

External Barriers to Political Freedom from the Quran's Point of View

Seyed Kazem SeyedBaqeri

Islamic Research Institute for Culture and Thought, Iran

Keywords

Quran
Political freedom
Political structure
Taghut

Abstract

Political freedom has faced internal and external barriers over time. This study aims to investigate external barriers to political freedom, approaching to Quran with the question that, what the external barriers to political freedom are that manifest themselves in the political and social arenas. It also stresses the assumption that the external barriers to political freedom must be observed within their oppressive scope with its specific principles, and counter forces to freedom, in addition to the internal barriers to political freedom. Those counter forces, which are regarded as freedom barriers include the Taghuts (Dictators), Mostakbers (arrogant rulers), aristocrats, the opulent, scholars. Hence, we set this question forth from the Quran: what the external barriers to human freedom are that often appear in political and social forms. Employing a local method of discretionary interpretation and adopting a Quranic perspective, the study innovates in that it investigates external barriers to political freedom including the role of oppressive structure, fabricated rules together with the role of people and Taghuts.

Introduction

When it comes to discussing human freedom in political and social settings, the investigation of barriers is raised. That is the main principle in political freedom is striving to relieve human from restraints. But before taking any measure, identifying the barriers and learning about them are deemed necessary in order that requirements for guidelines and approaches are met. Motahari argued that freedom is one of the fundamentals in any creature. It doesn't matter if it's a plant, an animal or a human being; it needs freedom anyway. A living being may enjoy security and evolution factors, while still, some barriers constrain it from making any further progress (Motahari, 1999).

Freedom is defined as there being no barriers, yet our perception of barriers can engender diverse schools of thought. There seems to be a significant difference in viewing political freedom in the ideology that takes only external Taghut into consideration as a barrier and the one that takes heed of both internal and external Taghuts. The citizen who is mindful of relieving himself from sensuality besides liberating from tyrants, has a different opinion from the one whose only concern is absolute freedom to satisfy his lust in (political, financial, etc.) arenas and likewise in any other aspects. "In line with western attitude, some think highly of freedom, just like human beings were created for freedom, and so they reject religion because it hampers human freedom. Therefore, for them, God has given place to freedom". Islam however, has a moderate view of freedom. It suggests that human reverence is safeguarded in the light of freedom, but not in a way that it becomes a pretext to oppose morality and makes humans obedient in the face of desires. (Sobhani, 2004). The discussion over freedom barriers is to investigate how boundaries defined by religion lead us to true human relief, such that specification of which makes it clear that freedom barriers are not the religion and its teachings, but rather the restrictions caused by the individual himself or by other people.

By now, some books have dealt with political freedom in different contexts. For example, "Conditions of freedom in Islam" by Seyyed Mohammad Baqer Hakim, investigates freedom conditions in Islam and

composes issues such as freedom in western and Islamic views, the scope of freedom in Islam, genuine elements of freedom, freedom obligations in Islam and ultimately the role of religious guardianship in that setting. Another book, “al-horrah al-siyasiah fi al-islam” written by Ahmad Shoghi Alfanjari which discusses issues such as Quran and the contemporary society, and parties' status in Islam. Mansour MirAhmadi also has investigated issues like an explanation of the concept of freedom, principles of political freedom and its domains in Islam political philosophy, in “Liberation in the Islamic Political Philosophy” (MirAhmadi, 2002). Another book is “Freedom in Quran” by Seyyed Mohammad Ali Ayazi including subjects such as freedom principles, freedom of belief, freedom of speech, apostasy, and preliminary Jihad. Moreover, Seyyed Mohammad Baqer Sadr in a book titled “al-horrah fi al-quran” has discussed issues like the restriction of freedom and freedom in western and Islamic civilization. However, little attention has been paid in these books regarding barriers of political freedom. Therefore, the respective innovation in this paper pertains to the fact that it tends to investigate the barriers to political freedom from Quran's viewpoint by relying on a local approach to discretionary interpretation and its respective potentials. Another innovation that it takes advantage of is the investigation of the role that the cruel structure of the sovereignty plays beside the role of people and Taghut in obstructing political freedom, by stressing the word of God.

Generally speaking, there are three elements influencing freedom: “liberation”, “non-existence of barriers”, and “goal”. Political freedom takes place when political individuals and entities have freedom in their appropriate political activities and fundamental rights despite the challenges that governments might pose to their way (MirAhmadi, 2002). AlsdireMacIntyre (2001) defines freedom as the social independence of people in relation to others. AmartyaSen states in his book “Development as Freedom” that freedom is defined as no obstacles being present for people and their deeds in making appropriate situations (Sen, 2000).

In the Quran's view and Islam political attitude, freedom has been considered from different perspectives. Hence, political freedom means that people, groups and entities can dismiss the oppressive forces imposed by the government together with external political-social barriers and function in line with human improvement bypassing internal limitations. In political freedom, the key point is relieving from totalitarianism, which stands beside political tyranny in which the fundamental rights of its citizens are denied. This paper seeks the external barriers to political freedom, which is also of the Quran's concern. It also emphasizes the assumption that in addition to internal barriers, external barriers should be sought in an oppressive structure and the rules coming from the opposing forces such as Taghuts, Mostakbers, aristocrats that obstruct the way to establish freedom should also be investigated. This paper has been drafted by taking a thematic commentary approach and a discretionary interpretation method. In order to better understand the issue of the barriers to political freedom; the study uses of Quran, and almost all of the verses of the Quran, which were somehow linked to this area of study, were identified and investigated accordingly. We made use of all sorts of perception tools such as word perception, investigation of other verses, consideration of the context of the verses, taking advantage of interpretative narratives and the perceptions made by other commentators. Freedom barriers can be noticed all over the Quran, and one may have a specific perception out of any of them. Therefore, if anyone wants to know the precise meaning out of the Quran, he should have a comprehensive look at the whole context. He should resort to it from different perspectives and exhaust all of the potentials in the discretionary perception method. In this method, some matters like word investigation, understanding the literature of a verse, investigation of the occasion of transmission of verses to Prophet Mohammad, use of supportive verses, referring to interpretative narratives, use of intellectual and scientific evidence throughout history is of importance.

We try to investigate some of the barriers to political freedom by using this method.

Typology of barriers of political freedom

In typology of barriers of freedom, we can divide them into some subcategories. For example, we can sort barriers of political freedom into two subcategories of internal and external. Some of the internal barriers of political freedom can be found in affairs such as lack of spiritual freedom, lack of self-esteem, lack of subjection morale, obedience and devotion. In internal barriers, we emphasize that freedom is initiated from within us. When viciousness conquers one's soul, the first step towards freedom has failed. When the individual is spoiled from within, he would first violate his own rights and then the rights of others. Consequently, by entering such a person to the arena of political power, major steps are taken towards tyranny. In other words, piety gives human spiritual freedom, which means being released from the slavery of carnal soul and eradication of social slavery. Individuals who do not accept to be under the subjugation of money and power never fall in line with social slaveries (Motahari, 1999). In the same way, in the intellectual arena too, feeling associated with deterministic thoughts and dependence on habits and fanaticism can be investigated.

Though political freedom is often interpreted in its negative meaning as relief from restrictions and irrational external compulsions in behaviors, (Berlin, 2002) this freedom is also designated in its positive meaning as realizing the rights, talents, capabilities, and potentials (Taylor, 1985). Given the logic and the literature of the Quran, if the negative freedom means that one can behave in any way without any limitations in the political arena, it doesn't make any sense and it's not accepted since the political deeds of all must be under the surveillance of the values and ideologies stipulated by the divine. Therefore, the very positive freedom will be taken into account, which is in line with rights and flourishing talents.

The dominant portion of barriers to political freedom takes place outside which is a type of freedom with external manifestation. Most of the time,

tyrants are considered the most common type of barriers to freedom, which doesn't allow the citizens a free and active involvement. That is because, with political freedom, thinkers will find the opportunity to challenge the regime and evaluate the authorities' behavior, decisions, words, and thoughts making the process of exercising power transparent. This way, the first people who obstruct the way to freedom are authorities with illegitimate power and their self-serving followers. Late Naeini wrote about the tyrannical overthrow of Israelites by Pharaoh. Though they never worshiped him as Copts did, they couldn't tolerate it in Egypt. In Shu'ara surah, Hazrat Kalim (A.S) tells Pharaoh: "وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ" (Holy Quran, Shu'ara, 22). In addition, in another verse he quotes Pharaoh's people: "وَقَوْمُهُمَا" "لَنَا عَابِدُونَ" (Holy Quran, Mu'minun, 47). It seems that worship of Israelites was the reason for which they were doomed to subjugation (Naeini Gharavi, 2007). Pharaoh intended to bring people to absolute slavery an attempt to sabotage freedom.

We can observe other forms of freedom barriers in the arena of political and lawmaking structures. A political structure is applied to entities that enjoy political power and shape independent integrity (Naghibzade, 2008). Since structures integrate a set of different elements, forces, and capabilities they find a synergistic characteristic and so they take advantage of a multiple power compared to individuals. Often, rulers could become Taghut and restrict freedom when they find a way to the political system. In a structure, forces become integrated enabling an easier abuse of power and negation of freedom while making it more challenging to stop it. In political structures, lawmakers serve for power and make laws based on the objectives of opponents of freedom, negating people's freedom in a deceptively legitimate form. This paper stresses the external barriers to political freedom, oppressive structure, the laws resulting from them and forces opposing political freedom while paying attention to the effective role of internal barriers of political freedom authority of Islam in justifying, analyzing and explaining the essential aspects of democracy.

Oppressive structures

We can have an overlook of Pharaoh's ruling structure by resorting to the Quran. This structure appears in a way that has no room for freedom. Pharaoh, with full authority and exorbitant claims to be worshiped as God (Holy Quran, Nazi'at, 24) sat on the top of the pyramid of power while others like the opulent, elites, aristocrats, military commanders, corrupt scholars and authorities not only made no objection to the system but also firmly supported him by their wealth, military power and legitimizing propagandas inspiring more arbitrary behaviors in him. Such a political structure is so prevailing that hampers any kind of freedom and no one can object to it. In addition to slaves and soldiers who have no choice but obedience, this structure made the people of Pharaoh who obey without any disapproval abject (Holy Quran, Zukhruf, 54). Even when the magicians failed to compete with Hazrat Musa and started to believe in God, Pharaoh warned them that they can't believe in Musa's God without his permission otherwise they would face his (God= Pharaoh) fury (Taha, 71). Such people refused the message of God (Holy Quran, Naml, 14) and denied his Prophets (Holy Quran, Mu'minun, 48) in the form of suppression and superiority. They have too much pride and seek superiority over others, and their only logic is more and more domination (Karami Hoveizi, 1982). Such structures try to weaken their dissidents with the help of other government components and have the company of the simple-minded with a glamorous characteristic. They shut the voice of freedom. Pharaoh slanders Musa in a dazzling voice that, oh Musa, have you come here to dislodge us from our own land by showing magic:

قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَى (Holy Quran, Taha, 57).

Meanwhile, it's not Pharaoh alone who says that. His followers also show their approval about it by stressing that Hazrat Musa and Harun are nothing but wizards who want to discard people's religion: "These two are certainly wizards who want to dislodge you from your land and eliminate your religion by magic." (Holy Quran, Taha, 63).

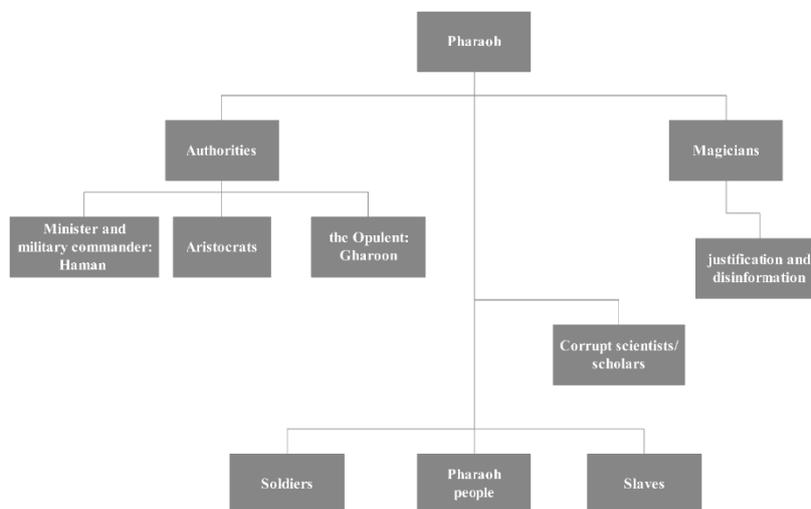


Figure 1. Pharaoh's ruling structure

Such structures make the society lifeless, therefore, “factors contributing to lack of freedom include one hand insensitivity, negligence and submissiveness to fate and on the other hand the disability, against which Islam has fought, refuted the oppression and regarded it as an evil, and accepted vindication of rights as a virtue” (Motahari, 2003, p. 121). An oppressive political structure is set, the tyrannical elements back each other and surveillance the society in a way that no one is capable of realizing freedom and people get used to their misery. Such a structure encompasses all of the social interactions and there is no way left for people to feel the freedom.

Countervailing forces of freedom

Most of the external barriers emerge in a form of countervailing forces of freedom that often play an effective role in the oppressive structure, employing which the dictatorship limits the freedom of the citizens. These countervailing forces are called tyrannical elements and the study will discuss some of them from the viewpoint of the Quran.

1. Taghut (Dictator)

One of the external barriers mentioned in the Quran is Taghut. Taghut

systems are examples of tyrannical regimes, a manifestation of which is sabotage of political freedom of citizens. Taghut refers to a person whose viciousness surfaces in a way that denies people's rights and stands against God's expedients. Satan is a true manifestation of Taghut, and whoever after him invites others to obey him is an oppressive king, a hypocritical scientist, or a ruler who is a fund of governance and power. (SeyedBaqeri, 2015). One of the traits of these persons is ignoring people's rights and taking their freedom away. With a self-serving desire, such persons want everyone to be at their service. Therefore, if anyone objects their unlawful demands or question them, they will threaten them to death and torture. Quran quotes that after the victory of Musa over wizards, they started to believe in God and Pharaoh said to them:

أَمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَأَلْصَبَتُّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ.

Do you begin to believe in him without my permission? He is certainly your master who has taught you magic. I will cut an arm and a leg from you, one from the right and the other from the left, and hang you from a date tree (Holy Quran, Taha, 71).

With a power gained unlawfully, Taghut tends to change people's beliefs. Shaykh Tusi (2002) quotes that cutting an arm and a leg in an opposite direction and hanging the body from a date tree was first done by Pharaoh. "Crucifixion" refers to many executions just like "chop" meaning cutting many people from different parts of their body. They both refer to Pharaoh threatening his own people to torture (Tabatabaei, 2002).

God narrates about Pharaoh that he threatened Hazrat Musa and his followers to death:

When Musa brought the truth of us to them, they said: kill the sons of those who believe in him and let their women live as forced labors. And Pharaoh said, let me kill Musa (Holy Quran, Ghafir, 25-26). Another measure Taghuts take to restrict citizen's freedom is threatening to jail, just the way Pharaoh threatened Hazrat Musa:

قَالَ لَنْ اتَّخَذْتُ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ.

He said: "If you serve any other God but me, I will definitely jail you"
(Holy Quran, Shu'ara, 29).

The arrogance of Pharaohs led them to the extent of viciousness that they propagated their propaganda of divinity while considering everyone as their slave and follower (Javadi-Amoli, 2002).

It is mentioned in Nahj al-Balagha that Pharaoh brought Israelites under his slavery:

اتَّخَذَتْهُمْ الْفِرْعَانَةُ عِبِيدًا.

The Pharaoh made them their slaves and servants.

Then that Hazrat explains how this took place:

And they let them suffer and remain in agony; therefore they were under the repression of Pharaoh and had no choice but obedience and no way to defend themselves. (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon. 92).

Given that the role of Prophets is the most crucial in fighting against stranglehold and manifestations of viciousness. Quran reminds us about Prophets opposing tyranny and tyrannical class of the society (Motahari, 2000).

According to the Quran, every Prophet tried to release human from worshipping anyone but God and fighting against Taghut:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ.

And in fact, we sent any society an envoy to give this message: "Follow and worship God and stay away from Taghut" (Holy Quran, Nahl, 36).

Taghut systems are characterized by slaving people. There's no chance of criticizing the policies made by the rulers in such governments and any criticism or benevolent comment would be perceived dangerous. The personal opinion of the ruler has priority over the opinion made by the intellectual elite. They want a blindly support from the people and think highly of themselves while they are entangled with perfectionism and narcissism. Pharaoh says from this point of view:

أَنَا رَبُّكُمْ الْأَعْلَى (Holy Quran, Nazi'at, 24).

Tyrannical rules take the path of terror instead of logic rationality. They even want the true beliefs of their people subjected to their own capricious aspirations. They make false statements about their dissidents accusing them

of ambitiousness and rabble-rousing. They consider the wealth of the country as their personal asset allowing themselves to impinge on it in any way they wish (Mousavi Zanjani, 1961).

All of these verses plus many others imply that one of the most common crimes committed by Taghuts is sabotaging political freedom of the people who must conform to all their ambitious requests.

2. Mostakbers (Arrogant rulers)

Mostakbers avoid any comments or criticisms in a self-centered way and since they only care about their own interests and desires think others are to serve their ambitions. Therefore, they crucify anyone standing on their way. They are also obstinate and reluctant to accept the truth. The word oppression also contains this concept:

(Ibn Manzur, 1988, p. 127) الامتناع عن قبول الحق مُعَانِدَةً وَتَكَبُّرًا

Arrogance is a trait of someone who expresses superiority and pride even though he is not (Qorshi, 1992). Mostakber is someone who seeks superiority for himself and wants to express it to others. However, Motakabber is a person who has accepted vanity as a trait of him (Tabatabaei, 2002). Therefore, it is in a narrative that Imam Sadeq states:

مَنْ ذَهَبَ يَرَى أَنَّ لَهُ عَلَى الْآخِرِ فَضْلًا فَهُوَ مِنَ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ.

Whoever thinks he has superiority over others is arrogant (al-Kulayni, 1968, p. 128).

Another narrative refers to lack of companionship with the truth:

الْكِبْرُ أَنْ تَغْمِصَ النَّاسَ وَتُسَفِّهَ الْحَقَّ.

Vanity is to belittle people and undervalue their rights (al-Kulayni, 1968, p. 310).

Quran narrates that Pharaoh was an arrogant Taghut and according to the interpretation of Alforghan, he was a manifestation of the agony Israelites because he insulted human reverence by imprisoning people:

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَطَاعُوهُ (Holy Quran, Zukhruf, 54).

And he murdered them put the men under slavery and got the women to endure forced labor:

يُدْبِحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (Holy Quran, Qasas, 4).

Pharaoh was an arrogant ruler seeking superiority over followers of God proclaiming himself God (Sadeqi Tehrani, 1986, p. 411).

One of the most common traits of Pharaoh and the aristocrats surrounding him was arrogance. It is mentioned in Mu'minun surah:

فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ (Holy Quran, Mu'minun, 46).

But they showed arrogance being defiant and narcissistic.

We can read in another verse that:

He and his troops went about arrogance ignoring people's rights (Holy Quran, Qasas, 39).

Arrogance is reinforced by political power and the individual rises to claim divinity, a fancy that takes freedom from citizens. According to the Quran, Pharaoh announces the aristocrats following him that:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي (Holy Quran, Qasas, 38).

I don't see any other God for you but myself. All of these inappropriated fancies turn to a full state of arrogance when they are summoned in one person and the expected result would be the ruling of stranglehold, terror, and suppression.

3. Jabbars

Jabr, according to the literature of the Quran, is the trait of another one who restricts freedom and stands in people's way by denying their right to decide about their own lives. He uses his power for defiance and aggression (Anis et al., 1978) subduing dissidents taking power from them in a way that they find no chance what so ever to make a choice (Mostafavi, 1996). In its literal meaning, tyranny is attributed to someone who makes up for his deficiencies by proclaiming perfection and the dignity that he doesn't deserve. He condemns the people and they have no choice but surrender. "Sultan" is also called "Jabr" (characterized by compulsion) because he has the power to rule people in any way he wishes, and coercion in its original form means reluctance (Ragheb Esfahani, 1991). It is also said that jabbar is the one who kills with no mercy (Tarihi, 1996). With a jabr approach, which is a characteristic of suppressive emperors, the ruler takes any freedom from the citizens.

The power that dismisses the people's rights forcing them to conform to his wishes, has taken the dishonest path of jabr to restrict their freedom. Naeini writes in this regard "in such a rule, the ruler just like usual owners assumes the country as his personal asset and the people as his slaves. He accepts whoever obeys him and rejects and suppresses whoever defies him" (Naeini Gharavi, 2007, p. 8). With this attitude taken, no room for human freedom remains. Hence, when a jabbar finds power in a society the result is the denial of political freedom.

4. Arbab (Master)

Another external barrier to political freedom is the Arabs who assume themselves gods and that they are free to treat people in any way they want. Arbab or such a tendency has been condemned by the Quran and a true believer doesn't accept any other one instead to besides God. The one who only believes in God and not anyone else reaches transcendental freedom and follows no one but God.

God criticizes the Jewish and Christians who accepted to follow their scientists and monks instead of God:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ (Holy Quran, Tobe, 31)

Referring to the parties functioning back in the ruling times of Imam Ali, Late Naeini explains that people would be subdued in Israelites rule

و ايم الله لتجدن بنى امية لكم ارباب سوء بعدي (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon. 92)

And I swear to God that you will find Israelites, such bad rulers.

In interpretation, decadence from "Wilayat" to "Arbab" is to describe the same concept (Naeini Gharavi, 1966).

God says clearly to the literates that come and let's stand for the belief we share. Let's not accept anyone's rule but the God's.

لَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ (Ali 'Imran, 64).

This verse is concerned with the rational reason beyond the need for Tawhid (oneness of God), Islam and justice in social-political systems. That is because exploitation and slavery of people do not occur by the owner of power unless he is ego-centered and wants no one to have superiority. Thus,

he seeks personal discretions and wants all political, economic, judicial, legal, and business arenas under his command, something which is against God's will and the logic he designed for even distribution of rights among his creatures (Bohrani, 2005). Elimination of the attitude of being Arbab among rulers is an essential measure towards the desired right of freedom. "Given this point, a verse of Quran states that the system that stabilizes justice in societies is the one rooted from Tawhid and lordship is only for God; and that worship is only for him or the one leading to him. In light of such a principle in human systems, oppression is eradicated. Thus, in Islamic systems, everyone follows God and his actions and not anyone else instead. This logic eliminates all oppressive classes who want others under slavery" (Bohrani, 2005, p.329) and any human Arbab who is considered as a human barrier is taken out of political settings and power related interactions.

5. Mala (Aristocrats)

Mala is another group that the Quran mentions as the external barrier to freedom and a sabotaging factor of people's rights. A class of the society that shares the same opinion and has luxurious lives (Ragheb Esfahani, 1991). Therefore, "mala" is another word for aristocrats of the society (Ibn Manzur, 1988). It is mentioned in a narrative that Prophet Mohammad heard from a man coming back from Badr war that: "we killed some old men". Then, Prophet Mohammad said: "they were aristocrats of Quraysh, if you were before them, they would underestimate your action" (Ibn al-Athir, 1996, p. 351). These groups of people, who are rich and powerful, treat others with arrogance and take the freedom away from them. Aristocrats who are forceful by keeping each other's companion infringe other people's rights easily due to their high position in the society. That is why Pharaoh and the first class of Israelites group seek superiority and extravagant and restrict people's freedom by aggravating and torturing them:

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ مَلَائِكِهِمْ أَن يُبْتَلِهُمُ .(Holy

Quran, Yunus, 83)

At last, no one believed Musa other than some children of his own tribe

who were afraid that Pharaoh might find out about it and torture him or her.

Quran narrates that aristocrats and those holding power infringed other people's rights and restricted their freedom. God reveals about aristocrats of Shoaib tribe who threatened believers and said:

“Oh, Shoaib! Return to our tradition! Otherwise, we will banish you and those believing in you.” (Holy Quran, A'raf, 88).

Shoaib reply is an implication of their efforts to restrict their freedom:

قَالَ أَوْ لَوْ كُنَّا كَارِهِينَ.

“Do you want to take us back despite our willingness?” (Holy Quran, A'raf, 88).

They don't even pay attention to Hazrat Shoaib advice. In return, they threaten him and other believers to exile. In their words “لَتُنْحَرِجَنَّكَ” and “لَتَتَّعُوذُنَّ” are in the same context containing stress on the “ن” implying their resolution to this job (Tabatabaei, 2002). This is how oppressors reveal their true nature accepting the companion of power rather than the companionship of God and following him (Modaresi, 1998). We can see in these verses that the aristocrats are arrogant choosing the path of indulgence and vanity over moderation.

There is always too much pride in their words and deeds that is they deny other people's freedom. Quran narrates that the aristocrats said to Hazrat Noah that:

إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (Holy Quran, A'raf, 60).

This aspiration will lead to the denial of Prophets just like they denied Hazrat Noah:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ (Holy Quran, A'raf, 64).

God says that owner of power and wealth also in Ad people alleged Hazrat Hud to have been insane and liar (A'raf, 66).

Regarding Samud people, God uses the word mala (aristocrats) along with “arrogance”:

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ (Holy Quran, A'raf, 75).

According to Sayyid Quṭb's (1987) interpretation, it is clear that the arrogant authorities' questions were for threatening and summoning people to deny the path of believers and the poor by teasing them.

Hence, aristocrats do not recognize any rights for others being regarded as an absolute barrier to political freedom, in a way that they want the citizens to follow whatever they dictate to them, otherwise, they will face their fury.

6. Motrafin

From the logic of the Quran, another barrier to political freedom is the opulent class of the society who thinks of themselves as superior to other people just because of their wealth and luxurious lives. Although the opulent and mala are in the same category and both seek superiority and they are self-centered, they have differences. “مترف” is a past participle form derived from “ترف” meaning “to have and enjoy the earthly blessings in any way” (Ragheb Esfahani, 1991, p. 166). In Quran, it is mentioned that “ثرفه” means blessings in plenty. “تترف” means living in pleasure and comfort. The form “أفعال” of that is “أتراف” meaning insisting in oppression, and “مترف” means being left to oneself to do whatever he desires, or unleashed to commit any sins without any limitations. It also means mollycoddled, suppressive and indulgent (Mohaqqeq, 1985). In the Shaykh Tusi's words, the opulent are those who preferred wealth to reason and they are rulers overwhelmed with wealth:

وهم الذين آثروا الترفعة على طلب الحجة، وهم الممتنعون الرؤساء (Shaykh Tusi, 2002, p. 192).

Means exploiting the earthly blessings:

وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا (Holy Quran, Mu'minun, 33).

We bestowed upon them our blessings.

It is also said that:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ (Holy Quran, Waq'ah, 45).

Meaning that they were overwhelmed in luxury and blessings, and ignorant of the spiritual aspect of life and religious rituals. The difference between “مترف” and “منعم” is that the “منعم” will enjoy all the spiritual and unspiritual blessings, either partly or totally, aware or unaware of it. On the other hand, “مترف” is the one who is overwhelmed in unspiritual blessings and unaware of spirituality (Mostafavi, 1996). “أأترفناهم” means we gave them

blessings and kept them in power. It also says: “مَثْرُفُوها” (Holy Quran, Saba, 35) meaning “those who had the blessings of the earth without following God” (Tarihi, 1996, p. 30). One can find out from all of these that the opulent were rich, stubborn, mollycoddled and irresponsible (Mohaqqeq, 1985). On the other hand, “mala” is a united group of people or class of a society who have a glamorous position in society.

Given these features of the opulent, they are people who take no civil or ethical liability. Rather, the only thing that preoccupies them is this assumption that “only money solves all problems”, and they suppose that they can behave in any way they want disrespectful of other people’s rights. Qarun was one of those who enjoyed economic power. He was ambitious and ignorant about people’s rights just like Pharaoh who had and abused his political power. When these two factors intermingle, the outcome is corruption in society. Qarun is the symbol of opulence in God’s words. He was characterized by oppression. He had abundant treasure and inflicted oppression on Musa’s people:

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ (Holy Quran, Qasas, 76).

In fact, “Baghi” means the intensity of demands and when used with “على” it means assault (Mostafavi, 1996). Ragheb also suggests that “بغى” means a desire for assault accompanied by oppression and seeking superiority (Ragheb Esfahani, 1991). We can see in “العين” that “البغى: الظلم” means oppression (al-Farahidi, 1993). Hence, “بغى” contains concepts such as intensive demand, excessive indulgence, oppression, and ever seeking superiority. Though God had granted Qarun so many treasures of wealth whose keys' burden was found intolerable by the forceful servants (Holy Quran, Qasas, 76). His people told him not to indulge himself in an excessive way that God doesn't admire (Holy Quran, Qasas, 76).

Also, his people told him to seek the blessing of the afterlife while enjoying pleasures of the current life and seek goodness after God blessed you. Do not go after corruption when God disapproves of it (Holy Quran, Qasas, 77). However, his assertive response was that “this is the result of my knowledge”:

إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي (Holy Quran, Qasas, 78).

It is also mentioned in Zumar surah that human comes to this boastful claim when he forgets where his blessings originated in:

ثُمَّ إِذَا حَوَّلْنَا نِعْمَةً مِنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ .(Holy Quran, Zumar, 49)

Then, when we grant him a blessing, he says: “I have earned it by my knowledge.”

Another trait of the opulent is committing crimes, as God says:

وَ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أُتْرِفُوا فِيهِ وَ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ .(Holy Quran, Hud, 116)

And those who were oppressive went after wealth and indulgence, and they were offenders. It is deduced from “كانوا مجرمين” in the sentence that some of the people of Egypt were corrupt and got used to corruption (Tabarsi, 1993). Oppression is infringing other people's rights which a manifestation of restricting freedom.

According to Sayed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah's interpretation, the problem that many human societies are entangled with is in choosing the wrong path, oppression, and misdirection, the opulent who stand against believers who encourage in faith and amendment in the society and want to reduce the social gap changing the materialistic values to spiritual ones. It is the opulent class who try to stand against Prophets through disinformation and by any social, economic, political tools and mislead people by spreading fabrications and accusations. They “disbelieved in what we sent to them” because messages from God are for human freedom and his relief from humiliation. The purpose of sending Prophets is to free the proletariat (Fadlallah, 1998). However, since this group only think of amassing their wealth and enjoy power, they are always ignorant of other people's freedom.

7. Monks and scholars (Ahbar)

The word scholars (احبار) is the plural form of “حَبْر” or “جَبْر” meaning wise men and scientists. The original form of this word refers to blessing and prosperity in life, given that, joy, admiration, elegance, all of which are among the blessings. “حَبْر” has been seemingly derived from the Hebrew word “حابر” meaning wise man. But about the question that whether or not it incorporates the concept of magic in it, we should say that magic and

priesthood seemed to be common back then (Mostafavi, 1996). These people can make a false notion in society and restrict other people's freedom just because of their wealth and high social status.

Another group of the same category is monks who are religious worshipers. Monks play an important role in drawing people, showing a fabricated path to them and lead them to any direction they want. Quran narrates that, the Jewish and Christians made monks, scholars and the Christ their masters (Holy Quran, Tobe, 31). Late Tabarsi quotes Imam Baqer and Imam Sadeq who said, swear to God that they didn't fast or say prayers for their wise men or monks, yet they did halal (permissible deeds) haram (forbidden) and vice versa, while the Jewish and Christians followed and worshiped without noticing (Tabarsi, 1993).

Adi son of Hatam says: Once I went to Prophet Mohammad and saw him reading the 31st verse of Tobe surah. I said we don't worship them. Then he asked, don't you find forbidden what they find forbidden? And don't you find permissible what they find permissible? (Tabarsi, 1993). In this sense, wise men (scientists) and monks try to make and fabricate policies, teachings, and interpretations to make the affairs in line with their own perspectives and interests. Therefore, captivation of people takes a legal and legitimate form while opposing which for reaching freedom costs heavily. The false notion they support in the society has sometimes been just some profit-seeking thoughts, as such the bunch of superstitions and misinterpretations and spreading them in the name religion have been a fundamental barrier to the political-social freedom. They are hypocrites who stand beside oppressive dictators imposing restrictions on freedom in the name of religion. "It's been centuries that the mentality of humans has become inactive and ultimately without sense under the pressure of superstitions and blind imitation. The cost of the oppression imposed by the heads of tribes, monks, and kings who exercised their power in human societies has been so tremendous that devastated the human willpower" (Mousavi Zanjani, 1961, p. 184) and not many attempted to seek freedom.

Conclusion

In this paper, the authors tried to investigate some of the structural barriers and the forces opposing political freedom such as Taghuts, Mostakberin (arrogant rulers), Jabaran, masters, aristocrats, the opulent, monks, and scholars.

When human is entangled with an oppressive system, strangling power, amass of data, disintegration, and downfall of vocabulary by the media; he will be confined by visible and invisible external factors. The confinement resulted from police power, and soft and hard powers take the power of choice away from human. There is a precise relation between the internal and external barriers to political freedom. The humble society and the people whose willpower has faded away in time would have little strength to decide and think freely. They would make little efforts to gain their political freedom; therefore, they would easily fall for Taghuts. Understanding these barriers, and awareness of the internal and external foundations, which hamper freedom will give them a wake-up call to be able to tackle them by demanding freedom in their thoughts and deeds.

When those barriers are taken out, the atmosphere would be ready for public participation, free statement of opinion, political multilateralism, evenly distribution of political-social opportunities. Citizens not only “can” freely criticize their lawmakers, but also “have to” do so to stand against oppression as one of the biggest crimes.

In Islamic political teachings, citizens cannot restrict their own freedom or the freedom of others. Human is not allowed to restrict his own freedom or let Taghut takes his freedom. In Islamic culture, opening the way to or allowing oppression as a major barrier to freedom is condemned. That is because the individual infringes his own right of freedom by accepting oppression and inactivity, silence and ignorance with respect to the social duties. He is not allowed to endanger his political-social rights just like he is not allowed to do so regarding other people's rights and give away his or other people's freedom and power or choice to tyrants.

One of the duties of the Islamic government is to eliminate barriers to

political freedom by establishing a fair structure and employing faithful forces. Given the capabilities and facilities that governments have, they can devise the necessary framework to ensure the existence of freedom in society and provide advancement and growth in all sectors.

In eradicating the barriers and the effort to achieve political freedom, we can't blame individuals. In fact, paying attention to the desired structure takes more priority. It is often the structures that play fundamental roles. Structures and rulers have enormous responsibilities to realize political freedom. They are able to provide necessary atmosphere and infrastructure for experts and wise men and women to share their opinions with no fear or obsession of potential consequences; as such, to have a society in which criticism, exhortation, benevolence, encouragement of good deeds, deterrence from forbidden affairs and brainstorming are allowed.

References

* *Holy Quran*.

* *Nahj al-Balagha*.

1. al-Farahidi, Kh. (1993). *Kitab al-Ayn*. Qom: Islamic publications.
2. al-Kulayni, M. (1968). In A. A. Ghafari (Ed.), *al-Kafi*, Tehran: Dar al-Kotob Islami.
3. Anis, I., Sawalhi, A., Khalafahmad, M., & Montaser, A. (1978). *al-Mu'jam al-Waseet*. Tehran: Alsaghaf Islamic publications.
4. Berlin, I. (2002). *Liberty*, London: Oxford.
5. Bohrani, M. (2005). *Asas al-Nizam al-Siyasiah eind al-Imamiyah* (1st ed.). Qom: Fadak publications.
6. Fadlallah, S. M. H. (1998). *Tafsir min wahy al-Quran* (Vol. 2). Beirut: Dar al-Melak-o-Itebaa publications.
7. Ibn al-Athir. (1996). *The end in the strange talk and the end*. Qom: Smaelian publications.
8. Ibn Manzur. (1988). *Lisān al-'Arab*. Beirut: DarolJalil publications.
9. Javadi-Amoli, A. (2002). *The Quran's Thematic Commentary: Society in the Quran*. Qom: Esra publications.
10. Karami Hoveyzi, M. (1982). *al-Tafsir Li-Kitab Allah al-Munir* (1st ed., Vol. 6). Qom: Elmiye publications.
11. MirAhmadi, M. (2002). *Liberation in the Islamic Political Philosophy*. Qom: Bustane Ketab.
12. Modaresi, S. M. T. (1998). *Tafsir Hedayat* (1st ed.). Tehran: Darmohebi Olhoseyn.
13. Mohaqeq, M. B. (1985). *Dā'irat al-farā'id dar farhang-i Quran*. Tehran: Besat publications.
14. Mostafavi, H. (1996). *al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Quran*. Tehran: Ministry of culture and Islamic guidance.
15. Motahari, M. (1999). *Azadi-yi ma'nawi*. Tehran: Sadra publications.
16. Motahari, M. (2000). *Collection of Works*. Tehran: Sadra publications.
17. Motahari, M. (2003). *Motahari's notes* (1st ed.). Tehran: Sadra publications.

18. Mousavi Zanjani, S. A. (1961). *Freedom in the View of Islam*. Qom: Shiite School Monthly.
19. Naeini Gharavi, M. H. (2007). In S. J. Vari (Ed.), *Tanbih al-Ummah wa Tanzih al-Milla*. Qom: Bustan Golestan publications.
20. Naghibzade, A. (2008). *Introduction in Political Sociology*. Tehran: Samt publications.
21. Qorshi, S. A. A. (1992). *Qamus Quran*. Tehran: Darul Kitab.
22. Ragheb Esfahani, H. (1991). *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (1st ed.). Lebanon: Dar al-Shamye publishing companies.
23. Sadeqi Tehrani, M. (1986). *al-Furqan fi Tafsir al-Quran* (2nd ed., Vol. 26). Qom: Islamic culture publications.
24. Sayyid Qutb. (1987). *In the Shade of the Qur'an*. Beirut: Dar Alsheragh publications.
25. SeyedBaqeri, S. K. (2015). *Political power in view of Holy Quran*. Tehran: Research center for Islamic culture and thought.
26. Shaykh Tusi. (2002). *al-Tibyan Fi Tafsir al-Quran* (3rd ed.). Beirut: Dar al-'Ara'yat al-Arabi publications.
27. Sobhani Tabrizi, J. (2004). *Rasail wa Maqalat*. Qom: Imam Sadiq publications.
28. Tabarsi, F. (1993). *Majma' al-Bayan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (3rd ed.). Tehran: NaserKhosro publications.
29. Tabatabaei, S. M. (2002). *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran*. Qom: Esmaeilian publication.
30. Tarihi, F. (1996). *Majma' al-Bahrayn* (3rd ed.). Tehran: Mortazavi bookstore.
31. Taylor, Ch. (1985). *What's Wrong with Negative Liberty? Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. London: Cambridge.