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## Elites and Shifts in Political Behaviors: Evidence from Quran

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research was to examine the behavioral role of elites in political change from the perspective of the Holy Quran. As such, the current research employed an analytical-descriptive design, where Pareto's theory of the circulation of elites on the classification of elites into governing and non-governing was used. The findings of the research indicated that the political elites in the Quran are individuals perceived to be role models and leaders of other people and are responsible for the implementation of political and social affairs and the guidance of the latter. The elites can be divided into constructive and destructive, in terms of the weight of the effect they bear on society, and into governing and non-governing, in terms of their status within the governmental hierarchy. According to the Quran, the governing elites can exert positive (constructive) influence through acts of unification, counseling, justice-orientation, guiding, and enlightening, and negative (destructive) influence through acts of oppression, dictatorship, discord and dissension, and promotion of corruption. The non-governing elites, on the other hand, can have a positive (constructive) influence in shifting political behaviors through delegitimizing the tyrannical government, hindering the performance of the tyrannical government, the breakup of that government and discouraging the masses from the tyrannical ruler, and a negative (destructive) one through hiding the truth and remaining quiet against falsehood.

**Keywords:** Holy Quran, political change, political behavior, governing elites, non-governing elites.

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Quran, the elites are an influential class of individuals in society that can bring about profound behavioral changes in society. The elite can direct shifts and changes in society; that is, the constructive elites can lead the society towards progress, excellence, and desirable values, while the destructive elites can lead many to wrongness and corruption, and hence, each class can have a distinct weight to the fate of the society. The Quran has mentioned the example of some elites such as Samiri that were responsible for the sin of the calf for teaching, guiding, and changing their behavior, while numerous narrations have cited the political behavior of the early Islamic elites in the polarization of the Islamic society. A simple glance at the events of the beginning of Islam since the death of the Prophet (pbuh) clearly illustrates that the difference among Muslims is rooted in the actions of a handful of elites of the society at that time.

The aforementioned is only one of the many examples that can depict the extensive role of elites in changing political behavior, in that, constructive behaviors can upturn the fate of an



entire society while negative behaviors can lead to a dark future in the fate of nations. According to the verses of the Holy Quran, the role of elites in changing political behavior is of paramount significance, which, in turn, can be expressed in various categories. The circulation of the elite by Pareto is a major theory that can be used to divide and analyze the elites into governing and non-governing elites. Although the Holy Quran discussed issues primarily through the perspective of core beliefs and values that can be explained based on the core value, further examination and analysis facilitates the discussion and division of elites in terms of their governmental role and their magnitude of influence.

According to the Holy Quran, the elites are either involved in the intellectual realm or the executive realm, each of which nevertheless can have either constructive effects such as those of divine prophets, or destructive effects such as those of Pharaoh, Nimrod, and Qarun. Yet Pareto's circulation of elites stipulates the place of governing and non-governing elites is constantly changed, yet, they are the founders of political change and transformation in the society. Therefore, according to the Holy Quran, the governing and non-governing elites have decisive roles in political developments in terms of behavior.

The governing elites are perceived to advance their desired change onto the society from the power and influence they have over the society, therein benefitting from the mass media and communication and economic facilities they are equipped with. The non-governing elites, on the other hand, are involved in society by seeking to manipulate public opinion. According to the verses, the constructive elites believe in divine truths and always walk in the straight path of God "Those gifted with knowledge clearly see that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth" (Saba: 6) . Moreover, they do their best to guide people toward God's commands: "And we made them leaders, guiding by Our command" (Al-Anbya: 73)

At the other end of this spectrum lies the destructive elites who constantly seek to tread the path of tyranny and hence promote misguidance. They have chosen to go down the darkness over light, and darkness shall await them. "As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness." (Al- Baqara, 257) The term *taghut* is mentioned seven more times in the Holy Quran in addition to this verse. The main efforts of the righteous elites are to fight against the tyrants who appear distinctly in every era and often hinder the divine commands in society.

The Holy Quran has indeed recognized the variability of human behavior. The most important element that alters the attitude of the masses is the actions and reactions of the elites of the society, the latter following the former by example, leading to society-wide changes. Therefore, the present study examined the behavioral role of elites in political change using a Quranic approach.

## Concepts and definitions

### 1. The elite

Elites, the plural of the elite, can be best defined as a select group that is superior in terms of ability or qualities to the rest of a group or society. The Term *Nokhbeh* is its Arabic equivalent. Two elements of "excellence" and "superiority" are the main indicators of its literal meaning. In its strictly special sense, elites can be referred to as any group of people who are prominent



in a specific field, especially the governing minority and the circles from which the governing minority arise (Bashiriyeh, 2004, p. 67). The Quran and narrations have employed various notions to refer to the elites, namely: role models, Messengers, Imam, Leader, the chosen ones, the greats, the chiefs, and the talented, among others (Baqarah, 124. Ghesas, 41. Yunus, 35. Ahzab, 21).

## **2. Behavior and political behavior**

Behavior is defined as the way of moving, way of acting, character, and way of life (Mo'in, 1986, vol. 2, p. 1341). In its most general sense, it is the movement or the response of any single entity or group to the circumstances (Saroukhani, 1991, p. 601). In psychology, behavior is defined as a person's reaction to a specific situation. In sociology, however, social behavior is the course of action of any social group, the behavior of all the members of which is perceived to be stable.

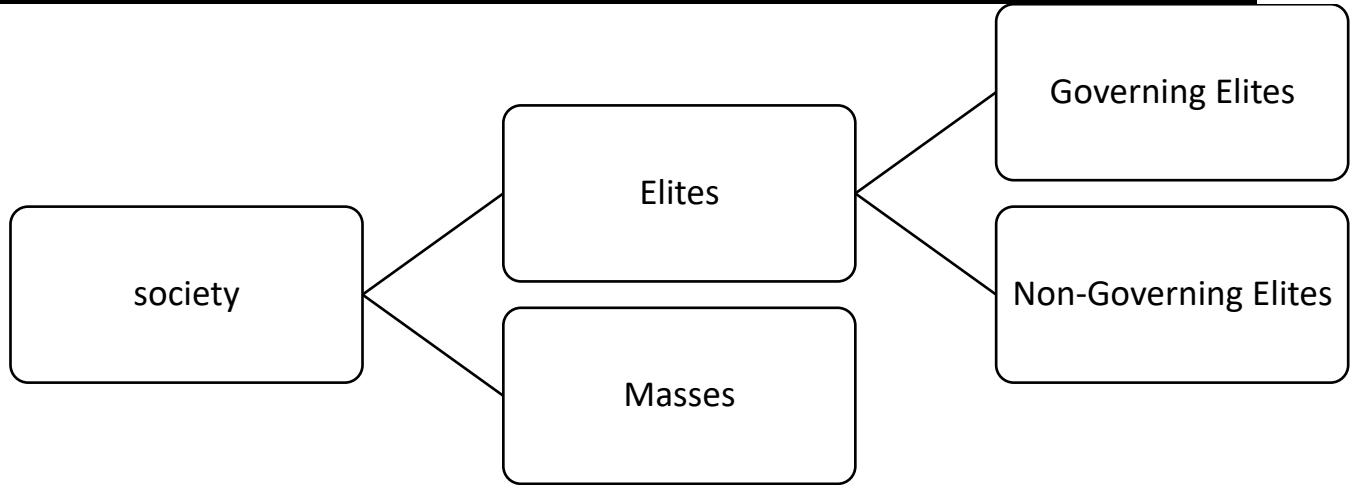
In the realm of politics, political behavior can be defined as any activity or practice undertaken to gain power at a certain level of the political system or to direct, control and supervise thereof. That is, political behavior is the political activities of individuals and the consequences that this activity has for political institutions, such as positive and negative propaganda, war, joining the enemy, allegiance and disloyalty, participation and non-participation (Abercrombie, 1988, p. 285).

### **Theoretical Framework**

One of the important theories related to power distribution and social-political balance is Pareto's circulation of the elite, which forms a major share of his discussions on social changes. According to Pareto, society is made of "masses" and "elites" and only elites are responsible for changes. He believes that in every society and every class of society, some people are more capable than others and the elites are the most capable people of every group and society (Pareto, 1963, p. 2027). There are two classes of elites, one is the "governing elite", consisting of people who directly or indirectly have an important role in the organization of political power, and the other is the "non-governing elite" who, strictly speaking, are not in a position of power (Pareto, 1963, 2032 p.)

Following Machiavelli's arguments, Pareto introduced a social taxonomy that included six classes, Class I through Class VI. Class I corresponds to the adventurous "foxes" in Machiavelli, and Class II to the conservative "lions," particularly in the governing elite.





### Research background

There is a plethora of Quran-based works in the literature for the elite. For example, Mashayekhi authored a book, *The Way of The Elite*, in which he offered various definitions for the elite using lexicography of verses from the Quran, consequently enumerating terms such as the believers, the pious, the obedient, and the sincere as denotations of the elite. Izadi comparatively examined the school of elitism and addressed the differences between Western elitism and revelation teachings, as well as basic differences such as the strategy and targeting of elites towards social transformation arising from the approach of elites. In an article titled “Role of Religious Elites in Religious Education”, Arafı has defined the religious elite, therein pointing out the necessary competencies for the religious elite. Moreover, the author emphasized their role in three fields of cognition, attitude, and behavior., in an article entitled “Basics and fundamental elements of elitism in Quranic teachings” Khani Moghadam has generally referred to the components of the Qur'an only in the context of elitism.

Therefore, despite all the works conducted on the literature for the elites, the works on political change and the role of elites are very few and far between, and to the best of our knowledge, no study has independently examined the role of elites in changing political behavior using the Quran as the reference point.

### The role of the governing elites in changing political behavior

The governing elites play an important role in political transformation, as far as religious teachings are concerned “People follow the religion of their kings” (Majlesi, v102, p7) the people follow the creeds and beliefs of their ruler. Rulers can even move a mass of people to follow them without a verbal invitation. The rulers of society are divided into two groups: rulers of justice and rulers of injustice, each of which has an important role in political transformation. Imam Sadiq (pbuh) divides imams and leaders into two types in his hadith: “Leaders who take guidance by the command of God and not by the command of the people, and consider the command of God before their command. On the other side are the leaders who lead the masses to sins, place their command before the command of the truth, place their judgment before the divine judgment, and they act according to their owing desires” (Koleini,



1984, Volume 1, p. 168), effectively meaning that the rulers influence people's thoughts, norms and beliefs, and people's beliefs are influenced by the culture that governs the society. Institutions such as family, education, mass media, and peers, which transmit these beliefs to people and are responsible for people's socialization, are all under the supervision of political rulers.

### **A: The constructive role of governing elites in changing political behavior**

God's prophets, their companions, and imams (pbuh) are at the forefront of the battle for rightfulness. They had the duty throughout history to guide and educate people and guide them to the happiness of this world and the hereafter. Their special characteristics and roles are clearly stated in the Quran, depicting therein the favorable behaviors of those elites in altering political and social behavior. Those roles are:

#### **1. Unification of the masses**

One of the behavioral roles of constructive elites in political change is the issue of unity and solidarity in that society. Division and chaos among people will lead to the degeneration and the destruction of the entire society. The first thing that Islam and the Quran relieved the people of the Jahili era from was the fragmentation of religious opinions and beliefs, replacing it consequently with the unity of belief (monotheism). Before Islam, the culture of paganism in Hijaz and the culture of Trinity in Rome simply could not create such unity (Motahari, 1985, p. 269). God has paid attention to this significant behavior in verses of the Qur'an, such as verse "And obey God and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you falter and lose your strength" (Al-Anfal: 46)

Unity in a society is the pillar in the events following the sin of the calf worshipping the calf, as Aaron (pbuh) claimed it as his excuse for lack of action when inquired by Moses (pbuh). Moses went to Mount Toor for 30 days to worship God, and God tells him that he should stay there for another 10 days, during which Samiri tricked the masses into worshipping the calf. After Moses came and saw that some people had become calf worshipers, he said to his brother, why didn't you prevent the people from becoming calf worshipers? He, in response, stated that he was afraid that Moses would condemn him for having divided the Israelites (Aaron) replied: "O son of my mother! Seize (me) not by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Truly I feared lest thou shouldst say, 'Thou has caused a division among the children of Israel, and thou didst not respect my word!'" (Ta-Ha: 96), an excuse which was readily accepted by Moses. He prayed for both himself and himself (Tabatabai, 1995, vol. 14, p. 194) whose prayer is mentioned in Surah A'raf as follows "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy; for you are the Most Merciful of the merciful." (Al-A'raf: 151)

Imam Ali (pbuh) expressed the reason for his silence in the early days of Islam after the death of the Prophet (pbuh) to prevent division among the Islamic Ummah and said in response to Mu'awiya: "... I understood very well that my right was taken away and I patiently let it go. O Muawiya, when the people pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr, your father Abu Sufyan came to me and said 'After the Messenger of God (pbuh), you are the worthiest person to lead the Muslims, and I support you against the opposition, give me your hand in allegiance', but I refused to accept his offer. O Muawiya, you know that your father kept repeating this statement and since the Islamic government was in its infancy and there was a possibility of



division among the Muslims, I did not listen to his words and sat in my house (Majlesi, 1983, p. 632).

## 2. Counseling

One of the roles of the behavior of the governing elites is constructive consultation. In the Arabic language, the word denoting consultation is synonymous with revealing (Ragheb, 1996, vol. 1, p. 470), but in its common meaning, it means taking help from the thoughts of others to clarify the matter or topic that the consulter is looking for. It is as such referencing and getting help from experts and consulting with them in its special sense and referring to public opinions in the basic issues in general fields.

There are two types of consultation. Sometimes a consultation is pertained to the subject and issues in which the final decision is the sole responsibility of the individual who seeks to make the best decision by consulting with others. In the second type of consultation, the opinions and direct involvement of people in decision-making are required as the basis of action, e.g., elections. (Islamic Research Institute, 2010, p. 200)

In the Quran, in addition to the verses that directly deal with the principle of consultation, two verses indirectly consider a consultation as one of the duties of the Prophet (pbuh):“And consult them in the conduct of affairs. And when you make a decision, put your trust in God” (Ali-Imran: 159) Allameh Tabataba'i says that the term *Amr* in this verse refers to the matters related to the administration of the government, not the Shari'a rules and what God has announced (Tabatabai, 1995, vol. 4, p. 56).

The second verse about the consultation is “And those who respond to their Lord, and pray regularly, and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and give of what We have provided them.” (Ash-Shura: 38) (Shora', 38). Here, the term “Amrahom” indicates the realm of consultation issues and works that concern the people and are among the affairs of Islamic society. There is a plethora of narrations on consultation, which is emphasized consultation, for example,“He who acts solely according to his own opinion gets ruined, and he who consults people shares in their understanding.” (Nahj al-Balaghah, Saying 54) Imam Ali (pbuh) states that “Consultation is the chief way of guidance. He who is content with his own opinion faces danger.” (Nahj al-Balaghah, Saying 211). Therefore, according to the verses of the Quran and the traditions of Holy Imams, consultation is one of the important matters that play a role in the decision-making of the governing elites, that is, consulting with people of technical expertise and experience in governmental and executive matters.

The constructive role of the elites in consultation is that they establish a platform for cooperation, collaboration, and consensus in the Islamic society when they consult with the people and experts, and hence the masses feel responsible and involved in the matters of the society, they accompany the Islamic system and root for its prosperity. On the other hand, the elites might turn to autocracy by not consulting with the people and making the political system ineffective.

## 3. Justice-orientation

In the Quranic thought, establishing justice is a basic principle on which the behavior of elites should be based.“We sent Our messengers with the clear proofs, and We sent down with them



the Book and the Balance, that humanity may uphold justice.” (Al-Hadid: 25) The point is in the sentence “that humanity may uphold justice” As such, when talking about the “spontaneity of the people”, the Quran has no purpose of indicating that the goal was for the prophets to force people to establish justice, rather the goal was for the people to be themselves the executors of justice with the guidance of the elites. That is, the masses were intended to be trained in such a way that they become the executors of justice and tread the path of faith with their own feet (Makarem, 2002, vol. 23, p. 372). In the Quranic culture, all political, social, and individual human activities and behaviors must be based on justice. “God commands justice” (An-Nahl: 90) Imam Ali states in this regard that “The most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas” (Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter 53) the best achievement a ruler can boast of is the establishment of justice in all cities. Justice illuminates the horizon of power, and the elites must take steps towards the establishment of justice by changing the existing situation to the desired and being justice-oriented plays a fundamental role in the social-political behavior of the constructive governing elites.

#### 4. Guidance

God could do this guidance without intermediaries, but in the way of testing the servants in this world, He has placed the means and intermediaries like the guiding rulers, in verses “And We appointed leaders from among them, guiding by Our command, as long as they persevered and were certain of Our communications.” (As-Sajdah: 24), and “Guiding by Our command”, that is, they were the leaders who influenced the souls of masses using the will of God, leading them to excellent educational and human goals.

The guiding tools of the Prophet of Islam were good morals, honesty, trustworthiness, chivalry, compassion, encouragement, and persuasion to do righteous deeds and worship God. “And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command; and We inspired them to do good works, and to observe the prayer, and to give out charity. They were devoted servants to Us.” (Al-Anbya: 73)



#### 5. Enlightening and Increasing insight

The Arabic term for enlightening or insight is a Qur'anic and narrative term that is mentioned 42 times in the Qur'an. Insight means awareness, deep and reassuring knowledge, and certain scientific knowledge, acting as a light that sheds light on the facts behind the scenes of events. Insight is concerned with three particular fields, namely, knowledge of the truth, knowledge of the enemy, and situational knowledge; *Basir* (lit. for one who has insight) is someone who knows the truth and evaluates political arrangements based therein. *Basir* is also denoted as someone aware of the subliminal tricks of the enemy which are devised with utmost prudence “The one who is aware of his/her time wouldn't be affected by confusion and obscurities”. Quran states in this regard that “the path of me and my companions is a call to God accompanied by insight” Say: “This is my way; I invite to God, based on clear knowledge—I and whoever follows me” (Yusuf: 108) The constructive elite guides people to the right path, but insight is very important in preventing the deviation of the path to correctness. The Prophet (pbuh) said: “The Blind is not the one who loses his eye, but the one who loses his foresight.” (Nahj al-Fasahah, p.153) Imam Ali (pbuh) said: Losing sight is easier than losing insight “Losing your vision is more preferred than losing your foresight” (Amadi, 2016, p.536)

Imam Sadiq (pbuh) said: “The one who acts without foresight is like the one who walks in the wrong way— Walking fast just gets him more away.” (Al-Kulayni, v1, p.60) The role of constructive elites is to give political insight to the people, which requires constructive behavior.

### **B: The destructive role of the governing elites in changing political behavior**

The destructive governing elites are the tyrants who tread down the path of oppression. They have been referred to in the verses of the Holy Quran with different terms and interpretations. They only consider worldly materials to be theirs and hence seek their worldly comfort and welfare at any possible cost. This only leads to losses in this world and the hereafter. “They are those whose deeds will come to nothing, in this world and in the Hereafter; and they will have no saviors.” (Ali-Imran: 22)

The destructive governing elites build their oppressive governments on the oppression of the people. That is, they easily manipulate the masses by keeping them in the shadow of ignorance and oblivion. Ignorant patronage (Fath, 26), Ignorant show-off (Ahzab, 33), and Ignorant rule (Maideh, 50) are manifestations of the rule of ignorance and the domination of colonialism. In the following, the elements through which the governing elites can exert destructive influence in changing social-political behavior are mentioned:

#### **1. Oppression**

One of the things that cause a change in behavior in society is oppression, in which the destructive elite plays a fundamental role. Many of the roots of anomalous behavior lie in seeking forms of oppression “And they rejected them, although their souls were certain of them, out of wickedness and pride. So, see how the outcome was for the mischief-makers.” (An-Naml: 14), although they firmly believed, they denied it out of oppression and seeking superiority. here, “oppression” is introduced as the reason for denying the call of the prophets. Referring to this verse, Imam Sadiq (pbuh) states:” It means that he rejects knowingly that it's right and proofed for him”. Oppression is a statement of something that a person wrongfully denies while knowing otherwise (Koleini, vol. 2, 1984, p. 287)

Regardless of how tyrannical the rulers eventually become, they cannot sustain their rule with oppression, therefore. They provide social transformation with their oppressive behavior and hence relinquish it to the new elites. There are many verses in this context as well, one is a series of verses that consider “denial of truth” to be the cause of destruction (Hud, 116, Anbia, 13, Mo'menun, 33, 64). Oppression is not strictly used in the Quran for violating the rights of an individual or a group, but any departure from humanity is deemed as such. Cruelty has a general meaning in the Quran, many verses of the Quran consider oppression in the general sense as the cause of the destruction of a nation (Motahari, 1999, p. 208).

#### **2. Dictatorship**

One of the behavioral roles of destructive elites is arrogance and dictatorship. Dictators refuse to consult with people of tact and thought, as a result, the ruler would soon be deprived of any social support. The term “Pharaoh” is used in 74 verses of the Holy Quran. The Qur'an only mentions Pharaoh to refer to the king opposing the prophecy of Moses. The frequency of verses



regarding Pharaoh's methods and character is significantly high, indicating that the Quran has strongly warned the elites against “turning into Pharaoh” and dictatorship in politics. According to the Quran, dictatorship is the repulsive rule of the elite. The exodus of Moses against Pharaoh begins with this divine command “Go to Pharaoh; He has transgressed.” (Ta-Ha: 24) “O Moses, go to Pharaoh, as he has rebelled.” This verse is repeated twice in the Quran, in Surah Taha and Surah Na’zeat. In Surah Taha, it is addressed to Moses in the form of Deuteronomy: “Go to Pharaoh, as he has rebelled” (Taha, 43). Imam Ali (pbuh says: “Whoever is arrogant in his authority will be degraded” (Amadi, 364) Whoever is arrogant in his leadership shall become belittled. “If you be arrogant in your authority, you’d be degraded when you get deposed” (ibid, p.346) “Arrogance during the period of government and leadership causes humiliation during the period of removal.” Pride and dictatorship will create a change in political behavior, evaporates justice-oriented behavior and anti-oppression tendencies, and will promote behavior associated with violence.

### 3. Discord and dissension

One of the roles of destructive elites in creating political change was to administer and highlight the differences between popular groups. This dissection of people greatly increases their vulnerability, as sectarian conflicts prevent them from dealing with very important issues of society. In addition, it provides the cause for dependence on the criminal powers, as every group becomes inclined to the leaders of corruption to its rival, “Indeed, Pharaoh tyrannized over the land, reducing its people to factions, abasing one group of them” (Al-Qasas: 4) “Thus, he fooled his people, and they obeyed him” (Az-Zukhruf: 54) Pharaoh used the method of division and discord to humiliate the Israelites and divided them into groups (Tabarsi, 2001, Vol. 10, p. 478). This is the same approach that has built the basic foundation of the rule of the despotic governing elites throughout history, as the so-called “divide and rule” has been an efficient tool for all destructive elites.

Intellectual differences will lead to behavioral conflict. Conflicts of opinion in society owing to differing schools of scientific and intellectual thought lead to the progress of that society. Yet intellectual differences stemming from ignorance and selfishness lead to behavioral disorders in society, leading to the regression of that society “And obey God and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you falter and lose your strength.” (Al-Anfal: 46). Conflict over vital issues causes degeneration. The destructive elites seek to intensify the conflict, to reach their goals as a result of this conflict.

There is a plethora of examples in the Holy Quran implying that Pharaoh constantly sought to arouse the selfishness and racism of the Egyptians against Moses and his people by inciting ethnic and racial differences “They said, “Are we to believe in two mortals like us, and their people are our slaves?” (Al-Mu’minun: 47). “Should we believe in two people who are like us and their tribe used to be our servants?” The Israelites were the poorest of that land, and hence they were extremely ridiculed by the people of that time. Therefore, the people of Pharaoh took advantage of this issue and said to the people: How can the low race dare to object to the pharaoh's actions? How is it possible for God to choose a prophet from a people who have always been our servants and slaves? So, just as we have superiority over their tribe, we also have superiority over them. And since we are superior, they should worship us, just as their



people worship us. All being said, discord and divisiveness are one of the behavioral characteristics of the destructive elites.

#### **4. Promoting corruption**

Corruption is defined as the abuse of authority, status, power, laws, and regulations for personal gain. One of the things that destructive elites can do to drastically change behavior in any given society is to instill corruption in all fields, which gradually transforms values into anti-values, ultimately leading to unfavorable social-political changes in society. Analysis of the Holy Quran reveals that the term and notion of corruption are mentioned 50 times in 47 verses (Ghesas, 76 and 77; Al-Baghareh, 11, 12 and...), referring to its root causes, destructive effects, methods of fighting, and its sanctity, among others. It is highly noteworthy that a significant part of the verses of the Holy Quran has mentioned the traits and actions of the leaders of corruption, introducing examples such as Pharaoh, Haman, Gharun, the chiefs of Ad and Thamud, among others.

#### **The role of non-governing elites in changing political behavior**

The non-governing elites also play important roles in changing political behavior, which is further broken down as constructive and destructive roles:

#### **A: The constructive role of non-governing elites in changing political behavior**

##### **1. Delegitimization of the tyrannical government**

According to the verses of the Holy Quran, Moses (pbuh) did several things at the beginning of his campaign against Pharaoh. At first, he tried to gently introduce God and the true owner of the world to Pharaoh, effectively challenging the legitimacy of Pharaoh, as the Pharaoh established himself as the owner of the people and the land so that he has the right to rule over them (A'raf, 104). Revealing the vices of the pharaoh and his henchmen was another action Moses performed to delegitimize the Pharaoh. He is, as such "Go to Pharaoh; He has transgressed." (An-Nazi'at: 17) Tyrant "And Pharaoh was high and mighty in the land. He was a tyrant." (Yunus: 83) , called by Moses to be rebellious, criminal, and arrogant (Dokhan, 31). Muhammad (pbuh) also used similar methods for delegitimization of the tyrants of his era, seeking therein the freedom of the people from their clutches.

##### **2. Hindering the performance of the tyrannical government**

Political systems need legitimacy not only to establish but also to stay relevant, a corresponding notion to which is secondary legitimacy or efficiency. In this regard, Moses initially sought to weaken the soft power of sovereignty with "verbal actions" followed by "behavioral actions" aimed at disrupting the functions of the rule of the Pharaoh. The most important actions mentioned in the Holy Quran are (1) the defeat of sorcerers as a part of the knowledgeable elite in Pharaoh's hierarchy, and the exposure of their tricks, "So, the truth came to pass, and what they were producing came to nothing. \* There they were defeated, and utterly reduced." (Al-A'raf: 188,119) and (2) the implementation of nine miracles (Namal, 12, A'raf, 123, Shoara, 15) which led to the weakness of the belief in the unique power of Pharaoh.



### 3. Breakup of the tyrannical government

One of the successes of Moses in eroding the soft power of Pharaoh was to create a division among the different levels of his government (Taha, 61-66) including the rift between the sorcerers and Pharaoh “And the magicians fell down prostrate. They said, “We have believed in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.” (Ta-Ha: 70), the rift in the court and the attraction of Pharaoh's wife to the religion of Moses (pbuh) and the opposition of Pharaoh's successor to the assassination of Moses (Ghafer, 28).

### 4. Discouraging the masses from the tyrannical ruler

Moses besieged Pharaoh's social capital using this attitude. That is, he succeeded in shaking the beneficial relationship between the Copts and the government, and gradually turned the hope of the Coptic community from the governmental system in providing services and providing security to despair “Whenever a plague befell them, they would say, “O Moses, pray to your Lord for us, according to the covenant He made with you. If you lift the plague from us, we will believe in you, and let the Children of Israel go with you.” (Al-A’raf: 134) When Moses removed the calamities and difficulties through prayers, he used to convey to the followers of the pharaoh that he has no power and cannot solve their problems. Although the following verse stated that they did not come to believe after the plague was removed, the people were disappointed by Pharaoh's tyrannical rule.

### B: The destructive role of non-governing elites in changing political behavior

On the other end of the spectrum that houses the constructive elites, lies the destructive elites and position-seekers who seek to deceitfully play a role in changing the socio-political behavior of society. They are powerful individuals and sects who try to gain power and wealth by taking advantage of society's conditions and exploiting public ignorance or existing gaps. That is, they confiscate the material and spiritual capitals of the society for their benefit and cleverly take advantage of public resources for their interests. The destructive non-governing elites are presumed to have two major roles in creating social-political change, namely, (1) to hide the truth and (2) to remain silent in the face of falsehood so that their interests are not jeopardized (Makaram Shirazi, 1995, vol. 7, p. 394).

#### 1. Hiding the truth

One of the most devastating functions of the non-governing elites is concealing the truths that their expression would have changed the fate of society. History is full of instances and scenarios in which the elites have missed their chance to unravel the truth for the sake of gaining or maintaining material benefits, social status, wealth, and reputation among the people. By hiding the truth, the elites force the masses to submit to the governments and hence legitimize the rule of corrupt governments.

According to the interpretation of the Quran, “God received a pledge from those who were given the Scripture: “You shall proclaim it to the people, and not conceal it.”” (Ali-Imran: 187) “remind the time when God made a pact with those who were given the Book to reveal it to the people and not to conceal it.”



The Qur'an has enumerated the most severe punishments for this sin “Those who suppress the proofs and the guidance We have revealed, after We have clarified them to humanity in the Scripture—those—God curses them, and the cursers curse them.” (Al-Baqarah: 159) “God has damned those who conceal the clear reasons and means of guidance that we have revealed to people after We have revealed them in the Book, God curses them; “Why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and knowingly conceal the truth?” (Ali-Imran: 71) “Why do you blend the truth with falsehood (so that others would go astray), and hide the truth while you know it?” Christian and Jew's scholars are reprimanded for concealing the facts, and examining the punishments specified for these people would highlight the significance of concealment in the Islamic religion.

It is stated in the Quran that covering parts of the reality that the Jewish scholars have always been accused of has provided the basis for misguidance and made the masses tentative in making the right choice. For example, if at the beginning of Islam, the Jewish and Christian scholars had revealed to people what they know of the prophet, followers of all three Abrahamic religions would possibly come under one banner in a short period. Or if some Companions had not remained silent after the death of the Messenger of God and offered to the people what they knew about the succession of the Prophet (PBUH), that chasm in the sects of the Muslims would simply not have occurred.

When Muhammad (pbuh) was appointed on his prophetic mission, the Jewish elites stated that his mission did not extend their scope (Maghatel bin Sulaiman, 2004, p. 327). It has yet been argued that if they had examined their holy book exactly and acted on it, they would not have denied the Prophet of Islam (pbuh), as details of him are outlined therein (A'raf, 157, Bagharah, 176, An'am, 20)“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah, but then failed to uphold it, is like the donkey carrying works of literature.” (Jum'ah: 5). This is the most telling example that can be said for an idle scholar who carries the burden of the responsibility of knowledge without benefiting from its blessings.

## 2. Silence against falsehood

The elites of Israelites remained silent against Pharaoh, perceived to have led to widespread corruption. God blames these elites for their silence.“Why do the rabbis and the priests not prevent them from speaking sinfully and from consuming forbidden wealth?” (Al-Ma'idah: 63) “Why don't the Christian elites and Jewish scholars forbid them from sinful words and unlawful wealth?” the Quran stipulates that, to reform a corrupt society, its prevailing false thoughts and beliefs must be altered beforehand. The Messenger of God (pbuh) has prevented the elites from remaining silent, especially in times when seditions and heresies run amok, and has also promised the curse of God onto scholars who remain silent in such circumstances (Koleini, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 56). Many non-governing elites do not show any reaction when a right is violated, yet being silent in the face of such actions effectively means being satisfied with the then-current state of affairs. It has been narrated by the Prophet (pbuh) that: “The one who is silent is the brother of the satisfied [with viciousness] and whoever is not in our side is against us” (Majlesi, v74, p.421)“Those who chose to not support the Prophet (pbuh) and his successors are as if they were on the front line against them.”



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## Conclusion

Although the Holy Quran is perceived to have plentifully cited the role of the masses and human society in changing social and political behavior, the thought, behavior, and actions of elites have been dubbed the most decisive in changing the general policy of society, as they have the highest level of influence over social-political changes through their constructive or destructive behavior. As such, the current research has sought to highlight the fact that the Holy Qur'an has defined roles for the governing and non-governing elites, each of which is very important in political and social change. According to the Quran, the governing elites can exert positive (constructive) influence through acts of unification, counseling, justice orientation, guiding, and enlightening, and negative (destructive) influence through acts of oppression, dictatorship, dissension, and promotion of corruption. The non-governing elites, on the other hand, can have a positive (constructive) influence in shifting political behaviors through delegitimizing the tyrannical government, hindering the performance of the tyrannical government, the breakup of that government and discouraging the masses from the tyrannical ruler, and a negative (destructive) one through hiding the truth and remaining quiet against falsehood.

The Quran has also enumerated the great divine prophets as the elites who established missions of utmost significance in society, starting by guiding the thoughts and purifying the soul, followed by correcting the actions and behavior of the people. Destructive elites and status-seeking people have always tried to stand in front of God's prophets and their followers to derail the train of constructive shifts at every turn.

The Holy Quran has referred to the deviance of the rabbis through remaining silent towards the devious actions of the Jews, and the constant effort of the corrupt elite to destroy the schools of truth, among others, as examples of destructive elitism, identifying therein the worldly temptations of the elites, making excuses for blocking the path of truth, deceiving the masses, feelings of jealousy, fear, losing one's position, seeking wealth and social status, and adopting a superficial attitude, among others, as the root causes of their destructive behaviors.



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