. Research with a detailed and specific approach to examining the culture and religion of Shia has elucidated its components and indicators. Articles such as "An Examination of the Concept of Freedom in Shia Jurisprudence" by Nematollah Amini, "Reason and Rationality in Shia Thought" by Mahmoud Shafiei, and "Teachings of the Imams and Structural Changes in the Shia Religion" by Velayat and Farahmand pour fall under this classification. Although they cover essential points regarding the current subject, they do not render us independent of consulting other sources.

The second group of research focuses on exploring the relationship between political development and the culture and religion of Shia. Articles like "The Influence of Shia Mahdism on the Political Development of Shia Societies in the Occultation Era" by Shiroodi and Azizkhani, and "The Interaction of Culture Construction with Political Development in Shia Culture" by Abbas Ali Rahbar, are part of this group. However, despite their comprehensive and accurate content, which many aspects of the current research draw upon, they do not fully encompass the subject and do not specifically delve into examining the opportunities and challenges of Shia culture and religion. Therefore, the necessity of conducting the present research remains.

The third category of research, with a futuristic approach, delves into the future political structure of Iraq. "Political Organization in the New Iraq" by Haji Yousefi and Sultani-Nezhad, and "Typology of Shia Intellectual-

Religious Movements in the New Iraq" authored by Jamal Ashrafi, are part of this group.

Although the current research is indebted to the opinions and efforts of previous researchers, due to the novelty of the subject, it considers the above information necessary but insufficient in the course of the intended discussion.

Theoretical Foundations

Since sociology is a multidisciplinary field, (Jalali-pour, 2013, p. 96) the theoretical discussion at hand can be considered a combination of positivist, interpretive, and critical paradigms. Motivation in the positivist paradigm involves discovering or applying empirical theory, in the interpretive paradigm, understanding and describing social interactions, and in the critical paradigm, challenging dominant ideas. The nature and most important characteristics of humans in the positivist paradigm are rational and calculative, in the interpretive paradigm, humans are generative of meaning, and in the critical paradigm, humans are creative, flexible, and interpretive beings. In the positivist perspective, the knowledge of ordinary people lacks credibility, in the interpretive paradigm, the knowledge used by ordinary people in their daily lives should be taken seriously, and in the critical paradigm, common knowledge may be distorted and incorrect, hidden by ruling classes in the veil of ideology, and critical sociologists must make ordinary people aware of this distorted knowledge. The nature of social reality in the positivist view is the discovery of existing and recurring patterns of social relationships, in the interpretive view, the interpretation of human interactions in various situations, and in

the critical view, the acceptance of contradictions in social reality. A good explanation from the positivist perspective indicates a generalized theory that is considered correct from the interpretive view and, from the critical view, an explanatory aim to prepare people for changing the current situation. Positivists view values as neutral; interpretivists view values as the inability of humans to detach values, acknowledging that values are different but not superior, and critical theorists see all values accompanied by a kind of value position, sometimes ethical and sometimes non-ethical. Suitable evidence in social research in the positivist paradigm is evidence that is firm based on precise observations and has repeatability. In the interpretive paradigm, good evidence can be traced in the dynamic collective interactions, and in the critical paradigm, good evidence is one that effectively removes the illusions of people. Jalali-pour's divisions, after the above distinctions regarding the differences between positivist, interpretive, and critical paradigms and acknowledging the multidisciplinary nature of sociology, pave the way for explaining and adopting a combination of the above paradigms for the current article's discussion.

In this research, we need a combination of the above paradigms for analysis. Firstly, in the exploration of influential components in the culture and Shia religion in the process of political development, we delve into the existing realities, presenting an ontological and interpretive position on these components. Considering the critical paradigm, we do not overlook the weaknesses or obstacles in the theoretical foundations of the Shia school.

Opportunities for Shia religion and culture

As one of the specific components of its culture, the Shia religion benefits from different principles from other Islamic sects. The principle of imamate and justice, which is emphasized in the principles of the Shia religion, opens the way for our topic. What we can separate from the principle of Imamate for the present discussion is the attention to dynamic *ijtihad* in the Shia religion, and this principle is considered one of the opportunities for the development of the Shia religion.

Dynamic Ijtihad

After the minor occultation, Imamate continued in the form of the representation of the twelfth Imam as the authority. Authority is one of the fundamental elements of the identity of Twelver Shia Islam because it is an institution to which this group of Shia refers in legal, social, and theological matters (Researcher, 2010, p.55). Mohammad Javad Moghniyeh introduces the concept of *ijtihad* as having two simultaneous fundamental elements: the fourfold sources and the characteristics dominating the social life of each era (Moghniyeh, 1996, p.342). The roots of *ijtihad* trace back to the saying of Imam Sadiq (PBUH): "Upon us is the duty of establishing principles, and upon you is the duty of deducing the branches," emphasizing the role of Imams in elucidating general principles and the duty of mujtahids in deducing the specific branches and issues (Shafiee, 1381-114). One of the conditions of authority is being alive, and this can lead to the dynamism of the Shia school of thought in different periods because it provides the basis for deducing legal rulings based on the circumstances of time and place in contemporary issues for the reference

authority. The belief in the continuity of Imamate throughout history and the belief in the presence of the twelfth Imam in Shia thought to make this school responsible and proactive in improving the current situation. This characteristic, influenced by the principle of Imamate in the Shia school, aligns with one of the indicators of political development, namely the responsiveness and specialized functioning of the authority institution in the exploration and analysis of current issues. As seen in drafting the permanent constitution of Iraq after Saddam, the emphasis on conducting a general referendum and the struggle against challenges such as occupation were evident. The formation of the permanent constitution of Iraq can undoubtedly be considered a significant success in today's Iraqi political arena, achieved through the unity of Shia groups and timely intervention by the Shia authority (Ahmadi and Ghazvini Haeri, 2010, p.35).

Another opportunity that has been effective in the process of political development in Iraq, thanks to dynamic *ijtihad*, is the viewpoint of Ayatollah Sistani regarding the Sunnis. Previously, it was customary in Shia literature to consider Sunnis as our religious brothers, but Ayatollah Sistani emphasized that they should not be called our Sunni brothers; instead, they say they are our lives. This interpretation has been highly effective in the collaboration and cooperation of Sunnis with Shias for the transition to political development.

Intellect

In the field of Shia jurisprudence, intellect is one of the four sources of discovering legal rulings, considered as a means to elaborate on

the matter of Imamate through the principle of divine favor and the necessity of infallibility. Accepting the notion that God's favor dictates the need for a leader and a representative appointed by God, namely the infallible Imams after the Seal of the Prophets, is crucial for the proper and essential progress of both worldly and hereafter life. The obligation of infallibility for the Imams, who take on the leadership of the community, is in line with rational principles, consistent with human nature, and conforms to the path of human reason. It directs us to the fundamental existence of intellect and emphasizes Islamic teachings on thoughtful contemplation.

In the Holy Quran, intellect is mentioned 267 times in various forms such as reason, wisdom, understanding, prohibition, consideration, and jurisprudential credibility. The Prophet (PBUH) values the function of intellect, and Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes distancing oneself from worldly attachments based on intellect. Imam Sadiq (AS) identifies intellect as the inner proof (Rahbar, 2014, p. 82). Considering intellect as one of the fourfold shreds of evidence in Shia Islam alongside the Quran, tradition, and consensus for discovering legal rulings underscores the Shia commitment to thoughtful reflection and elucidation for the correct path in life, a commitment demonstrated over the centuries.

Gustave Le Bon refers to Islamic civilization as fundamentally rational, encompassing a broad sense of rationality. The rationality of Islam is attributed to its harmony with knowledge and nature. Practical intellect in Shia interpretation is a tool, alongside transmitted law, which, through the principle of divine favor, addresses the most important aspects of human life and distinguishes

humanity, making it superior among creations (Kazemi Shamlou, 2016). Firouzehi notes that Shia Islam is rational and free-thinking in both theology and religious jurisprudence. This is why it is recognized by Sunni scholars as 'Adliyya' or followers of reasoning (Feyrahi, 1998, p. 134).

Weber, in categorizing religions into belief systems and rituals, supports the claim of Islamic rationality. He restricts belief religions to those solely dedicated to salvation in the afterlife, contemplating life outside the conventional worldly framework. According to Weber, ritualistic religions attempt to establish a rational connection between humans and their surroundings by recognizing this world. Islam's approach to the world as a field for the hereafter, rejecting monasticism, and focusing on constructing a better world with injunctions like Zakat, Jihad, etc., based on this principle, is evident (Velayi & Farahmand pour, 2010, p. 192). The emphasis of jurists on customary reason in deducing legal rulings is part of Shia Islam's attention and emphasis on the role of intellect in understanding religion.

It is essential to note that having rational behavior does not mean humans are infallible; rather, it implies individuals have reached a level of understanding and comprehension that allows them to coexist peacefully in a civilized society, correct their mistakes, and engage in cooperation and benevolence (Yousefi & Amini, 2022, p. 260).

Considering the diversity of ethnicity and religion in Iraq, the Shia leadership, with its reliance on practical reason, played a significant and influential role in managing Iraq's affairs and subsequently contributing to political development through the rational and customary

approach. This has been a crucial and impactful opportunity, allowing Iraq, after Saddam, to showcase overall national unity and cooperation within the political structure, continuing its political development journey.

Freedom

Reason and rationality are foundational topics in the political, jurisprudential, and theological thought of Shia Islam. The interpretation and application of these concepts can either facilitate or hinder freedom. Mohammad Moin, in the Persian culture, has mentioned various meanings of freedom. Freedom, liberation, joy, happiness, tranquility, separation, gratitude, thanks, and more are among its meanings. Freedom is a complex concept that, with the element of choice and the rejection of dominance in personal life, ethics, and spirituality, aligns with and is synonymous with autonomy. While independent discussions of freedom are not explicitly addressed in jurisprudential books, there are references to freedom-related topics. Freedom of marriage, housing, civil rights, and more are among these discussions. The concept and issue of freedom in theology have been conceptualized through the principles of will, intention, compulsion, and choice assumed by scholars and speakers (Amini, 2020, p. 170).

The jurisprudential foundations of freedom can be found in challenging verses in the Quran, the call to good reasoning, the principle of goodness and ugliness in intellect, which leads to the existence of free will in human beings, and the right to freedom. The principle of non-dominance from a jurisprudential perspective, based on the saying of the Prophet, 'People are masters of their wealth,'

and the principle of the sanctity and respect for the property of Muslims, along with the principle of 'no harm' and no harm in Islam,' and the principle of permissibility, have been pursued (Mir Ahmadi, 1998, pp. 91-93).

Positive jurisprudential strategies in ensuring freedom include an emphasis on consultation, the right to criticize, recommending advice, and the principle of cooperation and supervision (Qadrnan Qaramolki, 2003, p. 232). If we define political development based on rationality, the right to freedom, and specialization of functions and institutions, and the power of accountability, the Shia culture and religion, with the positive elements of dynamic jurisprudence, rationality, and freedom, are perceived in harmony with political development.

The religious decrees (Fatwas) of religious authorities in critical situations such as the Najaf crisis, Fatwas preventing chaos, looting of public property during the crisis in Iraq after Saddam (Mohajeri, 2012, p. 40), in the process of drafting the constitution and emphasizing the preservation of Iraq's unity, statements about avoiding sectarian strife (Meraji Tabasi, p. 223), the Fatwa of Jihad against ISIS, and more can be evaluated based on the psychological and personality structure and the social and historical structure of the Shia community in responding to religious decrees in critical and decisive situations (Masjed Jamei, 2018, p. 75). This emphasizes the presence of rationality in the Shia religion, indicating dynamic jurisprudence and attention to the requirements of time and place, and the collaboration of society in participating and harmonizing with religious decrees in the new crises of Iraq in the process of political development.

The development of a political culture based on rationality, the right to freedom, and specialization of functions and institutions, and the power of accountability, is perceived in harmony with the political development of Iraq. The Shia school, with its positive components in various dimensions, such as the presence of knowledgeable scholars and elites, along with political strategies and organizational capacities, is rich in a network of institutions such as mosques, Hussainiyahs, religious gatherings, Shrines, and social capacities such as media, rituals, and religious ceremonies like Arbaeen, Hajj, Umrah, and visiting holy places (Khorramabad et al., 2022, p. 201). The Shia school, with such immense capacity in individual, institutional, and social dimensions, can pave the way for a new path of development, especially considering the increasing cultural interactions and the growing rationality, enabling the Shia people to have a mature understanding and involvement with scholars and the institution of religious authority as the most influential institution shaping Shia gatherings in various political, religious, and social dimensions. This can be a catalyst and shaper of a new path of political development and progress towards rationality.

In conclusion, opportunities, relying on the three principles of dynamic jurisprudence, freedom, and rationality in the Shia school, have enabled all groups to continue their political activities. Despite Shia Muslims constituting 60% of Iraq's population, their minority status does not deter them from political participation. The emphasis of Shia religious authorities and groups on the freedom of all ethnicities and minorities in all political fields is noteworthy.

Challenges of Shia culture and religion

The formation platform of development

In political and sociological literature, the belief is that no political or social phenomenon takes shape in a vacuum, but rather, it has roots in the social context of that society (Sardarnia and Zare Mehr Abadi, 2015, p. 187). Therefore, based on this concept, the framework, and space for the formation of the concept of development, as well as the interpretation and definition provided, are based on Western thought, which, although some aspects of it are accepted by the Shia community, is not entirely consistent. One of its most significant aspects is the emphasis on the rationality and instrumental use of its tools.

Weber, by dividing human actions into four groups: social action, emotional action, traditional action, and rational action related to values and rational action related to means-end, refers to the general capacities of human thought. Weber's emphasis on rationality related to the end is the same instrumental rationality that is not accepted by the Shia faith.

Contrary to 19th-century French anthropology, Weber argued that humans did not achieve their "rationality" through the Enlightenment movement, and individuals were never incapable of rational action in the past. In Weber's view, this connection is purely contingent, as it exists in sacrifices and worship and is the same as the calculation performed by the modern merchant regarding the most profitable means of profit. Action based on the rationality of means-end establishes the foundation for practical and formal rationality (Stefan Kallenberg, 2004, p. 58). This view of

rationality and the reliance of political development on the concept and application of instrumental rationality and attention to calculation is considered incompatible with the Shia school, where the goal is never justifiable as a means, and we cannot and should not use any means to achieve our goals.

Imam Ali (AS) in Sermon 200 of Nahj al-Balaghah states: "I swear to God, Muawiyah is not more politically savvy than me, but he deceives and commits various sins. And if I were not averse to deception and trickery, I would be the most politically savvy person."

The Iraqi context, given the ethnic diversity and the role-playing of regional and transregional actors, can be one of the challenges of political development. Considering that Shias in Iraq have mostly been without independent governance except for a few months during the 20th Revolution, it can provide a fertile ground for political development.

Different Readings of Shia Jurisprudence

Ali Taher Al-Hamoud's classification of various approaches of Shia in the political sphere, from the time of the Greater Occultation (329 AH) until today, can be enlightening and indicative of another challenge of the Shia school in the path of political development. The first period, the period of the flourishing of personal jurisprudence between the 4th and 10th centuries, without the involvement of jurists in political and governmental matters; the second period, the period of dominion and guardianship between the 10th and 13th centuries, where scholars focused on issues like Hisba and more.

The third period, the constitutional era, witnessed Shia scholars' attention to political

concepts such as rights, freedoms, and law, recognizing the legitimacy of the government with the presence of Shia mujtahids; the fourth period, the era of the Islamic Republic and the principle of Guardianship of the Jurist expanded the authority of the jurist to the extent of the Imam's authority; The fifth period, the era of reconstruction, introduced the theory of the Guardianship of the Ummah or the theory of the civil government, which found practical reflection in Iraq after 2003 (Al-Hamoud, 1397, p. 116). The intellectual evolution of Shia thought in different periods of jurisprudential life can itself offer a different interpretation of political development in its conventional sense. It is essential to note that culture is an evolving process and, considering the circumstances of time, place, and rational growth among human beings, can generalize, reject, or interpret beyond a given word.

As observed, some Shia individuals in Iraq, despite lacking a strong base, offer a different interpretation of development issues based on Shia culture and religion, which may pose challenges to the path of development.

The social realities and the distance of Shia from the government

After World War II and the emergence of concepts of development, the identity and nature of Shia, which had long been influenced by Western colonization and the imposition of different ideologies, led to the flourishing of a set of behavioral patterns based on dependency, indifference, a sense of irresponsibility, and social pessimism (Rashidi-Zadeh and Mohammadi, 2018, p.43), which was perceived in conflict with the concept of development and the necessity of participation, etc.

After the fall of Saddam, which created space for Shia dominance in power, the lack of expertise and long-term alienation from the power space, attention to the construction and fabric of Iraqi society, and the cultural weakness of the Shia and their semi-civilized situation considering the specific climatic conditions of southern Iraq, the lack of accumulated experiences and the weakness of systematic and organizational activities among Shia (Ghorbani, Bashiri, and Alizadeh, 2015, p.230), sometimes placing it in the translator of the conflict between tradition and modernity and the problems mentioned in the previous section, diversified the space from conventional development approaches in this area.

Cognitive obstacles, meaning different interpretations of Shia schools regarding politics and passive presence that can be influenced by the culture of long years of distance from power and structural problems in minority status and the legacy left for them by despotism and colonization, will pose challenges and obstacles to the movement of the Shia sect in the path of political development.

It can be said that the culture and religion of Shia played a trial-and-error role in pursuing the political development process in Iraq after Saddam, and this issue may create obstacles in some cases in the path of political development. In some instances, prime ministers have been appointed who are practically secular, although they are officially recognized as Shia. Considering this, the way Shia religion and culture have not emerged and flourished in the matter of political development in Iraq.

Conclusion

Three perspectives on the relationship between development and religion are presented.

The first approach is the differentiation approach, which sees religion and development as distinct domains. It argues that religion cannot be measured by scientific criteria, and development resulting from new scientific and rationality standards cannot be examined through religious criteria.

The second approach is the evolution approach, considering the relationship between development and religion as complementary. It suggests that a logical alignment can be designed for both developmental and religious explanations, synonymous with rational global governance under religious supervision.

The third approach is the conflict approach, where development resulting from science and human rationality in the modern era is in complete opposition to religion. This perspective places the scientific-oriented against the tradition-oriented.

After Saddam, Iraq provided a fresh opportunity for Shias to share power and integrate their cultural and religious components into governance and frontline politics. According to the new constitution of Iraq, the political system is parliamentary, with the majority of powers vested in the parliament. Any group with a majority in parliament will assume the

position of prime minister as the head of government, the most powerful executive official. This transformation, a result of the guidance from the religious authorities in the formulation of the constitution and the Shia majority's adherence to it, led to a shift in the culture and status of Shia Islam in Iraq. Shia Islam, due to its distinct principles of justice and Imamate, sets itself apart from other Islamic sects. Its principles of rationality, dynamic jurisprudence, and freedom distinguish it, aligning well with political development.

In recent years, the approaches of Shia authorities have indicated the presence of rationality as a key element and indicator of political development. The attention of the people and adherence to the authority in various fatwas and numerous crises witnessed in Iraq are evidence of political maturity and intellectual growth within the Shia community. The existence of the authority institution plays a significant role in preserving stability in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East. However, due to the Shia minority's historical distance from power, lack of political governance experience, different interpretations of Shia jurisprudence, reluctance to engage in politics, and realities of society and the international system imposed on Shia culture, we conclude that considering the different Western interpretations of political development, Iraq has not been entirely aligned with the concept and path of political development during this period after Saddam's fall.

References

Holy Quran

- Ahmadi, Farajollah; Ghazvini Hayeri, Yaser (2010). The process of drafting the Iraqi Constitution. *Politics*, Volume 40(14).
- Al-Mahmoud, Ali Tahir (2018). The emergence of Shia government: The experience of Shia governance in post-Saddam Iraq. Isfahan: Arma.
- Amini, Nematollah (2020). Examination of the concept of freedom in Shia jurisprudence. *New Horizons in Political Jurisprudence*, No. 8.
- Aminzadeh, Mohsen (1997). Political development. *Political and Economic Information*, No. 117-118.
- Ashrafi, Jamal (undated). Typology of Shia intellectual-religious currents in the new Iraq, *International Institute of Mustafa*.
- Feyrahi, Davood (1998). Foundations of freedom and party in Shia jurisprudence. *Political Science*, No. 3.
- Ghorbani, Arsalan; Bashiri, Saeed; Alizadeh, Javad (2015). The role of the political authority of Ayatollah Sistani in the process of state-building in post-Saddam Iraq. *International Relations Studies*, 8(30).
- Haji Yousefi, Amir Mohammad; Soltaninejad, Ahmad (2008). Political system in the new Iraq, *Office of Political and International Studies*.
- Jalaeipour, Hamidreza (2013). *Sociology of Iran: Distorted modern society*. Nashr-e Elm.
- Kalberg, Stefan (2010). Types of rationality from the perspective of Max Weber. *Foundations for the analysis of rational processes*. Translated by Mehdi Dastgerdi. *Ma'aref Magazine*, No. 80.
- Kazemi Shamloo, Mehdi (2017). Examining the fourfold sources of jurisprudence from the Shia and Sunni perspectives (reason, consensus, tradition, Quran). *Sokhan Jamee*, 6(12).
- Khorramabad; Mohammad Baqer, Jamshidian, Hadi; Aghayi, Seyed Hassan; Akhtari, Mohammad Hassan; Rashid, Abdul Reza (2022). Networking of Shia Muslims worldwide: Opportunities and challenges ahead. *National Security Journal*, No. 45.
- Masjed Jamei, Mohammad (2018). *Iran and the geopolitics of the region: Findings and unseen*. Information Publications.
- Mir Ahmadi, Mansour (1998). The concept of freedom in Shia political jurisprudence. *Political Science*, 1(1).
- Moghniyeh, Mohammad Javad (1998). *Al-Mizan Fi Al-Shi'a*. Lebanon: Dar Al-Tayyar Al-Jadeed.
- Mohajeri, Masih (2012). *Ayatollah Sistani and the new Iraq*. Publications of the Islamic Republic newspaper.
- Mohegh, Seyed Adnan (2010). The role and function of the transcendent institution of Shia authority in contemporary Iraq. *Middle East Studies*, No. 62.

Nahj al-Balaghah.

Qardran Qaramolki, Mohammad Hassan (2003). Freedom in jurisprudence and its limits. Qom: Boostan Ketab.

Rahbar, Abbasali (2014). The interaction of culture construction with political development in Shia political culture. *Strategic Policy Research*, 3(39).

Rashidi Zadeh, Behnam; Mohammadi, Ali (2018). Political culture and its impact on the failure of the democratization process in the Middle East with an emphasis on the Arab world. *Political Sociology of the Islamic World*.

Sadeghi Fadaki, Seyed Jafar (2022). What Shias Say. Tehran: Mirashe Sharq.

Sardarnia, Khalilullah; Zare Mehr Abadi, Mohammad (2015). Federalism and political culture in Iraq. *Foreign Relations*, No. 25.

Sari'al-Qalam, Mahmoud (1992). The principles of stable political development. *Political-Economic Information Journal*, No. 55-56.

Shafiee, Mahmoud (2002). Reason and rationality in Shia political thought. *Political Science*, No. 17.

Shirkhani, Ali (2007). Freedom from the perspective of Shia Islam. Tehran: Center for Islamic Revolution Documents.

Shiroodi, Morteza; Azizkhani, Ahmad (2013). The impact of Shia messianism on the political development of Shia societies in the era of occultation is based on the three components of wisdom, love, and justice. *Journal of Islamic Political Research*, No. 3.

Valayi, Ali Mohammad; Farahmand Pour, Fahimeh (2010). The teachings of the Imams and the structural changes of the Shia religion. *Journal of Iranian History*, 1(4).

Yousefi, Mohammad Ali; Amini, Amrollah (2022). Evolutionary rationality and development. *Economic Analysis of Iran's Development*, No. 21.

Zargar, Alireza; Nafar, Zahra (2016). Exploring the impact of Shia political culture on the formation of the roots of the Islamic Revolution and its victory. *Islamic Revolution Studies*, No. 16.