



Makale Türü / Article Type: Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

SHIISM AS AN INTELLIGENCE ELEMENT: THE CASE OF SHIAS OF PAKISTAN AND INDIA

¹Orhan KARAOĞLU

Abstract

The concept of intelligence refers to information and news found in a raw state, which, after being classified, processed, and interpreted, results in the production of information or a product. States or organizations gather the needed information through various activities and methods throughout the process, named the intelligence cycle, from obtaining raw data to processing it into information or a product. States/Organizations use the information they obtain as a strategic element in both their internal and external threats, security strategies, foreign policies, decision-making processes, as well as in any activities related to the target country/organization. In the intelligence collection process, various methods and elements are used, and one of the most important elements of this process is the Religious and Sectarian factor. States evaluate religious and sectarian factors in areas such as internal security, ethnic-sectarian issues, counterterrorism, international relations, education, culture, etc., contributing to the strategic decision-making process. Iran is also one of the states that stands out with the religious and sectarian factor. Iran benefits from its official Shiite denomination in its legal and state structure, internal and foreign policies, as well as security strategies, and conducts activities for this purpose on Shiite groups living in other countries. This article provides a detailed analysis of the use of religion and sect as a significant intelligence element, focusing on Iran's activities through the Shiite population in Pakistan and India, using open intelligence sources and the case analysis method.

Keywords: Iran, Shiism, Intelligence, Pakistan, India

Bir İstihbarat Unsuru Olarak Şiilik: Pakistan ve Hindistan Şiileri Örneği

Öz

İstihbarat kavramı, ham bir şekilde bulunan bilgi ve haberlerin, tasnif edilmesi, işlenmesi ve yorumlanması sonucunda üretilen enformasyon veya ürün anlamına gelmektedir. Devletler veya örgütler ihtiyaçları olan bu bilgileri, istihbarat çarkı olarak isimlendirilen ve ham bilginin elde edilmesinden bunun işlenerek bir enformasyona/ürüne dönüşmesine kadar geçen süreçteki çeşitli faaliyet ve yöntemlerle toplamaktadır. Devletler/Örgütler elde ettikleri bu bilgileri hem kendilerine yönelebilecek olan iç ve dış tehditler, güvenlik stratejileri, dış politikaları ve karar alma süreçlerinde hem de hedef ülke/örgüt üzerindeki her türlü faaliyetlerinde stratejik bir unsur olarak kullanılmaktadır. İstihbarat toplama sürecinde birçok yöntem ve unsur kullanılıyor olmakla birlikte, bu sürecin en önemli unsurlarından bir tanesi de Din ve Mezhep unsurudur. Devletler, din ve mezhep unsurlarını iç güvenlik, etnik-mezhepsel sorunlar, terörle mücadele, uluslararası ilişkiler, eğitim, kültür vb. alanlarda değerlendirerek stratejik karar alma süreçlerine katkı sağlamaktadır. İran, din ve mezhep faktörü ile ön plana çıkan devletlerden bir tanesidir. İran hem hukuk ve devlet yapılanmasında hem iç ve dış politikasında hem de güvenlik stratejilerinde resmi mezhebi olan Şiilikten faydalanmakta ve diğer ülkelerde yaşayan Şii gruplar üzerinde bu amaçla faaliyetler gerçekleştirmektedir. Bu makale, açık istihbarat kaynakları ve vaka analizi yönteminden faydalanarak, din ve mezhebin önemli bir istihbarat unsuru olarak kullanılması konusunda, İran'ın Pakistan ve Hindistan'daki Şii nüfus üzerinden gerçekleştirdiği faaliyetler üzerine detaylı bir analiz sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelime: İran, Şiilik, İstihbarat, Pakistan, Hindistan

¹ Doç. Dr., T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, orhankaraoglu@gmail.com, ORCID: [0000-0003-1389-5512](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1389-5512)



INTRODUCTION

Intelligence is the collection and analysis of information, particularly aimed at a specific purpose, rather than covert operations described as clandestine activities. Intelligence is the product that emerges at the end of the process of collecting, comparing, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting information. In essence, intelligence is the information or strategic knowledge obtained through the analysis of the gathered data, directed towards action. Intelligence is a universal social science that aims to understand and predict all kinds of political, economic, social, religious, and military events.

In the 21st century, a significant portion of intelligence is obtained from open-source intelligence (OSINT) channels. Open Source Intelligence, generally referred to as OSINT, denotes the process of collecting and analyzing information from publicly available and accessible sources. OSINT is often combined with other intelligence-gathering methods and plays a crucial role in the decision-making processes at strategic, tactical, or operational levels. It is widely used by governments, military units, intelligence agencies, security firms, and numerous organizations in the private sector, constituting a vital component of the intelligence collection process (Andrew, Aldrich, Wark, 2019).

The process of intelligence gathering is carried out using various tools and methods. Intelligence gathering tools are typically employed to obtain, analyze, and interpret information from different sources. These tools operate in various fields, ranging from open sources to covert operations. Religion and sect can also serve as significant tools in intelligence. They can be utilized in various ways within the intelligence domain. However, it should be noted that the use of religion and sect as intelligence elements is generally a sensitive topic and can potentially lead to complex consequences. The use of religion and sect as intelligence elements usually occurs within a specific political, security, or geopolitical context. For instance, elements related to religion and sect can be crucial in understanding internal conflicts in other countries, using them for propaganda and social engineering purposes, influencing the target country's domestic and foreign policy decision-making processes, and making strategic decisions accordingly (Andrew, Aldrich, Wark, 2019).

Today's world is undergoing a process in which social scientists, particularly those in the fields of political science and international relations, are striving to comprehend and contextualize geopolitical developments. Interdisciplinary collaboration is crucial in this process of meaning-making and interpretation. Due to the fact that global and regional issues cannot be comprehensively understood from a singular perspective, it is necessary to conduct multi-layered and dimensional analyses that incorporate various factors, including culture, religion, sect, sociology, economy, and psychology.

In contemporary times, the phenomenon of religion is a complex concept that affects individuals, society and the state. It exerts influence at both an individual level and in the context of social and international relations. Factors such as values, beliefs, culture, ideology and gender are instrumental in shaping personal identities. Specifically, religion and worldview are pivotal in defining identity for both individuals and societies.

Religion has emerged as a phenomenon influencing and shaping the domestic and foreign policies of nations. Notably, in the 21st century, religion has increasingly impacted international relations across diverse spheres. Another area where International Relations has begun to establish relations in recent years has been religion. When investigating foreign policy decision-making processes, it becomes evident that the influence of religious beliefs, religion-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations plays a significant role in the deliberations of state administrators and intelligence operations.

The discussion of Islamic Sects, especially Shiism, has drawn much attention in recent years due to its significant impact globally and regionally. Along with the Persian legacy inherited from the Persian Empire, Shiism has had a considerable influence on Iran's geopolitical and geo-cultural education, which persists to date. The politicization of Shiism has emerged as a crucial factor in shaping Iran's national identity, possibly the most significant. Iranian Shiism, with its unparalleled socio-cultural framework, sets it apart from surrounding civilizations and has since become a key driver of Iran's contemporary foreign policy and security agenda. Since the reign of Shah Ismail, Iranian Shiism has become inextricably linked with Persian nationalism. However, it appears that Shiism holds significant importance as an intelligence component for the Iranian government.

Iran has exerted its influence over Shiite communities through its proxies in different regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. Additionally, it is actively working to convert promising individuals in the political field to the Shiite sect. Shiism plays a major role in Iran's intelligence and security policies. This article aims to explore how Iran employs Shiism as an intelligence tool in Pakistan and India.

1. SHIITE GROUPS IN PAKISTAN

The population of Pakistan totals about 220 million individuals, of which 18-20% are of Shiite descent. The Shiite population is scattered throughout Pakistan. Ethnic Pakistanis make up the majority of Shiite groups, while Shiites of Iranian and Arab ancestry also call the country home (Vatanka, 2012). The majority of Pakistan's Shiite population is affiliated with the Ithna'asheriya-Imamiyya faith. Besides this group, other influential Shiite sects in Pakistan include Nizari Ismailis Aga Khan Group, Musta'li Davudi Bohra, and Suleimani Bohra (Zaidi, 2016).

Pakistan holds significant value for the Iranian state, as it serves as a crucial area for Iran's Shiism activities. In this regard, Iran is pursuing a policy to maintain a hold on the Shiites in Pakistan. It has been reported that Iran aims to prevent the unification of the Shiites groups mentioned above and prefers to keep communication with them separately (Abbas, 2010).

1.1 Sipahi Muhammed Pakistan

Established in 1994, Sipahi Muhammed Pakistan was formed to combat the Pakistan Sahabe Army (Sipah-e Sahabe Pakistan) and its affiliated militant group, Lashkar-e Cengvi (Lashkar-e Jhangvi),

due to their involvement in anti-Shiite activities. The group offers both military and religious training to Shiite factions and also undertakes operations against Sunnis. The organisation operates in Punjab, Gilgit, Baltistan, Para Çınar and Karachi. The leader, Seyit Gulam Rıza Nakvi, has been imprisoned since 1996. Reports estimate that the organisation has around 10,000 members. It has been alleged that Iran offers logistical and material support to the group (Rathore, 2017).

This organisation was added to the list of proscribed groups in 2002 during the tenure of the former President Pervez Musharraf. It has an estimated membership of around 10,000 individuals and is believed to have approximately 30,000 supporters and sympathisers as per certain researchers. SMP could potentially target the leadership of the Pakistani Companion Army (SSP) and its armed wing, Lashkar-e Jhangvi, as well as Pakistani state officials and moderate Shiite clergy in its activities. The group receives financial backing, either direct or indirect, from Iranian and Indian Intelligence Services, and also generates funds from donations made by the Shiite community (Rathore, 2017).

The detention of the SMP leader in Pakistan, along with the freezing of the organization's bank accounts and internal conflicts, significantly weakened the group. Consequently, SMP now operates as a collection of local and autonomous entities. After the banning of SMP and Jageri Fiqh Sovereignty Movement (Tehrik-e Nifaz-e Fiqh-e Jafaria-TNFJ), a portion of their members came together to establish the Unity Council of Muslims (Majlis-e Wahdat-e Muslimeen-MWM). Leaders of MWM receive regular support from Iran and frequently visit the country. MWM has a militia wing, but asserts that it serves as the "political representative of the Shia community" and maintains no ties to militias. The group conducted extensive public protests throughout Pakistan from 2012 to 2015 (Zaidi, 2016)

On the contrary, according to Pakistani intelligence circles, Iran attempted to assert control over the Shiite community in Pakistan by supporting Shiite organizations such as SMP and MWM. Iran also infiltrated a number of armed groups within Pakistan to safeguard its own interests, and it is even alleged that there are individuals working on behalf of Iran within anti-Shiite LJ (Abbas, 2010).

1.2 Shiite Militias in Pakistan

Shiite militia groups such as Pasdaran Mahdi, Ansar Hussain, Tehrik Hussain, Hezbollah and Mehdi Mala operate in Kurram/Paraçınar, Gilgit and Quetta. Abid Hussein Hussein, a former senator, plays a crucial role in the leadership of these groups. The "Central Imambargah" situated in Paraçınar on the Afghanistan border serves as the headquarters of Shiite militia groups. As Paraçınar shares a border with Afghanistan, it remains susceptible to interventions from across the border (Rathore, 2017).

Militia training camps owned by SMP are present in Paraçınar. Security points have been established in the region as a part of the activities of strong Shiite militia groups located in Paraçınar and its nearby areas. Over 400 families in the area were compelled to relocate to Sunni settlements due to the militias' coercion. Conversely, Shiite militias purportedly prevent Sunnis from selling properties or purchasing real estate in the locality. Shiite worship sites could also be utilised to disseminate religious instruction to Shiite militias (Abbas, 2010).

Members of the organization that puts pressure on Sunnis in these regions engage in activities close to Iran. In response to the pressure from the Shiite militias, the Sunnis residing in this region were compelled to move to Sunni settlements in Pakistan. There are indications of Shiite-Sunni tension, which is common in the Middle East, observed in this region. It is widely understood that during times of heightened Sunni-Shiite tension, there have been instances of damage to Sunni mosques and cemeteries. It is of interest to note that in this particular region, the Iranian flag is occasionally displayed in Shiite homes. In addition to providing support to Shiite political parties, Iran also enlists men from the Shiite factions in Pakistan and deploys them to conflict zones. It has been reported that Iran supported these militias and recruited Pakistani Shia citizens from the region to assist the Houthis in the Middle East, particularly in Yemen (Vatanka, 2012).

1.3. Shia Political Parties

"Unity Council of Muslims (MWM)" and "Pakistan Jafari Movement" (TJP) are the main Shiite political parties. MWM has gained significant recognition from the dispersed Shiite community in various regions. TJP represents the most prominent Shiite political organization in Pakistan. Its founding dates to 1979 with the TJNF aimed at upholding Jafari Jurisprudence sovereignty. After the death of the leader Jafar Hussein, Sayyid Arif Hussein Al-Husseini, who had been Ayatollah Khomeini's disciple, assumed the leadership position (Majidiyar, 2014).

In 2002, the Pakistani administration banned TJP, which later assumed different names in parliament. Presently, the Federal Assembly of Pakistan includes representation from the Pakistan Shia National Council (SUC). For instance, the Pakistan Imamiyya Students Organization (ISO), in addition to others like "Jamaat-i Islami (JI)" and "Islamic Ulema Cemiyeti-Samiu'l-Halk", enjoy Iranian backing. Iran lends its support to some Sunni and Shia groups. For instance, the Pakistan Imamiyya Students Organization (ISO), in addition to others like "Jamaat-i Islami (JI)" and "Islamic Ulema Cemiyeti-Samiu'l-Halk", enjoy Iranian backing. For instance, the Pakistan Imamiyya Students Organization (ISO), in addition to others like "Jamaat-i Islami (JI)" and "Islamic Ulema Cemiyeti-Samiu'l-Halk", enjoy Iranian backing (Majidiyar, 2014).

All of these organisations and groups have an influence on Shiites in Pakistan through various propaganda tools. These activities are conducted through television channels, newspapers, and websites. Numerous websites, including www.islamitimes.org, www.shiaforums.com, en.shiapost.com, www.islamicthought.co.uk, and www.ya-hussain.com, as well as television channels Such TV, Hadi TV, and Wahdat, and newspapers Payam, Voice of Palestine, Musrab Lab, Montiz ul Saher, El-Arif, Mahzan, Waqaiq Islam, Nawai Islam, Payam Zanib, Badri, Awan Sadaqat, and Tahira are available for Shiite Pakistanis. The two most influential newspapers are Vahdet and Tahreek (Vatanka, 2012).

Moreover, Shia think tanks in Pakistan hold substantial influence over the Shia population. These include entities like al-Basireh, Islami Markaz, Danish Kadha, Ahl e Haram Youth Think Tank, and Afkar Islami. Reports suggest that Iran provides financial backing to Al Kauthar Islamic University,

headquartered in Islamabad, which operates to disseminate Shia beliefs. Additionally, Iranian cultural centres in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, and Multan undertake cultural propaganda for Iran, aided by support from the Iranian government (Rathore, 2017).

As a result, Iran is engaged in Shiism-oriented activities in Pakistan. It provides financial and educational support to these Shiite groups, influences these groups by applying social-religious-cultural propaganda, and also works to Shiite non-Shiite Pakistani citizens. In the Middle East, especially in the regions that were under the "ISIS threat" during and after the Arab Spring period, it creates militia forces from Shiites in Afghanistan and Pakistan and recruits personnel from there. In this way, Iran gained the opportunity to develop both soft power and hard power elements through Shiism. Here, theo-power (religious power) has become an important foreign policy instrument for Iran.

2. INDIA

Zoroastrianism, a pre-Islamic faith originating in Iran, achieved popularity in India during the 8th century. As of now, around 100,000 out of 250,000 worldwide Zoroastrians reside in India. The TATA family, one of India's most longstanding industrialists, hails from an Iranian Zoroastrian ancestry (Rizvi, 2017). Mumbai holds a central position in this belief, since Aga Khan Mehellati, the leader of the Nizari Ismailis, migrated to Mumbai, India in the 19th century.

Official figures suggest that India is home to 200 million Muslims, however, unofficial estimates indicate that the figure is closer to 230 million. The Shiite population accounts for a substantial portion of this number, with unofficial estimates indicating that 50-55 million Shiites reside in India, almost all of whom identify as Ithnaasheri/Jafari supporters. If these figures are accurate, India is the world's second-largest country in terms of its Shiite population, after Iran (Rizvi, 2017).

Shi'ite Muslims reside in various Indian cities like New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. They also organize commemorations for events such as Karbala. The Shi'ite community in these regions can easily undertake their religious duties and conduct rituals. The Shia community in India participates in the political arena as a member of the BJP party, which promotes Hindu nationalism. Within the party, Shia members are actively involved in Indian politics. Like other countries with Shia populations, the Iranian state takes a keen interest in the Shias of India and supports educational initiatives specifically for the community (Rizvi, 2017).

2.1 Iran's Educational Activities in India

The Shiite community in India sends students to Iran for clerical training. Shiites receive education at religious education centres dedicated to the Shiite faith, including Nizamiye Madrasah, Sultan Madrasah, Cami-e Tebliğ Madrasah, and Emirü'l-Müminin Madrasah in India. Iran also supports the "Noor Micro Foundation" that was established by Shiites in India. Iran aims to promote Persian culture and language in India through this foundation. The Foundation translates Persian literature into English and Urdu and sends it to educational institutions and libraries. Furthermore, it is endeavoring to

establish Persian departments in universities, increase the interest in Persian, and open new Persian departments (Dhume, 2015).

The Islamic Cultural Centre at Al Mustafa International University plays a pivotal role in conducting these studies at other universities. Several Iranian universities take part in the events supervised by the Iranian Cultural Centre in India. In August 2023, Turkey revoked the recognition of Al Mustafa University as an equivalent institution. The Qom-based school is believed to have served as a hub for Iran's efforts to spread Shia Islam, recruit agents, and establish military infrastructure. Its significance to the Iranian government cannot be overstated. More than 30,000 Iranian students are enrolled in universities across India, primarily in urban centres including Mumbai, Pune, Delhi and universities such as Hamdard University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Bangalore University, Lucknow University and Rohilkhand University (Dhume, 2015). Approximately 5,000 Iranian businessmen operate in India. An estimated 40,000 Iranian citizens, including students and businessmen, are believed to reside in India.

2.2 Iranian Cultural Centers in India

Iranian cultural centres play an active role in India by facilitating trade and educational activities. These centres, which have four branches located in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad, enhance Iran's presence and influence in India. These centres, which have four branches located in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad, enhance Iran's presence and influence in India (Brett, 2016). It is stated that Iran spends over 10 million dollars annually for the activities carried out through its cultural center and business people. In addition to organizing seminars/conferences within the scope of Shiism and education activities, it also includes organizing demonstrations to support Shiites in Iraq and Syria (Dhume, 2015).

The All India Shia Ulema Council, which receives financial support from Iran, maintains close collaboration with Iran. Its leader is Molla Seyyid Kalbe Cevad Nakvi. Iran can conduct extensive propaganda activities in India, both directly through cultural centres, institutes, workshops, seminars and conferences that it organises, and indirectly through Shiite organisations, ulama, foundations and other structures within India.

Websites affiliated with the Shia community in India cover topics such as Hezbollah, Yemeni Shia, developments related to DAESH in Syria and Iraq, the Sunni-Shia conflict, and readers' feedback (Dhume, 2015).

2.3 Recruitment from India to Shiite Militia Groups

There is no substantive evidence to suggest that Iran offers militant training to Shiite groups in India and provides personnel to Shiite militias in conflict zones. Nonetheless, Shiite communities in India respond to and demonstrate against attacks targeting Shiites in Iraq and Syria. In this context, Mullah Seyyid Kalbe Jawad Naqvi stated in November 2014 that 200,000 Indian Shia Muslims

volunteered to protect the holy sites in Karbala and Najaf. Initially, they compiled a list of 6,000 volunteers including medical professionals and engineers. Furthermore, images depicting Shiite volunteers completing forms to guard against "Terrorists of Sunni origin" were released in the Indian media. It is worth mentioning that Seyyed Hasan Mahdi, Secretary General of the All India Shiite Husseini Fund, reported that "4,000 volunteers registered with them to travel to Iraq and protect Indian workers who were abducted and safeguard the sacred areas of the Shiites." In this context, it is probable that certain Shiites from India have travelled to conflict zones either independently or through Shiite institutions.

Shiite non-governmental organizations are active in India. These organizations include the All India Shia Ulema Council, All India Shia Hussaini Fund, Anjuman-e Haideri, Haji Naji, Iman Foundation/Jafari Observer, Najafi House, Safinatul Hidayah, Al Madrasha, World Islamic Network, Chennai Shia Youth Association, and Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib Islamic Center. Among the prominent leaders and influencers of the Shiite community in India are Sayyid Kalbe Jawad Nakvi, Molla Taki (the Imam of the Shiite Friday Masjid in Delhi), Bahadir Abbas Nakvi, Molla Jamel Hayder, Aizaz Urfi, Molla Iftikar Ansari, Molla Mirza Athar, and Molla Seyyid Hamidul Hasan. Also included are Mullah Raza Agha, Mullah Sayyid Imam Zaidi, Mullah Ali Hasan, Mullah Shehwar, Mullah Hasan Abbass, Mullah Husayn Kazim, Mullah Ansar Hussain, and Mullah Zillay Mustafa (Karaoglu, 2021).

The Iranian government, in conjunction with affiliated groups, engage in successful propaganda efforts in India. The websites of these groups commonly feature information pertaining to Hezbollah, Shiite communities in Yemen, and individuals fighting against DAESH in Syria and Iraq. Mullah Seyyid Kalbe Javad Naqvi, the leader of the Shiite Ulema Council of India, has urged for large-scale protests as a part of the ongoing campaign against ISIS. The activities of the Shiites have not garnered any response from the Indian government. Due to the extensive historical and economic ties between India and Iran, the distant relations of Indian Shiites with Pakistan, and the involvement of the Shiite community in Indian politics through the Hindu nationalist BJP party, there are no issues between the Shiite community in India and the Indian government (Brett, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The concept of intelligence refers to information and news found in a raw state, which, after being classified, processed, and interpreted, results in the production of information or a product. States or organizations gather the needed information through various activities and methods throughout the process, named the intelligence cycle, from obtaining raw data to processing it into information or a product. States/Organizations use the information they obtain as a strategic element in both their internal and external threats, security strategies, foreign policies, decision-making processes, as well as in any activities related to the target country/organization. In the intelligence collection process, various methods and elements are used, and one of the most important elements of this process is the Religious and Sectarian factor. States evaluate religious and sectarian factors in areas such as internal security,

ethnic-sectarian issues, counterterrorism, international relations, education, culture, etc., contributing to the strategic decision-making process. Iran is also one of the states that stands out with the religious and sectarian factor. Iran benefits from its official Shiite denomination in its legal and state structure, internal and foreign policies, as well as security strategies, and conducts activities for this purpose on Shiite groups living in other countries.

One of the areas where the global and regional politics regarding the geopolitical struggle between China and the USA are keenly felt is the South Asian region, which is home to both Pakistan and India. Due to the influence of the geopolitical dispute between China and the USA and the recent outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the region is currently being closely monitored. Not only is this area closely observed by global actors, but it is also of great interest to regional actors.

As a regional actor, Iran maintains keen interest in South Asia. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, its extraterritorial ambitions anchored in the Shiite doctrine have raised concerns among its neighbours over the past 40 years. Turkey is one of those countries apprehensive of Iran. Shiism plays a crucial role in Iran's external actions.

Since the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, Shiism has become a significant factor in shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies. Notably, Iran's emphasis on "Mahdism and the Defense of the Holy Places Discourse" in its foreign policy has resulted in increased Shiism-related activities in a variety of regions worldwide, particularly in the Middle East. Pakistan and India are often overlooked in discussions of Iran's cross-border Shi'ism activities. Rather than a pure effort to spread Shi'ism, Iran appears to view these activities as an important intelligence tool. Iran is leveraging the Shi'ism element in these countries for both geopolitical and theopolitical considerations, making strategic moves in the region.

Shiism has had a considerable impact on the geopolitical and geocultural landscape of Iran, in addition to the inherited Persian perspective from the Persian Empire. Through its politicization, it has become a crucial factor in shaping and upholding Iran's national identity, arguably the most significant one. In this context, Iranian Shiism has become the overriding factor in the security and foreign policy of contemporary Iran by merging with Persian nationalism since the reign of Shah Ismail. It creates a socio-cultural system that diverges from other civilisations in the region. Nonetheless, Shiism plays a crucial role as an intelligence element for the Iranian state.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION ETHICS

The method used in the study does not require ethics committee approval.

DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

This study was not supported by any person or organization.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

KAYNAKÇA

- Abbas H. (2010). *Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: Identity Politics, Iranian Influence and Tit-for-Tat Violence*, Belfer Center Combating Terrorism Center Press.
- Andrew C. Aldrich R.J, Wark W. K. (2019) *Secret intelligence*. Routledge Press.
- Brett, D. (2016). *Iran's fifth column in India*. Access date: 17.07.2019, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2016/12/28/Iran-s-Fifth-Column-in-India.html>
- Dhume, S. (2015). *India can't remain blind to shia radicalism*. Access date: 17.07.2019, <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/04/11/india-cant-remain-blind-to-shia-radicalism/>
- Majidyar, A.K. (2014). 'The shi'ites of Pakistan: A minority under siege. M.Rubin and A.K.Majidyar (Ed.). *The Shi'ites of the Middle East: An Iranian Fifth Column?* içinde (126-139). American Enterprise Institute.
- Rathore, S.A. (2017). *The Saudi-Iran factor in Pakistan's sunni-shia conflict*. Access date: 20.07.2019, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/saudi-iran-factor-pakistans-sunni-shia-conflict>
- Rizvi,S.A.A. (2017). Population of shia ithna ashri community in India: Case study of lucknow. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 22(9), 16-21. doi: 10.9790/0837-2209031621.
- Stratfor (2003). *Pakistan: A new wave of sunni-shiite violence?* Access date; 20.07.2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/pakistan-new-wave-sunni-shiite-violence>
- Vatanka, A. (2012). *The guardian of Pakistan's shia*. Access date: 21.07.2019, <https://www.hudson.org/research/9863-the-guardian-of-pakistan-s-shia>
- Zaidi, A. (2016). The shias of Pakistan: Mapping an altruistic genocide. J. Syed, E. Pio, T. Kamran and A. Zaidi (Ed.). *Faith-Based Violence and Deobandi Militancy in Pakistan* içinde (ss. 273-311). Palgrave Macmillan London.