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The Conceptual and Operational Model of the Political System of Ṭāghūt in the Holy Quran from the Perspectives of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Martyr Imam Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *ṭāghūt* is one of the central concepts in the epistemic system of the Holy Quran, bearing a direct relation to monotheism, divine authority, and the political–social order of human society. In numerous verses, the Holy Quran links faith with the rejection of *ṭāghūt* and presents this rejection as a condition for attaining guidance. In the Quranic thought of Ayatullah Khamenei, *ṭāghūt* does not merely denote an oppressive individual or an unjust ruler; rather, it signifies a system of domination in which political, economic, and cultural powers are organized toward the negation of divine sovereignty and the consolidation of non-divine authority. From this perspective, the opposition between divine authority and *ṭāghūtī* authority constitutes one of the fundamental axes for understanding the Quranic social order, while the struggle against *ṭāghūt* is presented as one of the foundational aims of the prophetic missions. Inspired by the analytical framework of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Ayatullah Khamenei's Quranic thought and employing the method of thematic analysis of Quranic verses, the present study examines the concept of *ṭāghūt* in the Holy Quran and extracts its components at four levels: foundations, structure, function, and consequences. The findings indicate that the *ṭāghūtī* system in the Quran is grounded in the denial of divine sovereignty, the formation of networks of arrogant power, the production of false legitimacies, the distortion of truth, and the exploitation of the masses. Ultimately, such a system leads to the spread of corruption and to moral and social collapse. Accordingly, in the logic of the Quran, *ṭāghūt* is not merely an individual or a historical phenomenon, but rather a structural pattern of domination that stands in fundamental opposition to the system of divine authority.

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1. Introduction

In explaining the system of human guidance, the Holy Quran portrays a fundamental confrontation between two fronts: the front of faith and divine authority on the one hand, and the front of disbelief and *ṭāghūt* on the other. Within this framework, the realization of faith is not confined merely to inner belief; rather, it also requires the rejection of structures of domination that stand in opposition to divine sovereignty. In this regard, the Quran states: *"…So one who disavows the Rebels and has faith in Allah has held fast to the firmest handle…"*[1] *(Quran 2:256).* This verse indicates that, in the Quranic logic, disbelief in *ṭāghūt* constitutes a prerequisite for the realization of faith and entry into the system of divine guidance.

In the Quranic thought of Martyr Imam Khamenei, the Quran is understood as a book of guidance for both the individual and society, and as a comprehensive program for shaping the social and civilizational life of humanity. From this perspective, concepts such as *tawḥīd* (monotheism), *wilāyah* (divine authority), *istikbār* (arrogant domination), and *ṭāghūt* are not merely moral or individual notions; rather, they pertain to the social and political structures governing human societies. In his explanation of the concept of *ṭāghūt*, he does not limit it to an oppressive individual or an unjust ruler; instead, he describes it as a system of domination—a system in which political, economic, and media powers are organized in order to consolidate non-divine authority and perpetuate domination over human beings (see Khamenei, Speech in a Meeting with State Officials, October 27, 2004 [1383/08/06Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3256). According to his interpretation, within the logic of the Quran the movement of the divine prophets has always been in opposition to such a structure, and the mission of the prophets was aimed at breaking the domination of *ṭāghūt* and establishing divine sovereignty in society.

Despite the significant analytical potential found in the Quranic verses and in the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei, contemporary scholarship has rarely attempted to reconstruct the concept of *ṭāghūt*

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1. ﴿…فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى…﴾ (البقرة/۲۵۶)

within the framework of a political system model—a model capable of coherently explaining the intellectual foundations, institutional structures, social functions, and historical consequences of such a system. Accordingly, the central question of the present study is: What are the components and mechanisms of the *ṭāghūtī* political system in the Holy Quran, and how can this system be conceptually reconstructed in the form of a coherent model inspired by the analytical framework of Imam Khamenei's Quranic thought? Addressing this question can contribute to a more precise understanding of the Quranic logic underlying the confrontation between divine authority (*wilāyah ilāhiyyah*) and *ṭāghūtī* authority, and can also provide a theoretical framework for analyzing structures of domination within human societies.

2. Research Background

Studies related to the concept of *ṭāghūt* can generally be classified into several categories:

The first category includes classical exegetical studies, in which the concept of *ṭāghūt* has mainly been examined from lexical and interpretive perspectives. Early Quranic exegetes discussed this concept primarily while explaining the relevant verses and identifying its referents. For example, Ṭabarī in *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Ta'wīl āyāt al-Qur'ān* (2001, 4:546), interprets *ṭāghūt* with reference to meanings such as Satan, idols, or any authority that is obeyed in opposition to God. Similarly, Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq-i Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (1986, 1:303), discusses the term within the linguistic framework of *ṭughyān* (transgression) and considers it applicable to entities such as idols or deviant authorities. Fakhr Rāzī, in *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (1999, 7:15), also presents multiple interpretations, including Satan, idols, and tyrannical rulers who are followed instead of God.

Among contemporary exegetes, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (1996, 2:344), defines *ṭāghūt* more broadly as any entity that is obeyed in opposition to God and that diverts human beings from the path of divine servitude. In his interpretation, the concept of

ṭāghūt is not restricted to specific individuals or objects but can encompass any authority or power that positions itself against divine sovereignty.

The second category comprises theological (*kalāmī*) and doctrinal studies, in which *ṭāghūt* has primarily been analyzed in relation to *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and *shirk* (polytheism). These works generally emphasize the necessity of rejecting *ṭāghūt* as a prerequisite for genuine faith in God (see Muṭahharī 2010, 2:77).

Third, there are studies in the field of Islamic political thought in which the concept of *ṭāghūt* has been examined within the framework of analyses of systems of domination and arrogance (*istikbār*). For example, some scholars, drawing on the intellectual literature of the Islamic Revolution, have interpreted *ṭāghūt* as a symbol of political and social systems of domination (see Miṣbāḥ Yazdī 2012, 1:290). However, in most of these studies the concept of *ṭāghūt* has either remained at the level of exegetical meaning or has been used in a general sense to refer to systems of domination. Few studies have systematically and methodically attempted to extract a conceptual model of a *ṭāghūtī* political system from the Quranic verses with reference to the Quranic thought of the Supreme Leader. Consequently, there remains a clear need for a structural study capable of explicating the various dimensions of this concept within the framework of a coherent theoretical model.

3. Innovation of the Study

The scholarly contributions and novel aspects of this research are as follows:

a. Systematic Reconstruction of the Concept of *Ṭāghūt*: This study seeks to move beyond viewing *ṭāghūt* merely as a particular instance or a general concept and instead analyzes it as a political system with identifiable components and mechanisms.

b. Presentation of a Multi-Layered Conceptual Model: By extracting data from Quranic verses, the study conceptualizes the *ṭāghūtī* system across four analytical levels—foundations, structure, functions, and

consequences—thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the concept.

c. Application of Thematic Analysis in Quranic Political Studies: Employing the thematic analysis method to derive a model of the *ṭāghūtī* political system represents a methodological innovation in the study of Quranic political thought.

d. Providing a Theoretical Framework for Analyzing Systems of Domination: The proposed model can serve as a theoretical framework for analyzing structures of domination and arrogance (*istikbār*) within human societies.

4. Research Method

The present study employs Thematic Analysis with an inductive–deductive approach, a method well suited for extracting Quranic concepts and organizing them into a multi-layered conceptual model. The research procedure consists of the following stages:

4.1. Data Collection

The data set includes all Quranic verses that refer—explicitly or implicitly—to concepts such as *ṭāghūt*, *istikbār* (arrogant domination), *istiḍʿāf* (oppression/enslavement of the weak), non-divine authority (*wilāyah ghayr ilāhiyyah*), Pharaoh (*Firʿawn*), the elite (*mala'*), the military forces (*junūd*), corruption (*fasād*), rebellion (*baghy*), and other related notions.

Auxiliary sources include authoritative Quranic exegeses such as:

- *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī),
- *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* (Ṭabarsī),
- *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān* (Ṭabarī),
- *al-Kashshāf* (Zamakhsharī),
- *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Fakhr Rāzī),
- *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* (Sayyid Quṭb),

as well as major works in Islamic political thought.

4.2. Identification of Meaning Units

All statements related to structures of power, patterns of governance, mechanisms of domination, distortion of truth, social control, and the consequences of *ṭāghūtī* rule were extracted and defined as primary *meaning units* for analysis.

4.3. Initial Coding

Each meaning unit was labeled with concise conceptual codes according to its substantive content. Examples of initial codes include:

- "centralization of power"
- "divide-and-rule strategy"
- "fear-mongering"
- "claim to lordship"
- "humiliation of the oppressed"
- "aligned elite networks"
- "manufactured legitimacy"
- "social corruption"
- "economic exploitation"

4.4. Theme Extraction

The codes were then grouped into broader conceptual categories, leading to the identification of the core themes of the *ṭāghūtī* system. Three levels of themes were derived:

- Basic Themes
- Organizing Themes
- Global Themes

These thematic levels collectively form the analytical structure of the model.

4.5. Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through systematic comparison of the extracted codes with major exegetical sources, including *al-Mīzān*, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, and *al-Kashshāf*.

Reliability was established through a three-stage recoding process (*coding stability*), in which the texts were reanalyzed and the results compared to ensure consistency and coherence.

4.6. Final Analysis

The final stage involved:

- Comparing and synthesizing the extracted themes,
- Examining vertical relationships among the four analytical levels (foundations → structure → functions → consequences), and
- Constructing the comprehensive conceptual system of *ṭāghūt* as a coherent political model derived from the Quranic text.

5. Concepts

5.1. Ṭāghūt

From a lexical perspective, the term *ṭāghūt* derives from the root *ṭughyān*, meaning transgression, rebellion, or exceeding the proper bounds and departing from the limits of truth (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 15:8). Quranic exegetes, in explaining this concept, have referred to various referents such as Satan, idols, tyrannical rulers, or any entity that is obeyed in opposition to God (Ṭabarī 2001, 7:16). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in his exegesis of verse 256 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, considers *ṭāghūt* to be any power that removes human beings from servitude to God and directs them toward submission to a non-divine authority (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 2:344). Nevertheless, many of these interpretations have largely remained at the conceptual or referential level and have paid less attention to examining the structural and systemic dimensions of this concept.

A careful examination of Quranic verses indicates that *ṭāghūt* often manifests in the form of a system of domination. For instance, in the narrative of Pharaoh, the Quran does not merely refer to the individual figure of Pharaoh; rather, it speaks of a network of power that includes the elite (*al-mala'*), the military forces (*junūd*), and propagandistic and economic mechanisms that contributed to the consolidation of his rule

(*al Qaṣaṣ* 28:4; *Ghāfir* 40:29; *al-Zukhruf* 43:54). Such descriptions suggest that ṭāghūt is not merely an individual, but a structure of power reproduced through political, social, and cultural mechanisms. The Quran also identifies characteristics such as arrogance and self-exaltation (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:39), the creation of social divisions and the oppression of segments of society (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4), the distortion of truth and manipulation of public opinion (*al-Zukhruf* 43:54), and the economic exploitation of the masses (*al-Shuʿarā'* 26:183) as defining features of such a system.

In explaining this issue, Martyr Imam Khamenei also emphasizes the social orientation of the Quran and regards the *ṭāghūtī* system as a complex set of power mechanisms that consolidate non divine authority through instruments such as propaganda, distortion of reality, economic domination, and the creation of cultural dependency, thereby diverting human beings from the path of monotheism and justice (Khamenei, Speech in a Meeting with State Officials, March 18, 2002 [1380/12/27Sh]; ; https://khl.ink/f/3111). Accordingly, in his view, a proper understanding of concepts such as *ṭāghūt* is essential for comprehending the Quranic social order and the historical confrontation between the front of truth and the front of falsehood.

1. Initial Coding Table

No.	Semantic Unit Extracted from the Verses	Initial Code
1	Pharaoh's claim to lordship (*al-Nāziʿāt* 79:24)	Claim of lordship
2	Denial of divine guardianship (*al-Baqarah* 2:257)	Rejection of divine guardianship
3	Arrogance and self-foundation (*al-Naḥl* 16:23)	Epistemic arrogance
4	Humiliation of the oppressed (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Social humiliation
5	Deliberate creation of division (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Structural division
6	Use of elite figures (*mala'*) (*al-Aʿrāf* 7:60-75)	Network of aligned elites
7	Creating fear and terror (*al-Shuʿarā'* 26:35)	Fearmongering
8	Distortion of truth / inversion of reality (*al-Naml* 27:34)	Cognitive distortion
9	Epistemic obstruction against the people (*al-Zukhruf* 43:54)	Epistemic closure
10	Propagandistic deception *(al-Zukhruf* 43:53)	Propaganda
11	Fabrication of false legitimacy (*Ghāfir* 40:36–37)	Manufactured legitimacy
12	Suppression of opponents (*al-Aʿrāf* 7:75)	Political repression
13	Blind obedience of the people (*al-Aḥzāb* 33:67)	Irrational conformity

No.	Semantic Unit Extracted from the Verses	Initial Code
14	Exploitation of economy and property (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Economic exploitation
15	Character assassination of prophets (*al-Aʿrāf* 7:66)	Character destruction
16	Instrumental use of military power (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4 – *junud*)	Military authoritarianism
17	Restricting freedom of thought (*Ghāfir* 40:28)	Anti-epistemic freedom
18	Exploitation of religious symbols (*al-Tawbah* 9:34)	Symbolic exploitation
19	Expansion of corruption (*al-Baqarah* 2:205)	Structural corruption
20	Destruction of the foundation of family/social order (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Social disintegration
21	Domination and arrogance in governance (*Hūd* 11:59)	Political arrogance
22	Threat, torture, and intimidation (*al-Burūj* 85:8–10)	Organized intimidation
23	Creating oppressor and oppressed classes (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Class stratification of society
24	Extreme concentration of power (*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:4)	Centralization
25	Preventing public awareness (*Ghāfir* 40:37)	Control of information flow
26	Denial of signs and truths (*Ṭā-Hā* 20:56)	Denial of truth
27	Accusation and labeling (*al-Shuʿarā'* 26:18–19)	Political labeling
28	Mockery of divine values (*al-Muṭaffifīn* 83:29-32)	Mockery of values
29	Soft infiltration and cultural deception (*al-Nisā'* 4:120)	Cultural deception
30	Transgression in power (*al-ʿAlaq* 96:6-7)	Behavioral transgression

2. Table of Organizing Themes and Global Themes

Global Theme	Organizing Themes	Corresponding Initial Codes
Foundational Layer of *Ṭāghūt*	Self-grounding, denial of divine guardianship, epistemic arrogance	1, 2, 3
Structural Layer of *Ṭāghūt*	Centralization of power, elite networks, legitimacy construction, epistemic distortion	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Functional Layer of *Ṭāghūt*	Repression, division, control of perception, exploitation, intimidation	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Consequential Layer of *Ṭāghūt*	Widespread corruption, structural oppression, social disintegration, historical collapse	19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

3. Thematic Network Table

Network Level	Network Content	Analytical Explanation
Global Themes	Foundational, structural, functional, consequential, and transtextual layers	Represents the macro-framework of *ṭāghūtī* thought in the Quran
Organizing Themes	Arrogance, concentration of power, distortion of truth, repression, fearmongering, exploitation, corruption	Reflects the intermediate elements that categorize the basic themes

Network Level	Network Content	Analytical Explanation
Basic Themes	Thirty initial codes extracted from the verses	The most detailed semantic units derived from the Quranic verses and exegetical sources
Vertical Relations within the Network	From basic themes → organizing themes → global themes	Indicates the movement from detailed data toward broader Qur'anic meanings
Horizontal Relations within the Network	Interconnections between structural and functional themes	Demonstrates the interaction among power, propaganda, economy, and repression
Final Output of the Network	"A Four-Layer Conceptual Model of the *Ṭāghūt* System"	—

The Conceptual Model of the Political System of *Ṭāghūt* in the Quran

Layer of the Conceptual Model	Core Components
Foundational Layer	Denial of divine sovereignty, arrogance, non-divine guardianship
Structural Layer	Concentration of power, elites and military forces, manufactured legitimacy, distortion of truth
Functional Layer	Social division, repression, control of perception, economic exploitation
Consequential Layer	Corruption, social decay, structural injustice, collapse

6. Research Findings

Based on the analysis of Quranic verses, classical and contemporary Quranic exegeses, and the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei and ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the *ṭāghūtī* political system can be conceptualized within a four-layered model consisting of foundational, structural, functional, and consequential levels. This model explains how deviation at the level of belief and worldview gradually leads to the formation of corrupt power structures, generates oppressive patterns of governance, and ultimately results in the decline, corruption, and collapse of societies.

a) Foundational Layer of the *Ṭāghūtī* Political System

1. Polytheism and the Negation of *Tawḥīd* as the Root of the *Ṭāghūtī* System

In the view of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the fundamental root of any undesirable political system is *shirk* (polytheism) and the absence of *tawḥīd* (divine unity). In his thought, *tawḥīd* is not merely an individual belief; rather, it constitutes the ontological foundation and the basis of political and social order. Only within the framework of *tawḥīd* can a political system guide human beings toward both worldly and ultimate felicity (see Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 4:123).

At the foundational level, polytheism refers to associating partners with God in lordship and sovereignty, that is, attributing the governance of the world and society to other beings and recognizing them as independent authorities in administering human affairs. As the Quran reports, the polytheists believed that the scope of governing the universe was so vast that God had delegated it to noble and exalted beings, and that these beings should therefore be worshiped so that they might act as intercessors before God. The Quran states: *"If you ask them, 'Who created them?' they will surely say, 'Allah'..."*[2] (*al-Zukhruf* 43:87) (see Zamakhsharī 1986, 4:267).

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, citing these verses, explicitly states that *shirk* constitutes a denial of God's Oneness and a negation of His absolute Lordship (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 18:127). This *shirk*, in essence, forms the foundational basis of tyrannical political systems—systems in which sovereignty does not belong to God and where rulers place themselves or others in the position of lordship and authority over the people.

In contrast to this pattern, *tawḥīd* constitutes the central foundation of the ideal society. Imam Khamenei. In *The General Outline of Islamic Thought in the Quran*, he emphasizes that *tawḥīd* in the Quranic logic is not merely an individual creed, but signifies the negation of all *ṭāghūtī* powers and the exclusive sovereignty of God. As he states, "*Tawḥīd* means that a human being submits to no power except the power of God" (Khamenei 2001, 35). Accordingly, any system that imposes a non-divine will or legislation upon society is, in the logic of

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2. ﴿وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّه...﴾ (الزخرف/۸۷)

the Quran, a *ṭāghūtī* system.

2. Self-Worship and the Erosion of Rationality

The second foundational characteristic of the *ṭāghūtī* system is self-worship and the severance of the relationship between reason and innate human nature (*fiṭrah*). When the pillar of *tawḥīd* is removed from the political structure, society's movement deviates from the path of *fiṭrah*, and true rationality is stripped away from it. The rationality to which he refers is not merely instrumental reason; rather, it is the capacity to discern real good and evil and to remain in harmony with *fiṭrah*. Abandoning *fiṭrah*, spirituality, and the religion that corresponds to innate human nature leads to the loss of the principal distinction between human beings and animals, namely rational reflection (*taʿaqqul*). The consequence of this condition is the dominance of emotions, impulses, and carnal desires over individual and collective decision-making. This is because the purpose of life in such an environment is reduced to nutrition, reproduction, and material pleasure, while spiritual and transcendent needs are neglected and forgotten (see Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 14:388).

An analysis of the current global landscape clearly demonstrates that the inefficiency of the 'hegemonic front' (the *istikbār*) and traditional Western powers is not limited to political or economic spheres; rather, it serves as a testament to the gradual collapse of the civilizational foundations that once purported to guide humanity. This decline is not an incidental occurrence or the result of isolated, temporary policy decisions, but is deeply rooted in the essence of a materialist civilization—one that has severed humanity from the safe haven of divine guidance and, by suppressing innate rationality, has fostered a milieu in which the instruments of domination engage in the continuous reproduction of corruption on a systemic scale. Indeed, the trajectory of global developments and the aforementioned civilizational crises indicate that this situation is not limited to past societies; rather, in the modern era, this problem has transitioned from an individual level to that of complex social structures. In contemporary materialist political systems, 'reason'—in its Quranic sense—has no place; everything is regulated according to base instincts and short-term interests.

Consequently, happiness is redefined as 'consuming better and more' and seeking material pleasure, while spirituality is marginalized' (see Khamenei, Address to the Assembly of Experts, March 6, 2014 [1392/12/15Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/25696). Therefore, self-worship must be regarded as one of the fundamental epistemological infrastructures of the *ṭāghūtī* (tyrannical) system.

3. The Secularization of Knowledge and the Relativization of Truth and Falsehood

In analysing the intellectual foundations of contemporary *ṭāghūtī* systems, one encounters the notion of the "relativization of truth and falsehood." In such systems, the empirical and mathematical sciences are confined to the service of material improvement and the domination of nature, while the humanities and religious teachings are regarded as lacking universality and authenticity. The consequence of this outlook is that truth and falsehood, as well as good and evil, are treated as relative, and no fixed criterion for values is acknowledged. As a result, "universal theoretical knowledge" concerning the Origin and the Return, together with moral principles, is removed from the sphere of social life. According to Allamah, this process gives rise to a profound neglect of God, spirituality, and ethics, ultimately producing a crisis of identity and meaning within society (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī 2012, 1:159). Within such a system, absolute truth is denied, and values become subordinate to the interests of dominant powers. For this reason, concepts such as justice, freedom, and human rights are likewise transformed in practice into instruments of domination. This condition corresponds to what the Supreme Leader has described as the instrumental use of science and media for global domination (see Khamenei, Speech after Visiting the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Organization, May 17, 2004 [1383/02/28Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3232). In his view, Western civilization, by separating knowledge from spirituality, has prepared the ground for political and cultural domination over nations and has turned knowledge into a tool of global arrogance. Accordingly, the secularization of knowledge must be regarded as one of the most important foundations in the formation of the contemporary *ṭāghūtī* order.

4. Acceptance of Satanic Guardianship and the Decline of Rational Discernment

From ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's perspective, the culmination of foundational deviation lies in the acceptance of the guardianship (*wilāyah*) of Satan. In his exegesis of the verse, *"Those who exact usury will not stand but like one deranged by the Devil's touch…"*[3] *(Quran 2:275),* he explains that Satanic influence disrupts the human capacity to distinguish between genuine good and evil. As a result, a person may come to perceive evil actions as normal—or even justified—and gradually lose the motivation to return to the right path (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 2:410). Under such conditions, the authority of Satan replaces divine authority, and the foundations of the political order come to rest upon the denial of God's sovereignty, arrogance, and the acceptance of non-divine authority. Some exegetical discussions also interpret the verse as indicating the broader spiritual and moral disorder produced by Satanic influence (see Ṭabarsī 1993, 4:668; Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 2:363), though the extent of this interpretation should be assessed in light of the original contexts of these works. In the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei, the contemporary global system of domination is likewise portrayed as a historical continuation of this *ṭāghūtī* authority. He emphasizes that arrogant powers employ media influence, economic resources, and political instruments in order to detach human beings from servitude to God and draw them into the orbit of their own domination (Khamenei, Remarks in a Meeting with the People of Qum, January 9, 2024 [1402/10/19Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/54897).

B) The Structural Layer of the *Ṭāghūtī* Political System

Based on the foregoing discussion, the polytheistic foundational layer gives rise to particular structures within the *ṭāghūtī* system—structures whose principal features can be identified in the Quran and explained in *al-Mīzān*. Among the most important of these are the following:

1. The Authority of Satan and His Human Representatives

The Quran explicitly states that in a non-faith environment, Satan exercises authority: *"…We have indeed made the devils friends of those*

3. ﴿الَّذينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبا لا يَقُومُونَ إِلاَّ كَما يَقُومُ الَّذي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ …﴾ (البقرة/۲۷۵)

who have no faith"[4] *(Quran 7:27).* ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī regards Satan as a being endowed with consciousness and will, who leads human beings into sin and deviation by adorning the world and clothing falsehood in the garb of truth. He emphasizes that, in carrying out his mission, Satan descends upon those who are *"every sinful liar" (Quran 26:222)* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 15:330).

Within *ṭāghūtī* systems, these human representatives of Satan employ propagandistic, cultural, and political instruments to conceal the truth and to keep society immersed in the darkness of polytheism, illusion, and false ideas. A society that accepts their authority is deprived of a true guardian who guides its actions toward their authentic end; consequently, it descends into darkness and spiritual death. Concerning Pharaoh, the Quran states: *"So he misled his people and they obeyed him…"*[5] *(Quran 43:54).* This verse indicates that a *ṭāghūtī* system sustains its domination through the manipulation of public perception and the deception of the masses. In a similar vein, Imam Khamenei identifies one of the principal characteristics of the global system of domination as the distortion of truth through media and propaganda (see Khamenei, Remarks in a Meeting with State Officials, May 19, 2003 [1382/02/29Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3178).

2. Legislation Devoid of *Tawḥīd* and Ethics

One of the structural pillars of *ṭāghūt* is legislation based on human desire and caprice. Referring both to early societies and to contemporary civilized ones, he explains that the laws in such societies are formulated largely as a result of conflicts and rivalries, serving merely to reduce clashes of interest rather than being grounded in the true welfare of the human being and society, and articulated in the light of *tawḥīd* and virtuous ethics. In a polytheistic order, law is founded either upon the will of a powerful individual and dictator (see Ṭabāṭabā'ī 2008, pp. 61-62). Imam Khamenei likewise emphasizes that the most essential characteristic of a *tawḥīd*-based society is the sovereignty of divine law. Any system that replaces the command of God with human will gradually lead to tyranny and corruption

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4. ﴿...إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّياطينَ أَوْلِياءَ لِلَّذينَ لا يُؤْمِنُون﴾ (الأعراف/٢٧)
5. ﴿فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَأَطاعُوه...﴾ (الزخرف/٥٤)

(Khamenei, Remarks in a meeting with the Assembly of Experts, November 7, 2024 [1403/08/17Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/58264).

3. Absence of Spiritual and Moral Enforcement

In such a structure, divine teachings and moral virtues assume merely a ceremonial and formal role, and people come to know ethics and religion only as defined for them by law grounded in whim and desire. The enforcement of laws rests solely in the hands of the "centralized political power"; and if the government itself deviates from the rule of law, there exists no higher or more transcendent force to restore it to the framework of justice (see Ṭabāṭabā'i 1996, 1:171).

In the intellectual system of the martyred Imam Khamenei, the steadfastness of nations against hegemonic powers (global arrogance) is not merely a political act; rather, it is rooted in the greater *jihād* and the overcoming of egocentric impulses, which provide the basis for the formation of collective will. On this basis, there is a profound connection between "Islamic awakening" and the negation of non-divine forms of governance, whose aim is liberation from the bonds of modern forms of enslavement. In light of this Quranic model, *ṭāghūt* appears as a "global network of domination" that uses political power, economic capital, and media to control nations (Khamenei, Remarks delivered at a meeting with Officials of the System and Ambassadors of Islamic Countries, August 31, 2011 [1390/06/09Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/17127). Therefore, in Quranic logic, *ṭāghūt* is not merely a tyrannical individual, but an organized structure of domination.

4. Individualism, Weakening of Social Bonds, and Moral Crisis

In his social writings—particularly in *Social Relations in Islam*—ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī outlines several consequences that arise from non-*tawḥīdī* social structures**:**

1. A fragile and unstable society, lacking a deep moral foundation;

2. The definition of human perfection exclusively in terms of material life, with ethics and spirituality relegated to a marginal and purely individual sphere;
3. Neglect of the moral reform of individuals, which ultimately results in the structural corruption of society;
4. Contentment with mere outward order while ignoring moral vices such as greed, indulgence, and moral degradation;
5. The spread of social irresponsibility and the dominance of individualism, such that each person perceives themselves as superior to the collective good (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 2008, pp. 40-43).

From his perspective, the root of all these forms of deprivation and social disintegration lies in forgetting God, spirituality, and morality**.**

C) The Functional Layer of the *Ṭāghūtī* Political System

At the functional level, the issue concerns the manner in which a *ṭāghūtī* system, founded upon the foregoing principles and structures, is expressed in political and social practice. The defining feature that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī identifies at this level is injustice.

1. Injustice as Deviation from Balance and Denial of the Divine Signs

Rāghib Iṣfahānī defines injustice (*ẓulm*) as "placing something in other than its proper place"; that is, relocating a thing from its rightful station (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1992, 315). In his exegesis of the verse, *"…and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing…"*[6] *(Quran 6:82),* ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī conceptualizes injustice as "deviation from moderation and temperance." He emphasizes that any transgression against divine law—even if ostensibly a mere personal sin—constitutes, in reality, both "injustice to oneself" and an injustice to the divine order (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 7:200). Through an ontological analysis of the concept of *ẓulm*, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī delineates it as any departure from truth and justice in the individual and social spheres that impedes the manifestation of faith in human life. This macro-perspective provides the requisite epistemological foundation for understanding the

6. ﴿...وَ لَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ...﴾ (الأنعام/٨٢)

structural dimensions of injustice. Consequently, in the analysis of *ṭāghūtī* systems, injustice is recognized not as a simple transgression, but at the social level as a systemic "denial of the prophetic mission and divine signs" and a fundamental departure from the path of divine guidance—a deviation that, by dismantling the criteria of truth, grounds all judgments in falsehood and distortion.

2. The Human Tendency toward Domination and the Emergence of Strong and Weak Classes

Expounding upon the concept of the "Trust" (*al-amānah*) as the "divine guardianship" (*al-wilāyah al-ilāhiyyah*), ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī posits that humanity's exclusive capacity to bear this momentous burden lies precisely in being *"… most unfair and senseless"*[7] *(Quran 33:72).* This description, in his view, signifies humankind's fundamental potentiality to acquire knowledge (*ʿilm*) and justice (*ʿadl*)—a potential absent in all other creatures (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 16:348-350). However, should human beings fail to utilize this existential capacity to realize divine guardianship, and instead deviate from their innate nature (*fiṭrah*) to harness this freedom of choice in the service of egoistic desires, the reality of being *ẓalūm* manifests within the social sphere. Consequently, the source of injustice is traced back to the "instinct of exploitation." Rather than fostering cooperation along the path of divine guardianship, this instinct drives individuals to exploit their fellow human beings for personal gain, thereby structuring societies around the domination of the strong over the weak.

3. Colonialism, Exploitation, and Despotism as Behavioral Patterns of the *Ṭāghūtī* System

In his analysis of contemporary international relations, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī emphasizes that many societies that outwardly appear prosperous and advanced have in fact built their material prosperity upon colonialism, exploitation, and the humiliation of weaker nations (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 2009, 1:117). In his view, stronger societies employ various mechanisms to subjugate weaker nations:

- sometimes through military intervention, despotism, and

7. ﴿…ظَلُوماً جَهُولا﴾ (الأحزاب/٧٢)

colonial domination;

- sometimes by claiming ownership over territories;
- sometimes by presenting themselves as guardians or trustees over other countries;
- and at times under the guise of defending the oppressed or preventing aggression, while in reality being among the greatest aggressors.

Thus, at the functional level, injustice manifests itself through concrete practices such as repression, economic exploitation, control of minds, and the imposition of cultural and political patterns upon other societies.

In the thought of the Supreme Leader, Ayatullah Khamenei, the emphasis on Islamic unity and the exposure of divisive conspiracies is conceptualized not merely as a political strategy, but as an existential struggle against modern projects of domination. By exposing the nature of arrogant powers in plundering resources and eroding the identity of nations, he challenges any structure founded upon intimidation and dependency (Khamenei, Address to the Officials of the System, April 26, 2005 [1384/02/06Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3277). Accordingly, the global system of domination—built upon the pillars of arrogance (*istikbār*), colonialism (*istiʿmār*), and the exploitation of nations—is recognized as the definitive contemporary manifestation of *ṭāghūt*. Rejecting and confronting this system constitutes the fundamental prerequisite for realizing the awakening and empowerment of the Islamic *ummah*.

4. Social Corruption and Destruction as the Direct Consequence of Injustice

Within the Quranic framework, a persistent correlation is drawn between injustice, corruption, and civilization decay. As illustrated in the verse, *"…but they wronged them. So observe how was the fate of the agents of corruption!"*[8] *(Quran 7:103),* systemic injustice acts as a catalyst for social fragmentation and moral decay, culminating in civilizational ruin. Consequently, any transient material prosperity enjoyed by hegemonies—if built upon the subjugation, economic exploitation, and violation of the rights of sovereign nations—is structurally unstable and ultimately

8. ﴿...فَظَلَمُوا بِها فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كانَ عاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدين﴾ (الأعراف/١٠٣)

unsustainable (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 8:211-212).

d) The Consequential Layer of the *Ṭāghūtī* Political System

The consequential layer in the conceptual model of the *ṭāghūtī* political system refers to the ultimate outcomes of this system at the level of history and society. Among the most significant consequences identified by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī are social discord, corruption, social disintegration, and historical destruction.

1. Discord as a Fundamental Consequence of Shirk

In his exegesis of verse 213 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*—*"Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets…"*[9] *(Quran 2:213)*—ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī considers social discord to be one of the most important consequences of *shirk* within human society. He explains that such disagreements arise from the human tendency toward domination and excess and from the self-interest and overreaching of certain individuals. The monotheistic religion was therefore sent to resolve these conflicts and restore society to justice and unity. However, when those scholars who possess knowledge of the Book of God—out of arrogance and injustice—deny it or distort its teachings, divisions intensify within society and become an obstacle preventing human beings from attaining the perfection appropriate to them (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 2:111). People's differences in worldly affairs are a natural phenomenon, one that can be regulated and resolved through religion. However, disagreement within religion itself originates from transgression and obstinate defiance (ibid). In both cases, when *tawḥīd* and divine religion are not effectively realized within society, the community deviates from its proper path and gradually moves toward decline and eventual destruction.

2. Structural Corruption and Social Degeneration

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī posits that the condemned corruption in the Quranic lexicon is not cosmic or ontological corruption inherent in the order of nature, but rather legislative or religious corruption. This legislative corruption arises from the distortion of religion, the

9. ﴿كانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً واحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّين...﴾ (البقرة/٢١٣)

alteration of divine laws, and the arbitrary manipulation of society's value and guidance systems. While such corruption may outwardly masquerade under the guise of reform, it inwardly culminates in moral decay, social fragmentation, the erosion of the reality of religion, and the degeneration of human life (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 2:97). Consequently, when the leadership and administrative structure of a society deviate from the path of divine guidance and are entrusted to forces acting on the basis of whim (*hawā*), arrogance (*istikbār*), and distortion rather than truth (*ḥaqq*), the natural consequence is the pervasive spread of corruption on earth. Within the Qur'anic framework, this is the very logic that defines the rule of *ṭāghūt* as the primary source and breeding ground for corruption across all individual and social spheres of life.

A comparative analysis of the conditions during the era of the Prophet's mission (*biʿthah*) and the civilizational characteristics of the contemporary world reveals that although the outward appearance of modern societies has been transformed by superficial progress, the power dynamics governing many of these societies continue to revolve around the same ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*), predicated on tyranny and arrogance. This historical continuity demonstrates that the bewilderment of contemporary humanity and the structural moral crises in dominated societies are rooted in the neglect of liberating revelatory teachings and their substitution with anti-human systems—systems wherein modern tools serve merely as a mask over the hideous face of the same Abū Sufyānī and Pharaonic behaviors of the past (Khamenei, Address to various strata of the people on the Anniversary of the *Mabʿath* of the Noble Prophet, January 17, 2026 [1404/10/27Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/62370). Within this paradigm, corruption is the direct consequence of the rule of wealth and force (*zar va zūr*) and the alienation of society from justice and spirituality.

3. Historical Collapse and Destruction

Ultimately, the Quran characterizes the fate of *ṭāghūtī* systems as "destruction"—a concept encompassing both worldly ruin (the collapse of civilizations and empires) and eschatological perdition. An examination of the patterns of struggle within the tradition of the prophets (*sunnat al-anbiyā'*), particularly in opposition to tyrannical

systems such as the Pharaonic model, demonstrates that victory over material powers is not contingent solely upon physical means. Rather, seeking recourse in infinite divine power and the synthesis of supplication and practical steadfastness constitute the fundamental infrastructure for success in this path. Although this confrontation between truth and falsehood is invariably accompanied by rigorous trials and substantial costs for the camp of truth, these costs do not signify defeat within the grand historical perspective; rather, they represent an integral part of the process of transition toward perfection. In fact, these turbulences and sacrifices are themselves part of the progressive impetus within the cosmic order, illustrating that Allah's precedent (*sunnat Allāh*) is ordained toward the inevitable decline of oppressive powers and the ultimate triumph of the camp of truth (Khamenei, Nowruz Address to the People, March 21, 2025 [1404/01/01Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/59802).

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the verses of the Holy Quran, and by drawing upon the Quranic thought of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and the Supreme Leader, Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei, the "political system of *ṭāghūt*" can be synthesized into a four-layered model:

1. Foundational Layer: The foundational layer consists of beliefs and orientations that distance society from *tawḥīd*. These include polytheism (*shirk*) in lordship and sovereignty, denial of divine authority, self-centeredness, the marginalization of sound rationality, and acceptance of the authority of Satan or non-divine powers. At this level, God is removed from the center of both individual and collective life, and sovereignty is attributed to human beings or other non-divine forces. According to ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this deviation from *tawḥīd* constitutes the root of broader social and political corruption, since the organization of human life becomes detached from the divine order.

2. Structural Layer: On the basis of these foundations, particular political and social structures emerge. In such structures, legislation may be shaped by personal desire, domination, or purely material interests, while divine knowledge and ethical values remain largely

symbolic. The absence of a genuine spiritual foundation weakens moral accountability within the system. As a result, centralized power, networks of aligned elites, the manufacture of legitimacy, and the distortion of truth become defining elements of the political structure.

3. Functional Layer: At the level of political practice, these structures produce concrete patterns of behavior such as systematic injustice, repression, social division, manipulation of public consciousness, economic exploitation, colonial domination, and authoritarian governance. In this layer, injustice—understood in the Quranic sense as deviation from the proper order and rejection of divine guidance—becomes the organizing principle of social and international relations. The governing logic becomes one of domination and maximal exploitation of others, rather than justice and balance.

4. Consequential Layer: The continued operation of such a system ultimately leads to deep social discord, widespread corruption, moral decay, and eventual historical collapse. The Quran repeatedly illustrates this pattern through the narratives of past communities—such as the peoples of Pharaoh, ʿĀd, and Thamūd—showing that societies founded upon *ṭāghūtī* principles, even if they temporarily achieve material prosperity, ultimately move toward destruction.

This four-layer model thus provides a coherent explanation of the internal dynamics of *ṭāghūtī* systems as portrayed in the Quran, particularly through the exegetical analysis of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī. At the same time, it offers a conceptual framework for understanding broader patterns of domination within human history.

In contrast, a *tawḥīd*-based political order begins with the reform of the foundational layer through faith and recognition of divine sovereignty. This foundation shapes structures grounded in justice and ethical responsibility, guides political practice within the framework of human dignity and social equity, and ultimately produces outcomes such as unity, justice, and genuine human flourishing. The fundamental distinction between the *ṭāghūtī* system and the *tawḥīdī* system therefore lies in the coherence between foundations, structures, functions, and consequences.

Within the Quranic perspective emphasized in the thought of Imam Khamenei, the central historical struggle can likewise be understood as the confrontation between the order of *tawḥīd* and the order of *ṭāghūt*—a struggle that reflects the broader mission of the prophets to challenge systems of domination and to establish a social order grounded in divine justice.

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