



## Utopia In Avicenna's And Ibn Khaldun's Socio - political Point Of View; A Comparative Study Based On Spriggan's Model

Ahmad Jahani Nasab<sup>1</sup> 

1. Postdoctoral Researcher of Political Thoughts (West, Islam and Iran), Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran. Email: [mehrdad.jahaninasab@gmail.com](mailto:mehrdad.jahaninasab@gmail.com)

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 27 October 2023 Received in revised form: 11 December 2023 Accepted: 17 December 2023 Published online: 20 March 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Asabiyyah, Avicenna, Ibn Khaldun, Prophetic government, Solidarity.</i></p>	<p>This article aims to analyze Utopia from Avicenna and Ibn Khaldun's socio - political point of view based on Spriggans' model. Therefore, the research question is: How did Avicenna and Ibn Khaldun think about the idea of Utopia and what ideal solution did they propose to get rid of its crises? Using the descriptive - analytical method, as well as library resources, the researcher found out that in an effort to create a link between politics and prophecy, Avicenna considered the crisis to be a lack of centralized national power, which in turn led to a lack of prophetic policy and proper implementation of sharia laws. Proposing the Utopia, he considered a prophetic political law as the best system, in which the prophet or his successor is at the forefront. His Utopia includes reconciliation of religion and philosophy, linking politics with sharia, and maintaining the unity of the Muslim community through the philosopher - prophet concentrated power. In fact, proposing of Utopia from the socio - political perspective was based on the divine nature of man and the maximum role of government in the felicity and salvation of citizens in this world and hereafter. However, in Ibn Khaldun's point of view, formation and expansion of powerful and vast governments are related to origin of religious principles and the role of religion in the lifespan of the states. He considers the state a fluid and declining phenomenon that, like humans, has a natural lifespan from its emergence to its decadence. Given that, in addition to tribal solidarity (Asabiyyah), religious solidarity can strengthen governments.</p>
<p><b>Cite this article:</b> Jahani Nasab, A. (2024). Utopia from Avicenna's and Ibn Khaldun's socio - political point of view; A comparative study based on Spriggans' model. <i>Journal of Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers</i>, 14(1): 86-107. <a href="https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2023.367074.1661">https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2023.367074.1661</a></p>	



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2023.367074.1661>

## **1. Introduction**

The idea of an ideal society, or in other words, “Utopianism” has always occupied the minds of philosophers and thinkers throughout history. Basically, humans have infinite needs and desires and act in any possible ways to achieve them. The ideal society can also be considered one of these human desires and wish because man has always sought to find the best society where he can realize his desires and achieve spiritual perfection and meet his material needs. Therefore, as long as we consider humans as having a social life with diverse and different demands and needs, defining an ideal society and a desirable system that can include the worldly and spiritual dimensions of humans seems necessary because human beings, in addition to meeting their worldly and material desires, also need to enhance the level of spiritual life and achieve the highest level of human perfection; hence the importance of explaining the ideal society in Aviceenna and Ibn Khaldun’s point of view using Spriggans’ method. Therefore, the paper aims to focus on their philosophical and political foundations.

As one of the great thinkers of the Islamic world, Aviceenna’s insight into the nature of government and the way of ruling society and socio-political institutions can be found in his works, such as *Al-Shifa*, *Al-Isharat*, and *Al-Tanbihat* (Halabi, 1993:509-510). Ibn Khaldun who was a thinker of the 14th century born in Tunisia, is considered by some to be a social philosopher, and according to others, is the first theorist of decadence in the Islamic world, who looked at the origin of decadence from a sociological perspective. He realized the origin of decadence was internal developments, therefore has focused on analyzing the power relations and social realities. Thus, the paper aims to answer this basic question: How do Aviceenna and Ibn Khaldun think in defining the ideal political system and their ideal society? In addition to that, it’s assumed that socio-political ideas are formed in a specific time and place and related to the era of the thinker, which can be understood by studying more than one historical perspective.

## **2. Methodology**

Theoretical and library data collection methods were used in the study. Also, based on the main research question with a comparative approach, descriptive –analytical case method was used. In addition, in terms of methodology, an interpretive approach, Wilhelm Dilthey’s methodological hermeneutic type, was used. Based on this approach, understanding the relationships between phenomena occurs in layers, and in understanding the system of socio-political opinions, knowing one requires understanding other components.

## **3. Findings**

### **1. The constructive concepts of Aviceenna and Ibn Khaldun’s philosophical thought system**

To understand the ideal society from the socio-political perspective of Aviceenna and Ibn Khaldun, the researcher used Thomas Spriggans’ model and its four stages in the book *Understanding Political Theories*, including observing crisis and disorder, identifying the causes of problems, community reconstruction, and solutions. Basically, it’s assumed that socio-political thoughts are formed in a specific time and place and related to the era of the thinker, and to understand it, it is inevitable to benefit from just one historical perspective. It is assumed that intellectual background is the concepts of the philosophical system of thought and the historical time as the era of these two thinkers.

In Aviceenna’s thought, as a result of the hierarchical nature of the universe, the universe ends to an active intellect, and the prophet is considered the ultimate of human perfection and the connecting link between man and divine intellect (Gilson, 2016:288). This shows the position and role of the Prophet in the leadership of his ideal society; since he is the most justified person who can take the leadership of the society by connecting to the active intellect being close to the divine and cosmic intellect. Hence, Aviceenna considers prophecy and revelation to have a political dimension. This view considers the civilized society to consist of two main components, namely, law and politics, and

deals with the political role of prophecy. According to him, he is considered a prominent politician and legislator of the society (Amid Zanjani,2008:209). So the main issue of politics is to bring the citizens to the ultimate happiness and perfection of man, which is possible only by the most justified people, i.e prophets.

In Ibn Khaldun's intellectual system solidarity plays a key role. It is the primary element of human communities, which in its simple form is the defense of ethnicity and relatives, and in a more complex form, it applies to governance. According to Ibn Khaldun, solidarity is a unifying factor and a means of defending the members of the nation and the only way to protect the country and the government:

Dominance and power and defense are undoubtedly achieved through solidarity , because ethnic pride and a sense of common support and defense, and the sacrifice of each individual for the sake of his friends are the results of solidarity (Ibn Khaldun, 2019:294).

The cycle theory and the organic nature of the state from Ibn Khaldun's point of view are also interesting. He considers the cycle theory and the lifespan of governments from emergence to decadence as a tool for analyzing power relations and political, social, economic change . Hamer divides governments into three eras of forty years, like the average age of a person. The first generation is still violent and nomadic which is due to intensity of solidarity among them. The second generation has changed their mood due to pampering, and the third generation, due to the lack of initial solidarity , reaches that degree of luxury and comfort that weakens and becomes fragile(Ibn Khaldun, 2019: 324 -326).

## **2. Avicenna and Ibn Khaldun's ideal society plan based on the Spriggans' model**

Avicenna saw the crisis of the political system in the sectarian differences and the lack of unity of the Islamic society, the lack of a powerful central government and ultimately the weakness and decadence of the caliphate. He knew the separation from the Shariah, therefore, he dreamed of reconciliation between religion and philosophy and the connection of politics with the Shariah in order to return the Islamic society to the ideal Islamic society and the righteous caliphas and the unity of the Islamic society. He has paid attention to the salvation of the hereafter and the happiness of the worldly and this world of the citizens and believed that the citizens should cooperate with each other to achieve the happiness of the world and salvation of the hereafter within the framework of social life. Therefore, to achieve this goal, the most competent and the most knowledgeable people should govern nations based on Sharia law. Thus, Avicenna considered the way out of the political crisis and chaos to be the establishment of a utopia and the implementation of Sharia law. In fact, a leader is necessary to guide the society by establishing traditions and laws, such a person must know justice and tradition well and be able to implement them. In the plan of an ideal and desirable society, the establishment of the law of justice and its implementation in society is very important. In the Theology of Healing, he considers the prophet to be the best person who can guide the people to the happiness of this world and the salvation of the other world by guiding the political society and implementing the laws of the people.

Therefore, he considers the prophet necessary for human societies and considers the best just law to be derived from Sharia. Basically, the lack of concentration of central power and the lack of unity among Muslims led to the establishment of Abbasid dynasty in Iraq, Iran, and Trans -Netherlands, the Fatimid in Egypt and the Maghreb, and the Umayyad in Andalusia, which itself was a clear sign of the crisis of legitimacy in the Islamic realm. Therefore, by their socio -political theory, these two thinkers motivated the Islamic world to plan a desirable and ideal society. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun, as a theoretician of the philosophy of history and social philosophy in the Islamic world, considers the nature of the state, under the guidance and control of the general laws of nature and its fixed rules. he believes in the concept of“ solidarity” as fruitful both in the rise and fall of governments. Although he considers the two categories

of solidarity and religion to be effective elements in creating social bonding, he believes that ethnic and tribal solidarity leads to waste of energy and resources in governance and to continuous war and conflict between tribes. However, solidarity in religion and its spread is admirable.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study has focused on this issue: how did Aviceinna and Ibn Khaldun think about the ideal society and how did they analyze the crisis of the political system and what ideal solution did they offer to get rid of it? Therefore, for a better understanding of the results, the two thinkers' socio-political viewpoints are in the following table:

thinkers	problematology	etiology	utopianism	Problem solving
<b>Aviceinna</b>	Weakness of Caliphate and tyranny of the rulers; existence of independent governments and dispersion of power; sectarian conflicts and lack of unity in Islamic society; lack of spiritual trust in the caliphate system	Lack of prophetic policy and lack of proper implementation of Sharia laws; lack of a justified leader or philosopher-including prophet or his successor-at the head of the government; conflict between people of religion and people of philosophy	Reconciliation of people religion and philosophy and link between policy and Sharia; preservation of Muslim unity through a policy typically consistent with the policy of philosopher-prophet	Establishing the utopia in the form of a prophetic government and leadership; compilation and proper implementation of Sharia law
<b>Ibn Khaldun</b>	Decline due to conflict between Islamic countries and government disorders due to the crusades; disruption of administrative system	Anti-rationalism and an absolute attention to hadith and conflicts between religious people and philosophers; weakening of solidarity as a factor of unity	Reference to human nature to enhance the primary solidarity; compilation of the dual policy of law and reason and attempts to link them together	Caliphate as a desired government and dynasty as a natural government according to the rules of human life considering solidarity and religion as two bases of unity

Analysis of proposal of Utopia from Aviceinna and Ibn Khaldun's socio-political point of view based on Spragens' model

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Ethical Considerations:** Complied with.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declare no conflict of interest.

#### References

- Amid Zanjani, A. (2008). *Basics of Islamic political thought*, Tehran: Pajuheshgahe farhang va andisheye eslami pub.
- Gilson, E. (2016). *The history of Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages*, translated by Reza Gandami Nasrabadi, Qom: University of Adyan va Mazahab.
- Halabi, A. (1993). *History of Islamic civilization: review of Islamic culture and intellectual sciences*, Tehran: Asatir.
- Ibn Khaldun, A. I. M. (2019). *Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah*, Translated by Muhammad Parvin Gonabadi, Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi..