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## **Functions of Election in a Democratic System**

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### **Abstract**

*Election is considered as an efficient mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power and stabilization of the rule of people in the democratic system. But having expected such role of the election needs the necessary requirements in political and legal system. In other words, the elections must be held according to the fair and competitive election principles so that accepting rule of people, the right of self-determination and the construction of democratic institutions in order to play role in direction of the desirable functions in democratic system. The basic aim of the study is providing a picture of the genuine functions of elections in democratic political system that it self requires the context and necessary requirements in political and legal system and the research conclusions with a descriptive-analytical approach indicate that genuine elections in democratic system has the certain functions such as legitimizing, peaceful transfer of power, political stability, implementation of the popular sovereignty, control of political power, choice and selectivity, regulating the public posts*

**Key Words: election, functions of election, genuine elections, democratic system.**

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**Introduction:** Election mechanism is formed based on the development of the concept autonomous human, principle of freedom of will and discipline of community management and the public demands and opinion. In fact, the elections system is a manifestation of a political system which is based on the will of the people and is an instrument for delivering the public demands to the governmental institutions and authorities.

Elections have a crucial role in building the state, power transmission, ensuring peace and political stability, fundamental human rights, public participation and the legal state. Accordingly studying and understanding the importance of elections in having a regular society in the public discourse is essential. What is mostly needed to be understood is trading and implementing the indicators and components of genuine elections and efficient political system which requires an understanding of the true meaning, providing the context of its realization, understanding the functions of original election to the public.

Because in some communities, some practices contrary to the true nature of the election campaign is expected by the authoritarian and non-democratic governments which by misinterpretation of the concept of election resort to such a mechanism in order to convince the public to make over democratic elections in favor of their own power. So this article aims to explain the actual special election and the election-related concepts such as democracy, democratic political system and democratic elections review and relying on so fundamental and basic concepts, deals with the role and importance of elections and democracy.

**In this regard some fundamental questions are raised:**

1. What are the characteristics of democratic elections and the components it follows?
2. In which political system do the real elections form and in what context?
3. What are the functions of elections in a democratic system?

The present paper using an analytical-descriptive paper and assuming that the elections must be true reflection of the public will, demands and social values and ex the conditions for its realization is formation of the democratic system, tries to explain and analyze the functions of a genuine democratic election system such as, legitimization, political stability, peaceful transfer of power, control and selection.

**Democratic System:** The democratic system is the results of the efforts and struggles of people against authoritarian regimes and other people. In this system, people have active presence in the formation of political power and its management and monitoring and legal requirements is set based on the value system in society. The concepts and different understandings about democracy and the democratic system have been proposed which can be summarized in three views

1. The view of the intrinsic value versus the instrumental view
2. Liberal views versus social equality
3. Representative view versus direct view

(Christiana, 2003: 12-128 and cf. Sadeghi, 2015).

Regardless of the attitudes mentioned above, the true democracy presents the public participation in governance and the exercise of political power by public. Participation in public affairs is a fundamental right which is increasingly desirable for most nations. Human being has experience diverse ways of governing in different historical periods and has experienced social and collective decision making but has found that a system built be based on his will and the aspirations and demands of the people could better provide the public interests.

Among political systems, experience has proven that more and better democratic system from other forms of government will be able to achieve this important aim. Now we have to see that what the system means and what indexes may explain a democratic political system. "Democratic system is formed based on the idea of freedom will of the people so it

is different from other political system because this system is established against the despotic, coercive and authoritarian powers" (Karkpatrik, 1982: 3).

**The concept of democratic system:** The concept of democracy and democratic system is based on democratic thinking. That is in the democratic system people have freedom in elections and change of government (Shapiro, 2003: 1). In contrast to the authoritarian regimes or absolute fiat which urged people to vote for them, in a democratic system state power originates from the public consent and people can change or overthrow the government legitimately (Lipset, 2004, vol. 2: 597). And differ from autocracy in this respect that their stability is more dependent on the consent of the majority of citizens (Lipset, 2004, vol. 3: 1250). Democratic system is based on the thinking that people should be free and equal to determine their living conditions.

This means that they must define a framework that would provide them the opportunity and also restrict them in ways that they cannot use the framework to negate the rights of others and have equal rights (Held, 1999: 407). Since in a democratic system, people are assumed to be self-governing, so they are the origin and the highest will in legitimizing the government and political system is formed by the transfer of power and the will of the people to the rulers so that the continuation of this system depends on the will of the citizens.

**Features of democratic system:** The basic question that arises here is that if the formation of a political system based on the will and obtained the consent of the people and citizens indicate the existence of a democratic system or not and if, in addition to this characteristic, another characteristic are necessary to the outside democratic system is realized. Having considered the views of scholars, different criteria for democracy and detection of a democratic political system can be observed which somehow have special distribution. From the perspective of one of the most famous scholars, political science is based upon systems of thought including liberalism, pragmatism, relativism, individualism, originality satisfaction and public acceptance, equality, autonomy, rule of law and legality, citizenship, sovereignty of the people and human rights (Bashiriyeh, 2002: 20-24) and introduced indexes to democratic rule including a system of separation of powers and the three powers, supervisory powers of encapsulation, participatory decision-making system, the principle of representation the responsibility of elected and unelected officials (Bashiriyeh, 2002: 105-136).

From the perspective of one of the leading experts in public law and principles of democracy coordinates include generality of participation, freedom of association, pluralism and diversity of thought and the decision of the majority and minority rights, alternation of power and the rule of law" (Hashemi, 1992 (a): 430-435). David Bitam also integrated four factors to assess and recognize democratic political system which are explained below (Bytam, 2004: 260-269).

**A: Free and fair elections:** The free and fair elections is one of the effects of a democratic system because people through which they can play an effective role and in the formation of

structure and political institutions and directing the policies and laws in society. It is true that free and fair elections broaden the scope of the free will of people to create and change regime but it is not sufficient to ensure the creation of a democratic system (Bjornlund, 2015: 2) and even governments which come to power based on free elections may be disabled, corrupt, short-sighted and non-official and support special interests. Accordingly, the elections will be free and fair when it is based on public participation and healthy competition, through which the people can turn their sovereignty and self-determination in reality and result of election process is based on the public, will but what the factors make elections free and fair await for further debate. What is important here is that free and fair election is an instrument to stabilize and consolidate the democratic system and ensure other instrument and the foundations of democracy itself. This means that freedom is not only an ideal, but a real experience and one of the examples of its realization is freedom of choice. It seems that freedom of thought, thought, determination, and freedom of will are inherent at the heart of freedom of choice. To experience freedom as an ideal experience and to be realized in practice, it should be possible to pick up in practice.

People participate in elections in order to exercise their rights to determine the fate of actual realization of the obvious manifestations of political freedom that is the most important foundations of democracy (Emadi, 2006: 45).

Transparent and responsible government: the transparent and responsible government is the state where the government decision is made based on the law and clear process and the officials and political institutions are responsive to the tasks, duties and decisions in the government of the people, and by providing the reasons and bases of decision to the people the political system is automatically responsive and with all other indices have democratic aspect (Mainwaring, 2003: 7).

In democratic systems, the government responsiveness to people has two aspects including: one is the legal responsiveness which means that system administrators respond to the court's adherence to the rules of law and the other is political responsiveness or responsiveness to Parliament and the public about the government's actions and policies (Bytham and Boyle, 2000: 54).

These respondents are, in fact, a guarantee of the preservation of the status of the free will of citizens, free and sovereign right to self-determination and the ruler is representative of the demands of the people. Therefore, in conformity of the authorities' decision with the wishes of the public, a variety of responsive institutions and officials should be used to the people. As a result, when the government was elected, it must constantly remain responsive to the people and their representatives.

Powers to take decisions and policies by the government are public powers delegated by the people and shall apply rules that monitor and consult people about their use and ensure and prevent the misuse of them. Only possible answer is that people should be completely aware of government actions and there should be procedures to systematically consult and correct public opinions (Bytam, 2004: 264).

Civil and political rights in a democratic system are fundamental rights of every citizen and the rights are instruments for dignity and sanctity of human service so that human dignity and identity can be enforced and the enforcement of which is delivered to the government. The government also enacted human rights laws to identify and to recognize these rights in various ways and with various and appropriate mechanisms to protect them. In fact, human rights, all the rights which are devoted to human being based on the validity of human nature and to emphasize on the word human is due to having the right (Orend, 2002: 15).

The civil and political rights are the rights recognized in the Declaration, all treaties and human rights documents (Hilla, 2004: 4). It is true that these rights as part of universal human rights are reserved for people, but their value in their collective work. It means to join the others and to achieve our common goals of fighting group, the effectiveness of public opinion and so on. After that individual rights should not be necessarily assumed targets or collective decision-making and monitoring people clashed over the government, because the law provides the basic foundations of such power for society "(Bytham and Boyle, 2000: 54).

**Democratic and civil society:** In the democratic system there is not just government and the public it can be seen in institutions and intermediate bodies (Hashemi, 1998 (b): 61) which played an important role in consolidating and developing democratic and accountable system. The concept of civil society reflects the fact that, for democracy, society must have various farmers without relying on the state to be governed. Only in this way is that government power is limited. Public opinion rather than being organized from above is organized from lower part to the authorities and community reaches the confidence necessary to resist tyranny (Bytham and Boyle, 2000: 55).

There manifestation of civil society and the political system reflects the key role of citizens in the democratic administration of political system. So that people from these communities can bring knowledge and information on how representatives operate and how use the power and authority given to them and then by presenting the views, comments and criticism provide the condition to monitor and control the power of the state.

By studying the characteristics of democracy, it can be concluded that it a system in which:

1. Citizen have active, effective, efficient and informed participation in the formation, organization and supervision of government
2. The citizens have a common and equal suffrage
3. the capability and equal opportunities for all citizens in public affairs is available
4. Government decisions and actions to be taken under the supervision of the people and the rulers automatic response mechanism
5. the rights and freedoms of citizens is recognized and protected in the government (Dahl, 2015: 37-38)
6. A party or party coalition is selected which could govern
7. Periodical election
8. The parties that did not win do not try to overthrow the government.

9. Government does not limit the critics and opponents of activity
10. At least two parties compete in elections
11. The party or a majority can govern until the next elections (Downs, 1957: 23-24).

As to the meaning mentioned for democracy and democratic system, it could be stated that any understanding and our attitude to democracy, minimum or maximum, election is the essential element of democracy. In other words, the election is an establishing instrument in the service of democracy and democracy is consolidated and established when: first the ruling system is formed with a free choice and a fair and competitive base. Secondly, it should be administered based on the principle of public control and accountability mechanisms. Thirdly, such a rule if defeated in the next election should accept the result.

The main theme of this standard is that to win the fight is not important, but the acceptance of election results is important, because it shows that the powerful actors and social advocate respect for the rules of the game to maintain their power (Dabirnia, 2006: 65). In the absence of selection mechanism in a democratic system, democracy remains in theory. In other words, election is the ideal bridge between democracy and popular rule.

For being democratic, a country must have elections where the number of candidates and parties compete together and the votes are counted fairly (Rose, 2000: 56). So that results of counting the vote is the manifestation of public will. We recall that elections is not the only means of democracy. Therefore, they should be helped by established institutions and appropriate rules (Powell, 2000: 4) to consolidate the democracy. However, it seems that the most important means of democratic elections is a democracy. Elections have a binding character, so that they encourage or induce politicians to pay attention to the aspirations of citizens. There is a general consensus that the competitive elections more than any other factor other instruments, have established the governments today as a democratic political system (Powell, 2000: 4). On the whole, the elections will serve as a mechanism for the citizens will through which the people in addition to determine the decision makers are the main factor determining the content of policies and regulations in the future.

**Election:** Election literally has several meanings including: selection, extraction, designates something from, inter alia, appointing someone from a pool to work (Amid, 2002: 159). The word election implies selectivity and choices that is the selectivity and selecting from a number of different options (Garner, 2009: 557 and Steele, 2011). In the definition of the word as a whole, it can be stated that: a vote to select the winner of a political organization or a political position, select the person or thing, the election condition, to determine the fate of some persons (Khosravi, 2008 (a): 32 and Habibnejad, 2011). In other words, it means: practice or a choice, act of election, the right or the ability to make a choice (The Free Dictionary, 2015). In general, the term refers to the selection and choice of action where first the free will of man is presupposed and secondly, there is the possibility of implementing this freedom of selection. Thirdly, there are different options to be selected from among them.

In terms of scope, there is a profound link between systems and people's choice. In other words, election is the mechanism for the formation of a political system and officials and political institutions (Khosravi, 2014 (b): 196, Kheradmandi, 2013). Thus election is forms of collective decision making processes in society in which voters decide which party or candidate take over the responsibility for the administration of public affairs (Rose, 2000: 36). Selection is a procedure in which parties and candidates are selected through a system of elected public voting and selection systems (Clark, 2015: 2).

With such an approach, election is one of the most important mechanisms of elections to fill the seats in a democratic system. In fact, the term and the election is not inherently original but also it is the instrument and mechanisms for collective decision making and serving the will of the people and stabilizing systems agency. Since in democratic systems, legitimacy and authority of government only stems the satisfaction of the citizens, the major mechanism for the transmission of consent is free and fair elections (2014: 10, Forging Affairs Administer of USA).

The term elections, in fact, finds its true meaning in democracies because as a result of unjust and unfair elections, an autocratic government and regime comes to power and representatives are elected who are not selected by people. Thus, following a competitive selection and healthy democratic system is founded and election as the establishment of mechanisms and instrument plays important role in influencing elected representatives of the people and politics (Powell, 2000: 3).

Finally, election is a collection of operations to select the rulers and determining the observers to check the power. From this perspective, election means selection techniques and different ways to determine the choice of means of representatives. A means by which citizens will participate in the formation of political institutions and determining the operators of political authority exercise (Judge, 2006: 291). Therefore, the election is defined as the force reviving the democratic system because it creates negotiations and public debate, forms the political slogans and program and determining the parliament composition and affects the distribution of power in the government (Le Duce and Others, 2002: 1).

**The concept of democratic elections:** By examining the meaning of elections and democracy, now we can introduce the concept of democratic elections. Since the democratic elections and mode of collective decision making has an essential role in peaceful and political stability in society, tenure of political power without consent or free will of the people, outside of the people and democratic procedures create instability, and conflict of interest and many problems for the administration of the political system. Accordingly, the establishment of a democratic system depends on a democratic election. Now the question is "what is democratic election?" and "what components and elements do the democratic election have?" and "how can a democratic election be assessed?" The answers to these questions can help us get a clear understanding of the meaning of democratic elections.

A democratic election is the elections in a democratic arena hold with respect for citizens' political rights and freedoms (Reynolds, 2011). Government and electoral institutions are legitimate that emerged from this environment which is based on the consent and free vote of the citizens. Thus democratic elections provide the legitimacy of the political system. However, democratic elections do not merely give symbolic legitimizing but have competitive, rounds, inclusive and free, fair and conclusive properties where the decision making in government is done by citizens who enjoy broad freedoms (Karkpatrick, 2015: 2).

This clear and specific feature of democratic election seems to distinguish them from other decision-making procedures. Competitive nature will lead to effective partnerships and all the opposition groups and parties. Inclusiveness, the presence of all qualified persons without regard to discriminatory factors and its definitiveness brings acceptance of election results by all the election actors.

Based on such an attitude and a sense of democratic elections, the government is legitimate which it begins with the consent of the people during elections with the above mentioned properties and secondly, after the operation, it satisfies the demands and needs of people in the framework of the law. In fact, democratic elections, is the election which creates the institutions and elected officials who encounter the elected and are accountable to voters. Therefore, in the democratic election, every citizen is the best judge of his own interests and no person or no class is pre-qualified to represent the people except in accordance with the conditions set out in relevant legislation elected by the people (Karkpatrick, 2015: 2). In democratic elections public choice is real and their vote is not merely a ceremonial act but citizens are active participants in decision-making procedures that will shape the next government decisions. These election procedures illustrate the meaningful participation and representation of people. Accordingly, the elected representatives tend to make decisions within the framework of demands and values in society.

### **Characteristics of democratic elections** (Keostakas, 1999: 61)

A) The active participation of everyone in a genuine election,

A significant number of citizens who are eligible to vote must have an active presence in the election .However, this presence must be conscious and with equal conditions and with different political freedoms.

B) Political freedoms: in a democratic space, the citizens should be capable of forming a citizens association and assembly based on cooperation, collaboration and common interests and their involvement.

C) Free and fair elections should be based on democratic freedom of citizens' attitudes and hold against the methods and access for all to the selection process.

D) Acceptance of the election results: if the election procedures takes place in a free, fair and competitive with proper management and monitoring mechanisms, for sustain and stability of the government, it should be accepted by all actors.

E) Compliance with all principles of democracy: the purpose of the principles of democracy is the principles which consist of three types: substantive, procedural, organizational and structural in light of which democratic thinking is improved and guaranteed.

**Election Functions in the democratic system:** election is perhaps the most important element in the establishment of democracy, because it plays an important role in the realization of the sovereignty, civil rights and liberties, restricting political power and consolidating the democratic system. Hence, functions and roles can be a specific stand for election in a democracy, the most important of which are listed below:

**Legitimacy:** One of the most important issues in political philosophy is the source of authority to the government. In other words, with what justification the authority, directives, decisions and rulers can be adopted and that from what sources they drive the competent authority. The "competence and authority of the ruler in the state is a moral, legal and philosophical issue, because by which the governors or some people decide for others and the followers are subject to their directives and decisions (Raz, 1990: 3).

Accordingly, the roots of the origin of the competence and authority of the ruler refer us to the legitimacy of the political system (Dyzenhaus, 1999: 106). And the legitimacy means one and harmony of coming to power by the leaders and rulers of society (meaning national community or country - the state) and beliefs of all or majority of the population in a given time and place. The result of this belief is the acceptance of the command for leaders and take the command function is for community members or citizens "(Abul Ahmad, 2005: 245). Thus, legality means to be in conformity with the values and vision of the society. Various views and theories have been proposed about the source of legitimacy in the political system, the study of which can be reviewed in the field and other writings including "The theory of divine sovereignty, power and dominance, charisma, natural and innate, traditional social contract and people (Marandi, 1997: 31, cf. Javid, 2013). However, what is more relevant to this paper is the people's views about the legitimacy of the political system. Because according to what we discussed in the second part on the theoretical foundations are designed based on the originality and the inherent dignity of the human being and attributes of his determination and free will and therefore the system has legitimacy which is formed based on the principle of consent and free will and free choice of the people.

Therefore, the main functions of establishing a democratic election is that it should be based on the opinion and the will of free people. In other words, the legitimacy of a democracy is dependent on the principle of free consent of its citizens which is often understood through the mechanism of elections and through the mechanism that governs elections or representatives of the authority and competence to take decisions and evaluate policies, determining legislation and governing these matters, and in strict accordance with the

principle of equality and these tasks are based on the principle of non-excellence since there is no reason a priori to an individual excellence on other people there and everyone has an inherent worth and dignity unless the person or group with permission of others have received such authority and competence.

Of course, it is also in their interests and creating appropriate ground for the flourishing of human potential. In order for the function of elections, the political system should take shape be based on democratic ideas and the taking of political power should be with the consent or permission of their citizens. One can realize it when election is held with the active and informed participation of citizens. It seems that if the conditions of participation of citizens in political participation are limited with unreasonable and discriminatory restrictions and therefore the elections to be held with a small percentage of citizens, it will demonstrate the illegitimacy of the state (Katz, 1997: 101-102).

**Political Stability:** The most important human and social needs and the main reasons for the formation of political society are peace, relaxation and individual and social interests. As already mentioned, most social theorists have focused on this goal to form a political system. Thus the order, peace and stability in a political system are the pre-requisite for talents and human potential in individual and social environment and to achieve human interests. On this basis, peace and political stability in society are one of the major functions and tasks of a government. Most theories agree on the security function of the state. Now, some important factors affect the political stability and peace in society and election is very important.

The importance of the elections is for the reason that the parties, political groups and individuals are trying to seize political power and to achieve its goal might take actions that lead to chaos and political convulsions at local and national level and ultimately, instability and conflicts in society .On the other hand, the elections could play an effective role in the elimination of tastes and differences in political interests and respect by winning the majority and minority, reduce or eliminate tension in society. Now the question is that: "what elections could lead to political stability in society?"

In order to answer this question, it should be noted that justice, public interest and social affairs is one of the objectives of governments and one of the aspirations for community formed by people. The system provides the appropriate human nature living side by side in peace and certainly factors that would put them in a favorable position are accepted by citizens.

As human beings have human consciousness are the intellectual strengths, nature of them understands justice, fairness and good and desirability and if, in a society, individuals or groups have shown that they move in this paths, certainly citizens will be wishing f their selection for social affairs and restoring the order and justice in the political system. If the effective mechanisms exist in the community to achieve political power by the individuals and groups, undoubtedly, we can see peace and political stability in society and as it was stated that the elections as a mechanism and instrument for the implementation of

sovereignty of the people can play an important role in this ideal. But not every election, but the election which is free and fair and genuine, so that the realization of free will and human nature is the principle of equality and active participation, all the citizens participate without any discrimination so that through a healthy competition well deserving individuals and groups elect for the country's affairs. From the perspective of political legitimacy, according to some theorists, stable social and political systems are the ones that most people most of the time have the reasons for action to support the survival of the regime. However, the combination of reasons for supporting a diversity and military might be very broad and complex, and the composition has a variety of social rift to structural and legal factors such as electoral systems and party systems in a political system (Frank Pual, 2000: 24). It should be noted elaborating on this issue, in the system where the parties and minority groups are excluded from participation in government due to structural and legal reasons, this situation may persist some kind of relative deprivation and political frustration which in turn seems as one of the major factors of violence and political instability (Gar, 1998: 465 and Khalili, 1992). Therefore every political system in which the fundamental values of the people are maintained and supported and be ensured, it can be expected the same level of political stability and peace in society. In fact, free and fair elections means realization of values, aspirations and demands of its people which is represented in the voting process and if elections are held so that they reflect the public aspirations and values by selection of the real candidates in Parliament, surely would provide the underlying political stability of the country.

Essentially the political stability refers to the balance between the people on one hand and functions of government on the other. In other words, in every society if the ruling political system can meet various demands of people and the system is in accordance with the beliefs and values of society and is confirmed by it, it will be the system of political stability (Eftekhari, 2002: 66-67).

As a result, the elections and electoral systems are effective on the political stability and instability in different ways. Of course, the nature of the electoral system and elections by itself cannot have significant effect on the political stability or instability but it requires mediating variables such as party system, parliament and government, political legitimacy and political stability. It should be acknowledged that the election system can have direct and immediate effect on any of the above factors. Each of these variables can directly or indirectly and in interaction with each other destabilize the political and social situation (Adel Panahi, 2002: 208).

**Regulating the assignment of the elected or public positions:** One of the most important functions of elections is to regulate the transfer of political power from one group to another, so the fear of totalitarianism, tyranny, or having special privileges and autocratic political system largely disappears. Accordingly, no one has the right to transfer the sovereignty to a particular individual or group. Therefore, all those who are responsible for the political management of the society, find the legitimacy in the exercise of power by the will of the people only through proper elections (Hashemi, 2010 (c), vol. 2: 5).

The absence of any rules for the transmission, distribution of political power, filling the public positions and management of the society bring various political disasters. In this regard, the belief in the existence and function of elections to the groups workings compete to seize political power ensures that the best way for gaining power is participation in elections. Gaining power through elections legitimacy by the people is the most peaceful way to achieve power in which all the citizens have equal value and grade and can be fair in appointing delegates and their preferences and select the competent and capable people for public office.

In fact, elections are like a double-edged blade. On the one hand, group or person of power is ousted from government and on the other hand, a new power is replaced. If a despotic state has set aside and in a peaceful and democratic competition, the elected representatives go to the Parliament, due to the staggering nature of elections they can still have the role of supervising the government and the functions in the system of democratic elections and to improve and strengthen the system of democracy become more obvious (Koryakov, 2002: 18). Thus, the system is efficient which contains fair rules and practices to fill the public positions, such as seats in Parliament and political opponents gain political power during the freely election process and with the active participation of citizens and to comply with all the rules and regulations governing the system of democracy and with the conscious public decision.

**Election and Selection:** Democratic system is a system that is formed by the people. In other words, representatives and governors gain power and authority to manage the country at will and consent of the people and take the real meaning of democracy when the equal opportunity exist for all citizens to public positions (Harris and Joseph, 1995: 550). On the other hand, the realization of the right to vote and select requires preferences, alternatives and multiple options and this choice must be informed and reasonable (Klosko, 2004: 19). Such a choice entails training in the civil society by legal and non-legal institutions and having enough information.

Accordingly, election is an event and an opportunity for individual choice to take the public office. Therefore it causes the growth and prosperity of human talents and there is no real opportunity for choice rulers without realization of a democratic system (Katz, 1997: 103). In a democratic system, options and alternatives for achieving the capability of choice can be manifested in different forms, the most common of which includes the presence of one or two options and allowing people to choose by saying "yes" or "no" or the presence of multiple alternatives letting people to select from among them (Katz, 1997: 103). In fact, in the elections, people in addition to selecting the policies, choose the alternative policies

**Controlling political power:** Controlling the power and preventing tyranny and dictatorship rulers has always been one of the main concerns of humanity throughout history. Experience has proved that the governments formed without popular base and the consent of the people has been those exercising more patriarchal oppression. Because in democratic systems the alternation of power is possible through different ways such as

elections and in this displacement if there are tyrants, they would not be elected by the people and they are moved in the direction of the values and norms of society, there is a second chance of being elected by the citizens. The acceptance of the fact requires the interval governance and accepting the agency of government (Haghighat, 2002: 167).

Limitation and control of political power are among the fundamental principles of a democratic system (Sartori, 1992: 10) that is covered by applying the general supervision of the people (direct and indirect). It is natural that in the absence of oversight and accountability mechanisms by the rulers, oppression or tyranny and dictatorship had to be expected. In democracies because the government is formed based on the consent and free will of the people, people have vital role through the mechanism of monitoring the government. Therefore, in addition to better limitation of power, it leads the government's movement in the right direction and legitimate aspirations of the citizens. In a democratic system, power is limited and controlled in different ways, such as ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, limiting tenure, determining the duties and powers in accordance with law, applying different ways of responding, tenure of political power through elections and so on. In the meantime, election more than anything is considered to control the political power. Because in a democratic system people are the real rulers, no one can obtain public positions by force or special privileges. Therefore, those can seize political power that win the vote of confidence of the people and this would be subject to free elections. As the ruler is elected by a free vote, their power is limited in the hands of competent in a defined period of time. Also, during the period, the representatives and rulers to make reasonable decisions and explain the mechanisms of their decisions based on accountability and for the public interest, they are seeking the consent of the people to be elected again. Thus the election will reduce the fear of autocracy. Thus the periodic renewal period for elective positions is the initial preparation to ensure accountability for democratic elites (Gabriel, 1997: 110).

Therefore in the democracy political struggle are periodic and the result of the general election is that the government of the country will be under struggle at fixed intervals. In this dominant way, all the devices and all the coercive force leaves the government and gives it to the new format (De Ruge, 1997, p.333). Thus, the periodic power and governance is the best mechanism to control political rulers. And the leading groups in the form of favorable decision try to maintain their position in the new election. On the other hand, new groups who want to seize political power will try new programs and promises to ensure the rights of citizens to ask for government affairs which will cause controlling the government.

**Conclusion:** Democratic system is considered an excellent platform to achieve popular sovereignty because it ensures the equal right of citizen participation in power and fair competition. Democratic system by assuming the public values, human free will and self-determination provide the condition for free, fair and competitive election. Such election plays a very important role in ensuring social peace and security and will guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens. Democratic elections, while ensuring the above purposes, if hold complied with all the characteristics of free and fair elections, can have special functions in the democratic system. In fact, democratic elections because of meeting the

values and demands of the people and citizens' rights and freedom would result in the formation of an ideal and public political system. Thus, democratic elections because of popularity would grant legitimacy to the political system and excludes the political system from autocracy and authority and change it to a public responsive government working for the well-being of people. By ensuring equal and free choice of the people, in addition to controlling power and having public political system due to public participation, the peace and political stability is provided in the society and any changes in the government is done based on the public will and the condition for any challenge for the power transfer will be eliminated.

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