The Emergence of Politics from the Debate over Utopias in the Holy Quran

Mohammad Masrour: PhD. of Political Sociology, Tehran, Iran.

m.masroor70@gmail.com

Jalal Dorakhshah: Professor, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Political Sciences, Imam Sadiq University, Tehran, Iran Iran(Corresponding Author).

derakhsheh@isu.ac.ir

Abstract: Political theology in every religion encompasses a system of political imagination that must first be understood to grasp the politics within that faith. The political forces in societies are each shaped by a utopia and work toward realizing a specific future vision. Politics essentially represents a competition to establish order for what is to come. The Holy Quran also presents distinct frameworks of political imagination, the exploration of which is vital for understanding politics through the lens of the Holy Quran. Consequently, this article addresses how politics in the Holy Quran is formulated based on the utopias articulated within it. The data analysis method in the article is thematic interpretation, and the data collection method is based on documentary studies. The article does not test a hypothesis or use a theoretical framework but ultimately presents a Quranic theoretical framework for analyzing politics. The article's findings can also be expressed as follows: by drawing two different utopias, the Holy Quran has expressed the formation of politics as a confrontation between two distinct logic governing societies. Accordingly, the communities of the righteous move within the framework of the "logic of blessings" and have utopias such as King David and Solomon, while the people of the world move within the framework of the worldly "logic of boon" and have utopias such as the Garden of Shaddad. The competition between the two utopias, achieved with different logics of life, forms the fundamental conflict of politics from the perspective of the Holy Quran.

Keywords: Political Theology, Holy Quran, Utopia, Blessing, Boon.

Introduction

Problem definition: Religions and Sharia laws have long been among the most important sources of social and political imagination. By defining boundaries, virtues, vices, and situations, the holy books have shaped the human imagination and created an order in the minds that was the source of the followers' actions. This order of thought, derived from holy texts, has contributed to the emergence of political movements throughout history. One can identify ideal examples of such ideas by examining these sacred texts. Classic works of modern political thought, like those of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, abound with references to the Bible. Historical accounts of the formation of New World cantons also affirm the Bible's authority in organizing early immigrant communities in North America (de Tocqueville, 1396, p. 28). Even figures like Karl Marx, who criticized Sharia, have inadvertently engaged with religious imagination and knowledge (Levitt, 1396, p. 31). In other words, political theology must first be able to organize political imagination. Without this analysis, we risk immature political philosophy discussions, often rooted in an imaginative framework shaped by theology, myth, history, and art.

Importance: Understanding the imaginative frameworks of the Holy Books is essential, as they represent some of the most critical political fantasies governing utopian societies; understanding the Holy Books' utopias will significantly help outline the nature of politics within these religions. Suppose the Holy Quran influences contemporary Muslim politics and culture. In that case, it is crucial first to comprehend the realm of imagination in the Holy Quran and strive for a coherent understanding of its vision for human societies. Only after this step can engage with political philosophy or other matters from the Quranic perspective and obtain practical and definitive answers.

Necessity: The Holy Quran, as a sacred text, contains subtleties and imaginative patterns that only by paying attention to them can one understand the foundations and general directions in various areas, including politics. A lack of studies focused on Quranic imagination has led to weakness in developing political philosophy literature based on the Holy Quran, preventing research in this area from growing as

it should. Without correctly formulating the political imagination found in the Holy Quran, political philosophy and political science become confused and disoriented, unable to establish a proper framework for their principles. This study aims to take a step toward addressing this gap by articulating the political imagination.

Objectives: This article's primary purpose is to describe the formation of politics through the contrast of Quranic utopias. The secondary objectives include understanding politics as a divine trial and test, visualizing the utopia of the righteous and believers in this world, depicting the utopia of the worldly, and highlighting the differences between Quranic utopias.

Questions and Hypothesis: The present study does not test a hypothesis but attempts to answer the question: "How is politics formulated in the Holy Quran based on the utopias outlined therein?" To this end, the present article addresses the formulation of the Holy Quran's utopias. It attempts to formulate this political fantasy and explain the framework for forming politics under these utopias.

Research Method: This research falls within the scope of the "thematic interpretation of the Quran" method due to the type of problem it addresses. Thematic interpretation involves the researcher collecting verse related to a topic and synthesizing their interpretations to create a conceptual framework. This process begins with the text of human life and its underlying realities. With a mind focused on human issues and thoughts, the researcher turns to the Quran, seeking answers to their questions through the frameworks and principles expressed, facilitating a two-way dialogue between the interpreter and the Quran, ultimately clarifying the Quranic perspective on the topic (Akbari, Shirzad, and Shirzad, 1393, p. 42). In organizing the research, this work follows these steps in order: first, collecting verse related to the topic; second, referencing interpretations and analyzing the commentary on each verse and the verse connected to it; third, analyzing, synthesizing findings, and concluding on the subject under discussion (Nosrat Panah and Bakhshi, 1399, p. 680). The data collection method in this research is documentary, and the following considerations have been taken into account for its application: 1. Emphasis on the surface of the Holy Quran and careful attention to the

words; 2. Awareness of the inner meaning of the Holy Quran as it relates to its surface; 3. The necessity of understanding the Quran's position with the overall set of verse about a topic; 4. Attention to the essence of the meaning of the Quran's words to avoid imposing external interpretations (Sultani, 1399, p. 18).

1. Research Background

The ideal society, as viewed through the lens of the Holy Quran or the Quranic utopia, is a topic that lacks coherent and scientific discourse despite the many scattered discussions surrounding it. In his book "Society and History from the Perspective of the Quran," Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi devotes a section to the concept of the ideal society. From his viewpoint, the key characteristic of this perfect society is its prevailing ideology and worldview. He attempts to explain behavioral patterns based on four human relationships: the relationship with God, the relationship with oneself, the relationship with nature, and the relationship with others. Additionally, he discusses institutions in the ideal society, generally addressing aspects of the economy, politics, family, law, and education (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391). Another work is titled "Characteristics of a Perfect Society in Islamic Civilization from the Perspective of the Quran and Traditions" by Mohammad Nazir Erfani and Hassan Kheiry. According to the authors, a perfect society is one where monotheism, justice, and moderation prevail (Erfani and Kheiry, 1397). Another notable work is "Mahdavi's Utopia, the Manifestation of the Purposefulness of Creation, the Finality of History, and the Peak of the Evolution of the Individual and Human Society from the Perspective of the Quran and Traditions" by Ali Mohammadi Ashnani. This article discusses the implications of verse and traditions in realizing the Mahdavi society as a utopia of human life (Mohammadi Ashnani, 1399). Due to the lack of a clear portrayal of Quranic utopia, research in this area has often missed the mark in providing a comprehensive understanding and has mainly focused on general indicators. Therefore, this study aims to clarify the concept of utopia in the Quran by outlining Quranic utopias. Furthermore, comparing these utopias will demonstrate that the Quran views politics as a phenomenon between two utopias grounded in the logic

of divine blessings and worldly benefits. The innovation of this research is first evident in its formulation of Quranic utopias and subsequently in its delineation of politics through these frameworks.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Principles

Politics involves establishing specific patterns of order and control within society. Before this order manifests in the social realm, it is conceived in the minds of individuals. It is through the interaction between imagination and the established forces within society that a new order emerges. Imagination is the source of creation and transformation, allowing humanity to evolve. When a collective social imagination forms regarding the future of a society, the forces of change signified by the concept of utopia also come to life (Navidnia, 1398, p. 53). Utopias represent organized social imaginations that can rally society around their vision, and throughout history, such utopias have fostered the emergence of political forces. At times, a political force arises around a well-defined utopia; at other times, a political movement is born from the negation of other ideas instead.

Nevertheless, in all instances, at least one utopia—whether spoken or unspoken—must exist as a positive or negative aspiration for building the future, allowing politics to develop around it. Each ideology also encompasses a utopian dimension that favors one order over another, which is why politics holds significance. Politics is shaped by the clash of utopias, ultimately influencing human conditions. Based on this understanding, utopia and politics are examined in greater detail.

2.1. Utopia

Utopia is an idealized imaginary society that separates human imagination from the chaos of the present, integrates visions of the future, and presents them as a desirable image. Utopia forms the foundation of society's socio-political imagination and is also seen as a source of people's hopes (Emerson, 1399, pp. 11-12); this is why politics also enters the realm of existence alongside it. Politics serves as a means of suspending the present and envisioning the future. This writing style also serves as a political indictment against current affairs, challenging the present by depicting an alternative vision (Rothstein et al., 1395, p. 77). The allure of utopia lies in its beauty and

organization, making it more desirable and exciting to inhabit than the structure of contemporary life. Utopia possesses the potential to reshape society by creating a new social force through its two essential functions: suspending the current situation and painting a picture of the future.

Utopia is integral to each person's Worldhood To be more precise, the way he is being in the world that shaping their relationship with transcendental circumstances. Sometimes, this utopia resides in the past, nostalgically influencing the present to enrich the future as a brilliant memory; at other times, it is primarily a vision of the future, emerging entirely from the realm of imagination and entering into people's lives. In this sense, the utopian pursuit is not a modern invention but a continuation of the many individuals who have aspired to develop the earth in indescribable and unique ways. For instance, Shaddad, upon hearing the description of the Garden of Eden, wished to create such a garden for himself on earth (Bahrani, 1415, vol. 5, p. 325). However, utopia encompasses more than just the design of buildings and gardens; it also includes the structure of society, institutions, and human relationships. The rejection of present reality through alternative visions forms the basis for change, revolution, and the evolution of worldhood. This process transforms personal worldhood into a shared cultural image: the art of transcending the present, understanding how to navigate the world, and ultimately achieving a worthy state.

Revolution and utopia are two sides of the same coin, and the date of birth of revolutions should be viewed as the day utopian images that guide their movement are formed. On this basis, Karl Mannheim suggests that utopia serves as the foundation of change, contrasting it with ideology and legitimizing the existing situation. He regards utopia as a collective unconscious organization (Mannheim, 1392, p. 72), where the vision of the desired world critiques everything and even shapes language, transforming it from a mere imagination into a social structure. According to Horkheimer, utopia is present in all our judgments (Horkheimer, 1398, p. 10). With utopia, criticism becomes possible; without the ability to envision an alternative image for individuals and society, neither would change occur in the world

nor would politics be created. Thus, utopia negates everything solid and rigid, such as place (Goden, 1392, pp. 36-37), enabling change and hope in the form of a temporal matter.

Utopias serve as points of reflection, showcasing the potential futures available to humanity. This line of thought traces back to ancient Greece, particularly in Plato's Republic. Following the Renaissance, it found expression in the modern West through works like Campanella's "City of the Sun," Francis Bacon's "New Atlantis," and Thomas More's "Utopia" (More, 1394, p. 22). Among Muslim philosophers, Al-Farabi describes a utopia characterized by blessings, where individuals strive towards achieving them. He contextualizes this utopia within its leadership and regards it as the foundation of the ideal city (Al-Farabi, 1995, p. 122). Al-Farabi posits that the city represents the essential framework for a suitable life, while smaller communities, such as villages, are deemed incomplete forms of existence (Al-Farabi, 1995, p. 13). He distinguishes four types of cities in contrast to the utopian ideal: 1) An ignorant city, where the populace is unaware of or disregards blessings; 2) A corrupt city, where the inhabitants recognize blessings conceptually, yet their actions echo those of the ignorant; 3) A transformed city, where the people's previous beliefs and actions aligned with the utopian model, but have since evolved; 4) A misguided city, where the original ruler pursued misconceptions, believing he was receiving divine revelations, resulting in a populace whose beliefs and actions are entirely founded on delusion (Al-Farabi, 1995, pp. 127-128).

Whether in the utopia, Farabi's dystopias, ruined cities, institutions, structures, or any narrative or image-making elements are not discussed. Instead, only the town's leader and the general direction of the beliefs and actions of its people are examined. This indicates Farabi's existential and idealistic perspective, which views their existence in the world as the primary factor in shaping the situation rather than formal matters. Disregarding form means neglecting the essence, so the main issues related to human life on earth, which arise from the relationships among humans and between humans and nature, are either overlooked in such a scenario or relegated to Sharia—this at least signifies the absence of philosophical wisdom

surrounding it. However, comprehending the essence of utopia cannot be achieved without grasping its form and manifestations. Therefore, a balanced understanding of utopia's semantic and formal structures is essential to create an inspiring image.

2.2. Politics

According to Montesquieu, public laws are rooted in the situation (Durkheim, 1397, p. 58), and modern politics derives from this meaning. Various definitions of politics—including governing, organizing public affairs, creating compromise, wielding power, and distributing resources—express the idea that politics involves establishing a specific pattern of order and control over society, or more precisely, the possibility of "constructing a situation" (Heywood, 1395, pp. 9-19). Therefore, the situation, much like the state, should be viewed as an entirely political concept, and the relationship between the situation and politics warrants discussion. Hannah Arendt, with a similar interpretation in her book The Human Condition, regards the situation as having political meaning. Indeed, she posits that the situation of action is the most political of them all (Arendt, 1389, p. 43). The concept of status is grounded in continuity, duration, and stability, thus aligning it closely with the state and politics. This continuity arises from social institutions and structures. Consequently, the collection of institutions and structures that shape the general conditions of society is referred to as status. In other words, each individual or group of decision-makers regulates their position and actions based on understanding several stable routines. These routines are seen as "rules of the game" in Douglas North's view, each of which he identifies as an institution (North et al., 1397, p. 43). Institutions establish the general methods and procedures in society that regulate people's behavior patterns and embody a system of beliefs, convictions, and interests (Zarei, 1397, pp. 33-34). Therefore, we are posing a political question when we inquire about the situation and how it arises and unfolds. More precisely, politics is the struggle to create a specific plan for the conditions that prevail in society. Since any plan or utopia can only be realized by dominating society, the conflict of utopias will naturally be considered. The antagonistic

nature of utopia becomes evident from this perspective, which Carl Schmitt addressed by invoking the concept of evil (Schmitt, 1392, p. 62).

On this basis, politics refers to "those events that are still in the process of becoming and in which decisions must be made for each case that led to the emergence of new and unique situations" (Mannheim, 1392, p. 164). This implies that what is not yet institutionalized falls within the realm of politics, while what is institutionalized, with no force left to change it, should be understood as the history of politics. Certainly, if a powerful force exists, it will disregard any institutionalized structure in front of it and will ultimately alter everything. Utopia also makes sense within this framework because it provides a plan for "becoming and changing the situation." It identifies unopened horizons and delineates the method of change through them. Consequently, politics becomes entirely dependent on and exclusive to utopia because, as long as there is no plan or imagination for change, no force for change can emerge.

3. The Political Trial of Utopias

In the Holy Quran, every aspect of human life must be understood within the framework of divine trial and testing: "Who created death and life that He may try you — which of you is best in deeds (Surah Al-Mulk, verse 2)." Politics is one of the human affairs, and a believer in the Holy Quran must comprehend the divine test of his political progress in every situation based on this doctrine. This poses a fundamental question in Islamic political theology: what tests and trials has the Supreme Being prepared for Muslims in various political situations? Therefore, it is crucial for politicians to understand the theological nature of situations and discern God's will within them. The Holy Quran illustrates different political contexts, among which two can be identified as utopian scenarios—circumstances where people's lives reach their peak based on their chosen paths, ultimately determining worldly paths and ways.

The importance of this issue is that theological discussions often focus on the afterlife meanings and consequences of worldly affairs, neglecting the examination of the realities of this world.

However, political theology seeks to analyze and theologically assess worldly choices and the ultimate paths of earthly existence. In other words, politics and the formation of government serve as a divine test for people, determining whether they strive toward establishing justice through divine measures: "Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity" (Surah Al-Hadid, Verse 25), or whether they cluster around trivial worldly matters: "Are you content with this world's life instead of the hereafter? But the provision of this world's life compared with the hereafter is but little" (Surah Al-Tawbah, Verse 38). In these circumstances, people bear the responsibility to rally around the truth and persevere in it until divine assistance arrives at the right time.

The Holy Quran presents nations and individuals with a choice, compelling them to choose their path based on pursuing one of two utopias. This serves as a divine test, revealing whether individuals are dedicated to their faith or if they harbor a tendency toward ingratitude and disbelief within their hearts, casting doubt on the sincerity of their beliefs: "Do men think that they will be left alone upon saying, 'We believe' and not be tried?" (Surah Al-Ankabut, Verse 2). "And certainly, We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars" (Surah Al-Ankabut, Verse 3). Accordingly, the Holy Quran outlines two utopias from different eras, each with distinct characteristics yet founded on the same principles. It is important to note that these represent two overarching conditions that govern human societies, which are not quantifiable but rather qualitative. Therefore, the indicator for assessing the state of societies in light of the Holy Quran is the condition of the people's hearts: "Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned" (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 225). The inclinations and preferences of hearts ultimately shape the state of society. The quality of the heart determines both the status of the individual and that of the society as a whole. It clarifies their relationship with the Supreme Being and the Caliph of Allah, and the progress of any society in uniting hearts hinges on the truth and

quality of their hearts. Thus, the purification and education of hearts serve as the central focus in forming each path.

In other words, every social situation represents a way of life that adheres to different logic and procedures. Consequently, the logic of life in each nation and the journey's conclusion are fundamental choices for every society, as expressed in the Holy Quran, which illustrates two utopias of worldly existence. The two types of Quranic utopias God defines in the Holy Quran and historical examples for each have a period-based context. Therefore, only the principles and rules necessary to achieve them can be discussed since they have varying requirements in terms of time and historical circumstances. Thus, discussing the overall concept of the Quranic utopia is misleading and ought to be understood within the context of historical periods. These utopias will be explored further in the following sections.

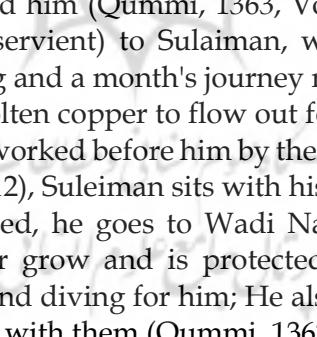## 3.1. Utopia of righteous People: the logic of Blessings

The mighty Lord says: "And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded against evil, we would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they rejected, so We overtook them for what they had earned (Surah Al-Aaraf, verse 96)." This verse states that God promises people that if they all believe and practice piety, He will open the doors of blessings from heaven and earth for them. The good deeds of people lead to an increase in further good deeds and blessings, and the events of the day are, to some extent, dependent on the actions of the people themselves (Tabatabai, 1374, Vol. 2, p. 271). This verse describes a situation where God opens the doors of blessings from heaven and earth for the people; this is a utopian situation, specific to when individuals adhere to faith and piety. The concept of "blessing" is central to this scenario, and its meaning pertains to consolidating something. The term refers to something from which significant and inexhaustible good is expected (Ibn Manzur, 1414, p. 396). This indicates that what God grants will be boundless and consolidated, which stands in contrast to the possessions of the world, which are scarce and perishable. This logic

highlights the difference in human existence within the world. Therefore, if a person relies on God and follows the divine path, God will connect them to the infinite source of His gifts, providing a wellspring of peace and tranquility. The logic of believers' lives in this world is based on divine blessings, which is how one can be safeguarded from negative traits such as greed, envy, and arrogance.

The Holy Quran provides extraordinary descriptions of the circumstances under which the prophets and divine saints held power, which can be seen as "eras of blessing" or "times of blessing" on earth. Concerning the impact of the rule of the Imams of Guidance (peace be upon them), the same verse is referenced, stating that if people had chosen faith and piety and had not denied the rights of the divine saints, God would have granted them such a government on earth (Barazesh, 1400, pp. 214 and 218). Faith and piety are general terms that, according to the teachings of the Holy Quran, include following the divine leader as one of their components. This also encompasses upholding divine institutions such as marriage, avoiding usury, practicing moderation, and adhering to other commands. In envisioning divine utopias, the institutional frameworks of the Quran should likewise be considered. Below are Quranic descriptions of blessed utopian scenarios.

When the Children of Israel accompanied Moses (peace be upon him) for many years to gradually overcome Pharaoh, finally, as they fled from Pharaoh's armies, the sea parted for them, and they achieved victory over Pharaoh with God's assistance. After crossing the sea, the Children of Israel settled in the desert; God caused twelve springs to flow from a rock: "...So there gushed from it twelve springs; each tribe knew its drinking place: Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 60)." Additionally, He placed a cloud over them to protect them from the sun. Their food also descended from the sky: "And We made the clouds to give shade over you, and We sent to you manna and quails: Eat of the good things that We have given you..." (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 57). These divine gifts afforded the Children of Israel utopian conditions far beyond typical worldly civilizations and granted them superiority over others. Naturally, all this was due

to their faith in the guardianship of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family), the Amir al-Mo`minin (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and the Imams (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) (Feyz Kashani, 1415, Vol. 1, p. 127). This utopian existence, where even the Israelites were not compelled to work, lasted until they strayed from the framework of divine life due to greed for worldly possessions. Diligence in maintaining the significance of divine institutions in their society can yield such outcomes, given the context of their era.

Another aspect of the utopia of the believers that has been realized in world history date   s back to the reigns of David and Solomon (peace be upon them). During this period, the Children of Israel once again fulfilled their covenant with God and, as a result of passing through trials and tribulations, earned the right to attain such a state. Another utopian kingdom of the Israelites is realized in a way in which David and Solomon gain dominion over parts of the universe that are usually impossible for people: "And certainly We gave to Dawood excellence from Us: O mountains! Sing praises with him, and the birds; and We made the iron pliant to him (Surah al-Saba, Verse 10)." Iron became soft for David like wax, and the mountains, birds, and animals mentioned him (Qummi, 1363, Vol. 2,p. 199); "And (We made) the wind (subservient) to Sulaiman, which made a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey m the evening, and We made a fountain of molten copper to flow out for him, and of the jinn, there were those who worked before him by the command of his Lord" (Surah al-Saba, Verse 12), Suleiman sits with his chair in the wind and travels with great speed, he goes to Wadi Naml, which is a valley where gold and silver grow and is protected by ants, the jinn do construction, mining and diving for him; He also knows the language of birds and converses with them (Qummi, 1363, vol. 2,p. 126). A man from his relatives moves the throne of the Queen of Sheba to a great distance in an instant (Feyz Kashani, 1415, vol. 4p. 67).

Although Dhul-Qarnayn is not a prophet, he is a believer whom God has bestowed favors upon and bestowed greatness upon. He sits on the clouds and descends into the darkness of the earth, blocks the path of Gog and Magog, and traverses the east and west of

the world (Feyz Kashani, 1415, Vol. 3, p. 260). These are Quranic examples of the state of blessing that previous societies have experienced. If believers are sincere, stand up for God, and are patient in the face of divine trials, ultimately the Almighty will open the blessings of heaven and earth for them. A divine utopia is realized through the help of the Almighty at a level beyond the ordinary life of this world, the culmination of which can be found during the time of the advent of the Qaim Al Muhammad, may God grant him peace. What is referred to as the "Muslim civilization" in history is very different from the "divine civilization" or "divine utopia" because it did not have the basic components of faith and piety; the state of blessing is formed only by the centrality of the divine saints and their guardianship. The temporal quality of such a civilization is such that, for example, in the era of the appearance of the Holy Imam Mahdi (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), each year lasts for ten normal years (Feyz Kashani, 1415, Vol. 3, p. 384); that is, time also has the principle of blessing and becomes more durable and reliable.

3.2. The Utopia of the Worldly: The Logic of Boon

The Holy Quran also describes a utopia for those who prioritize the world; those who do not believe in meeting God in the Hereafter are satisfied with worldly life, accustomed to it, and oblivious to the divine verses: "Surely those who do not hope for Our meeting and are pleased with this world's life and are content with it, and those who are heedless of Our communications (Surah al-Yunus, Verse 7)." The Almighty grants such people who desire the world as many worldly blessings as they deem fit: "Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire" (Surah Al-Isra`, verse 18). In these circumstances, nations are subject to "Estedraj" and are left to their own devices until their time comes. They enjoy a certain degree of worldly boon, glory, and splendor, spending their days in relative "comfort." However, in reality, this time will ultimately end to their detriment. They will be ensnared by God's trickery: "And (as to) those who reject Our communications, we draw them near (to destruction) by degrees from whence they know not" (Surah al-A'raf, verse 182), "and I grant them respite; surely My

scheme is effective". (Surah al-A'raf, Verse 183). In other words, due to their avoidance of the truth, some nations and individuals lack any foundation for transformation toward goodness and virtue and forget the Lord of the universe. In this way, the Almighty also aids them on their path. It grants them the world so that they may find contentment in it, but suddenly takes everything away from them: "So when they forgot what they had been warned about, We opened for them the gates of everything until, when they rejoiced in what they had been given, We seized them suddenly, and then they were destroyed." (An'am 44) God gives the disbelievers respite so their desires may endure long and then destroy them (Qummi, 1363, Vol. 1, p. 366). This truth reveals the insignificance and impermanence of worldly boon: "The provision of this world is short" (Surah al-Nisa, Verse 77). This reflects the utopian mindset of those who enjoy the world for a while but ultimately face a miserable end.

The concept of "Estedraj" refers to the trials and tests faced by believers in the presence of disbelievers who seek worldly gains. If God had not intended to ease the burden for believers, He might have blessed the disbelievers with immense wealth, allowing them to build their houses with silver roofs. While God may grant prosperity to those who disregard the truth, this wealth can vanish suddenly with the emergence of reality (Bahrani, 1415, Vol. 2, p. 419). In times of "Emla" and "Estedraj", when disbelievers enjoy their blessings, it becomes increasingly challenging for believers to maintain their piety, as the competition for worldly success intensifies. Not engaging in this competition or choosing to pay less attention to material pursuits can lead to feelings of isolation and relative poverty among the faithful.

One example of a utopia of boon is the paradise of Shaddad. Shaddad was a king of the Aad tribe who, upon hearing the description of paradise, decided to create a similar garden on Earth and ordered the construction of a garden called Iram. However, when the garden was completed and Shaddad and his companions were on their way to see the results of their work, God took their lives with a Saiha (a sudden sound or call). They never had the chance to witness their earthly paradise (Feyz Kashani, 1415, Vol. 5, p. 325). Another example of someone who achieved abundant blessings in the world is

Qarun. He was a devout individual who often worshipped God and sought forgiveness during the Tiyah period. However, as the Tiyah period extended, he became neglectful of his worship. Using his knowledge, he delved into alchemy and accumulated vast wealth. For a time, he enjoyed extreme luxuries and boasted about them, causing others to feel envious and wish for a life like his. Ultimately, he and all his possessions were swallowed by the earth at the prayer of Moses (peace be upon him) (Bahrani, 1415, Vol. 4, p. 288).

In Surah Al-A'raf, after recounting the histories of the nations of Noah, 'Ad, Thamud, and Shu'ayb, God states that every prophet sent to a community faced hardships, illnesses, and calamities aimed at guiding their people back to Him. However, when these difficulties failed to bring them back to God's path, He granted them abundant blessings and prosperity. Unexpectedly, when they felt secure, God made them suffer punishment. The verse states, "And We did not send a prophet to a town, but We overtook its people with distress and affliction so that they might humble themselves" (Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 94). "Then We gave them good in the place of evil until they became many and said: Distress and happiness did indeed befall our fathers. Then We took them by surprise while they did not perceive" **(**Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 95). God grants a boon to the people of this world, giving them time to repent and return to the truth. However, when their hearts harden and they remain indifferent to the truth while becoming absorbed in worldly matters, He will punish them. This indicates that a worldly utopia is achievable, and God allows those who seek it the time to accomplish this goal. Nonetheless, this period of happiness will not last long; the Almighty will suddenly take action against them.

According to the Holy Quran, God is sensitive to social institutions such as marriage and has issued punitive rulings against their weakening through fornication. The verse, "And go not nigh to fornication" (Surah al-Isra`, Verse 32), highlights this point. In historical situations where the institution of marriage is under threat, God has intervened to eliminate wrongdoing people from history. Similarly, concerning the institution of trading, God has condemned unjust practices such as overpricing and cheating in measurement, as

noted in the verse, "And give full measure when you measure out" (Surah al-Isra`, Verse 35). He also declared usury to be forbidden, stating, "...and Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury..." (Surah al-Baqarah, Verse 275). Those who undermine these institutions can face despair and destruction. This illustrates the vital importance of such institutions, as God has established specific laws and meanings within societies. Over time, various levels of truth have been defined through these institutions, and changing them can alter historical meaning. Therefore, if people engage in the tradition of "Estedraj," which involves destroying divine institutions and operating outside their intended framework, it is possible that God will expedite their removal from human history.

4. The Formation of Politics in Light of the Struggle Between Two Utopias

Politics, as described in the Holy Quran, emerges from the conflict between two distinct utopias. On one side are the divine prophets, and on the other are the arrogant individuals and those who primarily seek worldly pleasures (Jovinipour and Pirouzfar, 1397). This struggle represents two ways of existence, living, and desirable prospects in the world. It pits the people of truth against the people focused on worldly matters, with each side aiming to organize society according to its principles.

This is an existential struggle, as each side perceives the other as embodying evil. Consequently, the essence of politics is represented within the framework of good and evil. The divine utopia on earth is constructed based on the faith, piety, and perseverance of the people of truth, who experience unique blessings that emerge from divine providence. It is essential to understand that this divine utopia is not grounded in worldliness or Sufism; rather, it first manifests in this world and is accessible to those who seek it. God bestows special care upon these individuals, opening the doors of both heaven and earth to them.

In contrast, the alternative utopia is characterized by a disregard for the afterlife, a pursuit of worldly satisfaction, and a focus on making the material world the sole area of existence that fulfills its

aims and desires. Each of these utopias will lead to different social and political structures, and the paths to attain them will be entirely distinct. Consequently, these two societies will not share the same institutions, and divine providence will not unfold in a similar manner. determined similarly.

Under such circumstances, individuals will inevitably be drawn to one of two utopias, leading to a struggle to establish an order aligned with these visions. The destiny of societies will be shaped by whether people choose the path of blessing, aspiring for both the hereafter and the present world, or the path of boon, content with earthly pleasures alone. Divine prophets have faced this struggle at various points in history, guiding the people of truth through it.

The Holy Quran vividly illustrates the different fates resulting from these struggles. It reveals that, firstly, those focused solely on worldly pursuits will ultimately find no true enjoyment in life, as divine punishment will eventually overwhelm them. Secondly, although the path of truth is fraught with challenges, God will ultimately grant victory and success to those who are patient and steadfast, bestowing upon them the blessings of both heaven and earth. Initially, unclear matters may escape the attention of the heedless, who fail to recognize the ultimate outcomes.

The duality of divine utopia and worldly utopia closely parallels the division found in Augustine's tradition. However, a fundamental difference must be noted: Augustine's Christian theology emphasizes the negation and suspension of the present world, while it profoundly highlights the hereafter (Moghimi, 1390, p. 60). In contrast, divine utopia in the Quranic perspective is intrinsically linked to this world. This distinction makes sense within the context of historical circumstances. The Holy Quran does not advocate suspending the world; rather, it posits that a good life in this world serves as the foundation for salvation in the hereafter. Unlike Augustine's thought, which suggests that the hereafter necessitates a rejection of the world, the Islamic Quranic perspective does not follow this paradigm.

The utopia of the righteous focuses on the ways and logic of their lives in the world, which are closely related to both work and effort, as well as social and political struggle. The similarities between

Augustine's thought and the Quranic view may stem from the epistemological framework of the Abrahamic religions, which share the same core principles. Nevertheless, the temporal horizons of the divine utopia presented in the Holy Quran and the eschatological timeframe seen in Augustine's "City of God" are fundamentally different and incompatible.

Conclusion

Societies can move in two main directions: toward a worldly utopia or a divine utopia. Each society has a distinct relationship with these two concepts. Those who strive for a divine civilization, guided by the logic of blessing and the fulfillment of an eternal covenant, advance toward divine progress and transcendence. In contrast, societies that pursue a worldly civilization, driven by the idea of boon, tend to become increasingly secular and materialistic.

This presents a divine trial: which path will societies choose? One path leads to the heights of heaven, while the other descends into the depths of hell. People have the option to either follow the covenant of companionship with the saints of God, enduring trials and temptations or to remain content with a worldly existence, seeking temporary gains at the expense of the hereafter—ultimately leading to an unhappy conclusion.

Consequently, Islamic societies progress when they organize their institutions based on the logic of blessing. In contrast, worldly societies advance by structuring their institutions around the logic of boon, focusing on the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. The conflict between these two utopias is fundamental to the development of various societal paths and eras. Therefore, the nature and quality of movement toward each situation must be carefully considered, as they possess unique structures that shape their progression.

References

The Holy Quran

Akbari, Reza and Shirzad, Mohammad Hassan and Shirzad, Mohammad Hossein (1393), Rereading the Theory of Martyr Sadr in the Subjective Interpretation of the Holy Quran with Emphasis on Heidegger's Hermeneutical Thought, Bi-Quarterly Scientific Research Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies, No. 2, 37-61.

Arendt, Hannah (1399), The Condition of Man, translated by Masoud Olya, Seventh Edition, Tehran: Qoqnoos Publications.

Bahrani, Hashim ibn Sulayman (1415 AH), Al-Burhan in the Interpretation of the Quran, Qom: Al-Be`sah Institute, Department of Islamic Studies.

Barazesh, Ali Reza (1400), Tafsir Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), translated by Seyyed Rasool Beheshtinejad, Habil Javani, Mustafa Khalash, 3rd edition, Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications. Online version: http://alvahy.com/. Accessed (1403/10/20)

De Tocqueville, Alexis (1396), Analysis of Democracy in America, translated by Rahmatullah Maraghe'i, 4th edition, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.

Durkheim, Emile (1397) Montesquieu and Rousseau, translated by Younes Akbari and Masoud Zamani Moghadam, Tehran: Tisa Publications.

Emerson, Roger (1399), Utopia, in "Politics and Utopia", by Philip P. Wiener, translated by Jamal Mohammadi, Tehran: Farhang Javid Publications.

Erfani, Mohammad Nazir and Kheiri, Hassan (1397), Characteristics of the Ideal Society in Islamic Civilization from the Perspective of the Quran and Traditions, 3(5), 50-71.

Farabi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad (1995), Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City, Beirut: Dar and Maktaba al-Hilal.

Feyz Kashani, Muhammad ibn Shah Murtaza (1415 AH), Tafsir al-Safi, Tehran: Maktaba al-Sadr.

Goden, Christian (1392), Should Utopia be Restored?, translated by Susan Shariati, second edition, Tehran: Ashian Publications.

Heywood, Andrew (1395), Politics, translated by Abdulrahman Alam, 6th edition, Tehran: Ney Publishing House.

Horkheimer, Max (1398), The Dawn of the Philosophy of Bourgeois History, translated by Mohammad Jafar Poyandeh, 7th edition, Tehran: Ney Publishing House.

Ibn Manzur (1414), Lisan al-Arab, Volume 10, Third Edition, Beirut: Dar Sader.

Jovinipour, Sima and Pirouzfar, Soheila (1397), Typology of Arrogance and Its Nature in the Holy Quran, Quran, and Hadith Studies, 12(1), pp. 169-198.

Lovitt, Karl (1396), Meaning in History, translated by Saeed Haji Naseri and Zanyar Ebrahimi, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.

Mannheim, Karl (1392), Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge, translated by Fariborz Majidi, second edition, Tehran: Samat Publications.

Mesbah Yazdi, Mohammad Taghi (1391), Society and History from the Perspective of the Quran, 7th edition, Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing Institute and International Printing and Publishing Company.

Moghimi, Shervin (1390), The Nature of Politics in Augustine's City of God, Bi-Quarterly Journal of Theoretical Politics Research, No. 9, 59-79.

Mohammadi Ashnani, Ali (1399), Mahdavi's Utopia, Manifestation of Purposefulness of Creation, Finality of History and the Peak of Human Individual and Society's Evolution from the Perspective of the Quran and Narrations, Mahdavitism Scientific Research Quarterly, 14(53), 68-90.

Moore, Thomas (1394), Utopia, translated by Dariush Ashouri and Nader Afshar Naderi, 4th edition, Tehran: Kharazmi Publications.

Navidnia, Manijeh (1398), Analytical Sociology: Concepts and a Survey of Societies, Tehran: Sociologists.

North, Douglas and Wallis, John Joseph and Weingast, Barry (1397), Violence and Social Systems, translated by Behnam Zoghi Roodsari, Tehran: Shiraz.

Nosratpanah, Mohammad Sadeq and Bakhshi, Masoud (1399), Anti-Arrogance in the Political Thought of Imam Khomeini (RA) Relying on the Conceptualization of Arrogance in Tafsir al-Mizan, Political Scinese, No. 32, 671-696.

Qummi, Ali ibn Ibrahim (1363), Tafsir al-Qummi, Qom: Dar al-Kitab.

Rothstein, Edward and Meuchamp, Herbert and Marty, Martin E. (1395), Visions of Utopia, translated by Amir Yadollahpour, Tehran: Agah Publishing.

Schmidt, Carl (1392), The Concept of Political Matter, translated by Soheil Safari, Negah Mo`aser Publishing House, Tehran.

Soltani, Eshaq (1399), An Approach to the Quranic Theory of Freedom (with Emphasis on the Views of Allameh Tabatabaei), PhD Thesis, Tehran: Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Shahid Beheshti University.

Tabatabaei, Mohammad Hossein (1374), Translation of Tafsir al-Mizan, translated by Mohammad Baqer Mousavi, 5th edition, Qom: Qom Seminary Teachers' Association, Islamic Publications Office.

Zarei, Arman (1397), Post-Secularism, Tehran: Ney Publishing.