

Normative Framework of Legitimate Resistance in the Holy Qur'an: A Comparative Analysis of Justice and Ethics in Light of the Just War Doctrine

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Abstract

The present paper develops a normative framework for legitimate resistance in the Qur'an and compares it to the Just War Doctrine using qualitative content analysis and thematic interpretation of Qur'anic verses. The framework integrates ontological premises of justice, divine authorization, and the prevention of corruption; criteria for initiating hostilities; norms for conduct during conflict; and teleological principles for post-war contexts. It explains the causal link between oppression and resistance and distinguishes legitimate resistance from anarchistic violence. Analyzing ٦٧ verses on Jihād and defense, the study assesses whether the Qur'an provides a justice- and ethics-based model of resistance. Findings show that the Qur'an establishes a framework grounded in justice, divine authorization, and defense that surpasses secular just war theories. This framework is based on three pillars: "Divine authorization as a source of obligation, negation of oppression as the basis for legitimacy, and observance of human limits as the ethical standard." Unlike Western doctrines that focus on state sovereignty, the Qur'anic model includes non-state actors and addresses asymmetric warfare by emphasizing defense of the oppressed. The study's main innovations are duty-centeredness, justice-centeredness, and the integration of external and internal Jihād. Resistance, in this paradigm, is a divinely mandated ethical duty to restore

justice and prevent corruption, subject to requirements such as refraining from transgression, upholding distinction, and prioritizing just peace.

Keywords: Legitimate Resistance, Just War, Holy Qur'an, Ethics of War, Normative Framework.

Introduction

Recent armed conflicts have made it essential to reassess the ethical and legal foundations of warfare. The distinction between aggression and defense remains central in legal and ethical philosophy. The Western tradition, through the Just War Doctrine, offers a framework for legitimizing the use of force, based on criteria such as just cause, legitimate authority, and right intention (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ٥١). However, this doctrine's reliance on secular foundations and its focus on nation-states limit its ability to address identity-based resistance and popular liberation movements, reducing self-defense to national sovereignty. This limitation has created a theoretical impasse in addressing modern systems of domination. In contrast, the Islamic world faces a dual interpretive challenge regarding Jihād and resistance. Radical groups, by ignoring divine limits and Qur'anic norms, have reduced Jihād to violence and terrorism. Conversely, some Orientalist perspectives portray resistance in Muslim societies as irrational and outside international humanitarian law (Javadi Amoli, ٢٠١٦ AD/١٣٩٥ SH: ٢, ٤١٥). This polarization has hindered academic recognition of the normative reality of resistance.

Despite extensive scholarship on the jurisprudence of Jihād, there is no comprehensive normative framework that articulates the relationship among justice, ethics, and revelation-based resistance. Here, a normative framework refers to a systematic set of ontological premises, legitimacy criteria, behavioral norms, and teleological principles that explain the causal link between oppression and

resistance, and distinguish legitimate resistance from anarchistic violence according to Qur'anic standards.

The Holy Qur'an legitimizes resistance against oppression and permits fighting for those who have been wronged (al-Ḥajj: ٣٩), while strictly prohibiting transgression or ethical violations (al-Baqarah: ١٩٠). According to exegetes like Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this approach prioritizes human dignity and ethical objectives over military aims, making the restoration of justice—not territorial conquest—the goal of resistance (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ٢, ٦٢). The research gap lies in the lack of a comparative model that translates the Qur'an's teachings into contemporary legal-philosophical terms and highlights the ethical strengths of its resistance paradigm. This absence has blurred the distinction between legitimate resistance and illegitimate violence in global discourse and marginalized the Qur'an's emancipatory potential in academic settings.

This study introduces three key innovations: duty-centeredness, viewing resistance as a divine duty to prevent corruption; justice-centeredness, linking legitimacy to the presence of oppression rather than sovereignty; and the integration of external and internal Jihād, making armed struggle without self-purification illegitimate. These elements distinguish the Qur'anic framework from secular doctrines. The central question is: 'What are the components of this framework, and how can they advance the ethics of war by critiquing the Just War Doctrine?'

١. Literature Review

A review of research on resistance and the ethics of war indicates a transition from military-oriented approaches toward normative interpretations. In Iranian scholarship, Javadi Amoli (٢٠١٦ AD/١٣٩٥ SH) and Ṭabāṭabā'ī (١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH) have defined Qur'anic resistance as defensive justice-seeking aimed at safeguarding monotheism and human dignity, whose legitimacy is conditioned upon the occurrence of oppression. Haj Esmaeili and Habibollahi (٢٠١٢ AD/١٣٩١

SH) have regarded it as the final ethical recourse against aggression. Fawzi et al. (٢٠١٩ AD/١٣٩٨ SH) and Mohammadi (٢٠٢٢ AD/١٤٠١ SH) have characterized resistance as a normative "Right-duty" and an "Ethical-civilizational action." Movahedi (٢٠٢١ AD/١٤٠٠ SH) and Firahi (٢٠١٧ AD/١٣٩٦ SH) have emphasized the observance of the rights of civilians and human dignity in Islamic jurisprudence, while Nasri (٢٠٠٠ AD/١٣٩٩ SH) has demonstrated that Qur'anic standards of justice in warfare are more stringent than those established by the Geneva Conventions.

At the international level, Hashemi (٢٠١٢ AD) and Kelsay (٢٠١٥ AD) have emphasized the overlap between defensive Jihād and Just War Theory. Walzer (٢٠٠٦ AD) offers a secular framework based on right intention and legitimate authority. Bellamy (٢٠٠٦ AD, ٢٠١٨ AD), by addressing the challenge posed by non-state actors, regards religious traditions as sources for constraining violence and distinguishing resistance from terrorism. Fundamental critiques of the Just War Doctrine are also noteworthy. Realists such as Mearsheimer (٢٠٠١ AD) and Morgenthau (١٩٨٥ AD) regard it, in practice, as an instrument serving the interests of major powers. Postmodern thinkers (Derrida, ٢٠٠٧ AD; Foucault, ١٩٨٠ AD) regard it as a construct of Western power discourse. Feminist scholars (Gentry, ٢٠١٨ AD; Shogancy, ١٩٨٨ AD) have criticized the doctrine for gender biases and for neglecting women's experiences in armed conflicts. These critiques reveal the necessity of rethinking the Just War Doctrine.

Despite the extensive body of scholarship, the relationship between Qur'anic legitimate resistance and the Just War Doctrine has remained systematically underexplored in normative analyses of justice and ethics. Iranian studies have tended to be primarily jurisprudential, while international studies have lacked sufficient engagement with the Qur'an's revelatory dimensions. The present study seeks to fill this gap by developing a normative framework grounded in

transcendent ethics to elucidate the Qur'anic paradigm's capacity to address contemporary asymmetric warfare.

۲. Conceptualization

Any normative framework on war and resistance depends on clear conceptual definitions. This section reexamines two key concepts, "Resistance/Jihād" in the Qur'anic context and "Just War" in the Western tradition, from etymological, semantic, and institutional perspectives.

۲.۱. Conceptualization of Resistance and Jihād in the Qur'anic Semantic System

The term "Resistance" is a modern political-legal concept that emerged from post-French Revolution discourses and twentieth-century anti-colonial movements (Gross, ۲۰۱۵: ۱۲), and no direct equivalent of it can be found in the Qur'an. Merely appealing to ancient lexical meanings to establish the legitimacy of a modern concept would constitute the fallacy of "Ignoring semantic change" (Skinner, ۲۰۰۲: ۷۸). Accordingly, what is pursued here is the "Ontological tracing of the semantic components" of the root (*q-w-m*,) which carries connotations of "Steadfastness, standing firm, and rising." (Ibn Fāris, ۱۹۸۳ AD/۱۴۰۴ AH: ۴, ۴۲۹) Three semantic clusters can be reconstructed from this root:

- A) Moderation and equilibrium: *Qiwām* denotes steadfastness and moderation (Zabīdī, ۱۸۸۸ AD/۱۳۰۶ AH: ۱۷, ۵۹۲; Rāzī, ۱۹۹۴ AD/۱۴۱۵ AH: ۵, ۲۰۱۷);
- B) Continuity and perseverance: meanings such as endurance (Ibn Athīr, ۱۹۹۷ AD/۱۴۱۸ AH: ۴, ۱۲۵), continuity (Farāhīdī, ۱۹۸۸ AD/۱۴۰۹ AH: ۶۹۴), and firmness (Dehkhoda, ۱۹۹۴ AD/۱۳۷۳ SH: ۶, ۲۱۸۱);
- C) Rising in defense of truth: derivatives of *Istiqāmah* occur in numerous Qur'anic verses (Hūd: ۱۱۲; Yūnus: ۸۹; al-Tawbah: ۱۰; al-Takwīr: ۲۸; Fuṣṣilat: ۳۰). *Istiqāmah* means "Actively standing upon the axis of justice in

the face of deviation," and Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* defines it as "Not departing from the path of truth," which necessarily entails "Resistance to factors of deviation." (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ١٠, ٣٧٢)

D) From a normative perspective, the more significant term is *Jihād*, derived from *Juhd*, meaning capacity and ability, and *Jahd*, meaning hardship and exertion (*Rāghib Iṣfahānī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٢٠٨). Regarding the relationship between *Jihād* and the two key terms *Qitāl* and resistance, *Jihād* is a general concept within the Qur'anic semantic system. In contrast, *Qitāl* is a specific one: every *Qitāl* may constitute *Jihād*, but not every *Jihād* constitutes *Qitāl*. *Qitāl*, derived from the root (*q-t-l*), refers to "Armed confrontation and combat." (*Rāghib Iṣfahānī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٤٢٨; *Jaṣṣāṣ*, ١٩٨٤ AD/١٤٠٥ AH: ٣, ١٢٥) By contrast, *Jihād* means "Exerting effort and energy in repelling the enemy" (*Farāhīdī*, ١٩٨٨ AD/١٤٠٩ AH: ٣, ٣٨٦) and "Exerting one's utmost effort in the way of God," encompassing every form of striving along the divine path (*Rāghib Iṣfahānī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٢٠٨).

Jihād has four dimensions: "*Jihād* against the self (the fundamental condition of legitimacy), *Jihād* against Satan, *Jihād* through speech and expression (*al-Furqān*: ٥٢), and *Jihād* through wealth and life." (*al-Tawbah*: ٤١; *al-Ḥajj*: ٧٨) The Prophetic tradition, "Strive against the polytheists with your wealth, your lives, and your tongues," emphasizes these dimensions. In the Qur'anic paradigm, "External *Jihād*" is inseparable from "Internal *Jihād*," and the legitimacy of armed struggle depends upon this continuity (*Walzer*, ٢٠٠٦: ١٤٥).

From a jurisprudential perspective, *Jihād* is divided into two categories: "Defensive *Jihād*, which does not require the Imam's authorization and is undertaken in response to aggression, and offensive *Jihād*, which requires

the Imam's authorization and is impermissible during the occultation." The normative framework developed in this study focuses exclusively on defensive *Jihād*. In international law, the "Right of Resistance" has been defined under the right to self-determination (Griffiths, ٢٠١٩: ٦٧); in the Qur'an, however, resistance is transformed into a "Divine duty to prevent corruption upon the earth." (al-Baqarah: ٢٥١; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ٢, ٢٤٠).

٢.٢. Conceptualization of Just War in the Western Legal-Ethical Tradition

The concept of just war in the Western tradition represents a synthesis of three intellectual currents: Roman natural law (Cicero), Christian theology (Augustine and Aquinas), and modern international law (Grotius and Vattel). It establishes criteria such as cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, and overall proportionality for the legitimacy of initiating war, as well as distinction, proportionality, and military necessity for justice in the conduct of war (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ٢١-٣٣).

A critical point is that in historical practice, particularly following the Peace of Westphalia, this doctrine became an instrument for legitimizing state warfare and for restricting "Legitimate Authority" exclusively to nation-states (Elshtain, ٢٠٠٤: ٥٢). This limitation creates a serious challenge to the recognition of resistance by non-state groups. By prioritizing "Divine Authorization and Justice" over "Political Sovereignty," the Holy Qur'an could address this theoretical deficiency.

٢. Research Methodology

This study is fundamental-theoretical in its objective and uses a descriptive-analytical, comparative-normative methodology. Due to the interdisciplinary

nature of the topic, the researcher developed a tailored conceptual model and analytical process.

The research process was designed in three stages. In the exploratory stage, using the thematic interpretation method and drawing upon authoritative lexical and exegetical sources, the fundamental keywords associated with resistance, *Jihād*, and defense in the Holy Qur'an were identified, and their normative meanings were analyzed. In the comparative stage, the propositions extracted from the Qur'anic material were juxtaposed with the principal components of the Just War Doctrine, based on the views of thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Grotius, and Michael Walzer, and their areas of convergence and divergence were examined. In the inferential stage, logical reasoning was employed to formulate a normative framework for legitimate resistance. Within this framework, "Framework" refers to the set of general principles and rules extracted from the Qur'an, whereas "Model" refers to the structured representation of the relationships among these principles in the form of the study's conceptual diagram.

In addition, the data analysis was organized according to an original four-level model. The first level addresses the ontology of norms and analyzes revelatory data concerning right, duty, and the necessity of preventing corruption (*al-Baqarah*: ٢٥١). The second level examines legitimacy-generating criteria, such as divine authorization for the oppressed and the negation of trial, through comparative critique against the concept of cause in international law. The third level focuses on behavioral norms and the ethics of warfare, particularly the prohibition of transgression in *al-Baqarah*: ١٩٠, as well as the management of asymmetric warfare. At the fourth level, the findings are synthesized and integrated to formulate an alternative model of legitimate resistance.

To ensure objectivity, context, and minimize bias, the researcher established a transparent, reproducible four-step procedure for data extraction and comparative table construction.

In Step One, through a systematic review of authoritative sources on the Just War Doctrine, including the classical and contemporary works of Michael Walzer and Alex Bellamy, a comprehensive list of normative components was extracted across four dimensions: ontology, justice in the initiation of war, justice in the conduct of war, and teleology. To ensure content validity, these components were cross-checked against the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Moseley, ٢٠٢٢) and the Cambridge Handbook of Just War (Longo, ٢٠١٩).

In Step Two, using purposive qualitative content analysis and lexical searches in specialized software such as *Jāmi‘ al-Tafāsīr*, all ٦٧ verses related to the concepts of *Jihād*, combat, defense, peace, justice, oppression, transgression, trial, and captivity were identified, and their normative implications were extracted through the thematic interpretation method.

In Step Three, the relationship between the Western components and Qur’anic propositions was classified according to an original fourfold model comprising "Full Convergence," (e.g., right intention) "Convergence through expansion," (e.g., cause) "Divergence," (e.g., legitimate authority and *Wilāyah*) and "Normative Completion." (e.g., the principle of proportionality)

In Step Four, comprehensive documentation was provided through precise citation of verse numbers and exegetical references, based on the principle of interpreting the Qur’an through the Qur’an, so that any researcher following the same procedure would be able to arrive at fully consistent results.

٤. Qur’anic Foundations of the Legitimacy of Resistance: From the Principle of Justice to Authorization for Defense

This section presents a layered and substantiated account of three fundamental Qur'anic foundations for the legitimacy of resistance.

٤.١. The Foundational Principle of Justice: From the Philosophy of the Best Possible Order to the Rule "You Shall Neither Wrong nor Be Wronged"

In the Qur'an, justice is both the purpose of creation and the criterion for establishing equity (al-Ḥadīd: ٢٥). This perspective has a rich antecedent in Islamic philosophy. Farabi regarded justice as the "Bearer of Security" and the "Purpose of the Virtuous City," defining it as "Giving every possessor of a right his due" and "Placing everything in its proper position." His emphasis on "Divine Law" distinguishes this conception from the Aristotelian definition (Farabi, ١٩٨٤ AD/١٤٠٥ AH: ٨٣, ٩١).

A major turning point is Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of the "Best possible order," which distinguishes between two domains: "Ontological Justice," namely the inherent order of the universe based on divine wisdom and the principle of the fairest proportioning, and "legislative justice," namely the reflection of that order in religious laws (Mullā Ṣadrā, ١٩٦٣ AD/١٣٨٣ AH: ٦, ٢٤٢-٢٥٠). In light of this distinction, the Qur'anic principle "You shall neither wrong nor be wronged" (al-Baqarah: ٢٧٩) is not merely an ethical injunction but a reflection of ontological justice within the domain of legislation.

From this perspective, oppression is contrary to the best possible order, whereas resistance aligns with the ontological order. In Islamic political philosophy, the relationship between "Transcendent Justice" and "Earthly Justice" is ontological-legislative: "The desired earthly justice is that which corresponds to transcendent justice. This approach elevates resistance to oppressive systems into an ontological duty. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī regards "Establishing Equity" as the ultimate purpose of the mission of the prophets and as the continuation of the best possible ontological order within the social sphere." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ١٩, ٢١٨)

Accordingly, any oppressive structure that obstructs the "Establishment of Equity" lacks legitimacy, and resistance against it constitutes a duty to restore equity and return society to the ontological-legislative order.

٤,٢. Authorization for Defense: From Right to Duty

Verse ٣٩ of Surah *al-Hajj* may be described as the "Charter of Legitimate Resistance" in the Holy Qur'an: "Permission [to fight] has been granted to those who are being fought because they have been wronged. And indeed, Allah is fully capable of granting them victory." (al-Hajj: ٣٩)

Two points require particular attention when citing this verse. First, the verse was revealed in the context of the initial permission granted to Muslims to defend themselves. Before its revelation, Muslims had been prohibited from armed resistance, and this verse therefore represents "A turning point in the legitimization of defense." Second, in extending the ruling of this verse to all times and places, its temporal and spatial qualifications must be taken into account. The expression *Udhina* (permission has been granted) indicates a new normative ruling introduced at a particular stage in the history of Islam.

Nevertheless, what is capable of generalization is the criterion and underlying cause of the ruling: "Because they have been wronged." This expression indicates that oppression constitutes the complete cause for the authorization of defense (Ibn Kathīr, ١٩٩٨ AD/١٤١٩ AH: ٥, ٣٨١). Thus, whenever oppression occurs, this principle implies the legitimacy of defense, even though its specific forms and manifestations may vary with time and circumstances. This approach is based on the jurisprudential maxim "*al-Milāk Yadūru Ma'a al-'Illah Wujūdan wa 'Adaman*": the ruling exists or ceases to exist in accordance with the presence or absence of its underlying cause.

From the perspective of the Just War Doctrine, this verse corresponds to the criterion of "Just Cause," with one fundamental difference: in the Western

doctrine, just cause is often defined in terms of "Defense of territorial integrity," whereas in the Qur'an, being subjected to oppression in itself is sufficient to establish the legitimacy of resistance.

٤,٣. The Obligation to Prevent Trial and Corruption as a Transcendent End

The Holy Qur'an does not regard resistance merely as a reactive defensive action; rather, it connects it to a transcendent end, namely the removal of trial and the establishment of divinely grounded security: "And fight them until there is no trial and religion is for Allah." (al-Baqarah: ١٩٣)

Before drawing any normative inference from this verse, its revelatory context must be considered. The verse was revealed in the context of conflict with the polytheists. In this verse, the term trial refers to "Polytheism" and the domination of oppressive systems that prevent the establishment of justice and the free practice of worship (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ٢, ٢٤٨; Ibn Kathīr, ١٩٩٨ AD/١٤١٩ AH: ٢, ٤٣٣). In Ṭabarī's exegesis, under verse ١٩١ of Surah *al-Baqarah*, trial is interpreted as "Persecuting and harming Muslims to compel them to abandon their religion." (Ṭabarī, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٣, ٥٨)

The key issue in extending this verse to all cases of resistance is the question of identification and purification of the operative cause or disregarding the particularity of the original case. In other words, can the ruling of a verse revealed in the specific context of conflict with polytheists be extended to all instances of resisting oppression and corruption? The answer is affirmative, provided that trial is interpreted in its broader sense as "Any obstacle to the establishment of justice and the free practice of worship." This extension is based on disregarding the particularity of "Polytheists" and of the specific form of "Faith" referred to in the original context. That is, whenever a group, whether polytheist or otherwise, through oppression and corruption obstructs the establishment of justice and the free practice of worship, resistance against it is legitimate. This approach is also

consistent with the jurisprudential maxim consideration is given to the generality of the wording, not the specificity of the occasion of revelation.

In the same vein, the phrase until there is no trial makes resistance goal-limited: "Once trial has been removed, hostilities must cease. Based on a more precise reading, and with emphasis on the qualification but if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the wrongdoers (al-Baqarah: ١٩٣), the purpose of "Removing Trial" is to eliminate oppression and establish conditions for the free practice of worship, not to annihilate all ideological opponents."

•. The Normative Framework of Just War

The normative framework of Just War, rooted in the thought of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Walzer, is one of the most influential ethical approaches to warfare (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ١٢٥). This framework regards war as justified, and in some circumstances even necessary, provided that specific principles are observed; many of its principles have also become embedded in international conventions (Orand, ٢٠٠٥: ٢٥).

It examines justice in three domains. First, *jus ad bellum*, or justice in the initiation of war, based on criteria such as just purpose, right intention, legitimate authority, last resort, reasonable prospect of success, and overall proportionality (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ٦٠-١٠٠). Second, *jus in bello*, or justice in the conduct of war, which emphasizes distinguishing combatants from civilians and avoiding weapons of mass destruction, torture, and genocide (Orand, ٢٠٠٥: ١٩). Third, *jus post bellum* or justice after war, which is based on compensation for damages, reconstruction, and the targeted punishment of aggressors. The ultimate objective is to constrain violence and preserve human dignity during armed conflict (Orand, ٢٠٠٥: ١٢٣-١٤٠).

٦. Research Findings

This section presents findings at three interconnected levels: the legitimacy of initiating hostilities, behavioral norms during resistance, and the teleological dimensions of resistance.

٦,١. Level One: A Normative Reassessment of the Legitimacy of Initiating Hostilities

The first finding of the study indicates that, within the Qur'anic paradigm, unlike realist theories of international law that regard war as an instrument for securing national interests, the legitimacy of resistance, which constitutes defensive *Jihād* and is undertaken with divine authorization and the aim of removing oppression, is grounded in "Transcendent Justice."

The analysis of verse ٣٩ of Surah al-Ḥajj demonstrates that the phrase "Permission has been granted to those who are being fought because they have been wronged" indicates that actualized oppression is the sole source from which the right of resistance arises. From a comparative perspective, this verse overlaps with Walzer's criterion of "Just Cause." Still, it goes one step further: here, authorization is regarded not merely as a right, but as a "Duty to transform an unjust situation." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ١٤, ٣٨٤)

About the criterion of "Legitimate Authority," the Just War Doctrine permits only states to declare war. However, the findings of this study indicate that the Holy Qur'an, by placing the concepts of Ummah and *Wilāyah* at the center, links the legitimacy of resistance to moral competence and authorization under divinely guided leadership. Accordingly, the resistance of oppressed peoples, such as the contemporary Resistance Front, even in the absence of formal states, possesses, based on the Qur'anic principle, "And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and for the oppressed," (al-Nisā': ٧٥) a legal legitimacy that is before and independent of positive human law.

٦,٢. Level Two: Behavioral Norms during Resistance

The second finding highlights that, in the Qur'an, a just objective does not justify unethical means.

The Principle of Non-Transgression: Verse ١٩٠ of Surah al-Baqarah, "And do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not love the transgressors," functions as a peremptory norm in Qur'anic ethics of warfare. In his analysis of this verse, Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari maintains that *Jihād* and resistance in Islam constitute a surgical operation to remove the tumor of oppression, rather than an assault upon the body of humanity (Motahhari, ٢٠١١ AD/١٣٩٠ AH: ٤٢)

Distinction and proportionality in contemporary warfare: While international law assesses proportionality through military calculations, the Qur'an links it to piety. The findings show that the Resistance Front, following Prophetic traditions such as avoiding environmental harm and protecting civilians, implements a model of God-conscious resistance, prioritizing Islamic legal limits over rapid military victory.

٦.٣. Level Three: The Teleology of Resistance: From Punishing the Aggressor to Just Peace

The third finding concerns the ultimate distinction between Qur'anic resistance and secular doctrines. Unlike classical doctrines that view peace merely as the "Absence of War," the Qur'an defines peace based on justice: "Reconciliation is best." (al-Nisā': ١٢٨) Within this model, resistance constitutes a path toward a peace in which human dignity is not violated.

In current regional conflicts, the Resistance Front, guided by verse ٦١ of Surah al-Anfāl, "And if they incline toward peace, then incline toward it," demonstrates that resistance is a reactive, deterrent action. The analysis shows that Qur'anic resistance includes an ethical exit doctrine: "When the adversary accepts justice and peace, resistance transitions to peaceful diplomacy."

Table ١. Comprehensive Comparison: The Qur’anic Paradigm of Legitimate Resistance and the Just War Doctrine

This table summarizes the study's final findings across ontology, criteria for initiating hostilities, and criteria for conduct during warfare, and teleology. The "Comparative Result" column indicates whether the relationship is convergent, divergent, or in normative development.

Level of Analysis	Normative Component	Just War Doctrine	Qur’anic Paradigm of Legitimate Resistance	Key Qur’anic Evidence	Comparative Result
Ontology	Source of legitimacy	Natural rights, social contract, and nation-state sovereignty	Divine command and prohibition, transcendent justice, and religious duty to establish equity	al-Ḥadīd:٢٥; al-Nisā’:١٣٥	Fundamental divergence (divine vs. secular)
Ontology	Nature of war	An instrument for securing national interests or defending territorial integrity	An instrument for restoring justice and preventing corruption upon the earth within the framework of defensive jihad	al-Baqarah:٢٥١; al-Ḥajj:٣٩	Divergence (instrument of power vs. means of establishing equity)
Ontology	Relationship between war and ethics	Ethics of war treated as independent of individual ethics (normative dualism)	Integration of external and internal jihad; right intention is institutionally safeguarded through the authorization of legitimate divinely guided authority	al-Ḥujurat:١٥; al-Nisā’:٥٩	Divergence with emphasis on the institutionalization of ethics
Criteria for Initiating War	Just cause	Defense against external aggression	Repelling actualized oppression and defending the oppressed, even without a formal request	al-Nisā’:٧٥; al-Ḥajj:٣٩	Convergence with expansion (the Qur’an defines the cause beyond sovereignty)
Criteria for Initiating War	Legitimate authority	National governments; UN Security Council	The Holy Qur’an establishes the principle of obedience to <i>Ulū al-Amr</i> (al-Nisā’:٥٩), but remains silent regarding its specific application during the occultation. Shi’i	al-Nisā’:٥٩; al-Nisā’:٧٥	Divergence (the Qur’an presupposes just political authority, but in its absence, an oppressed community also possesses the capacity to defend itself)

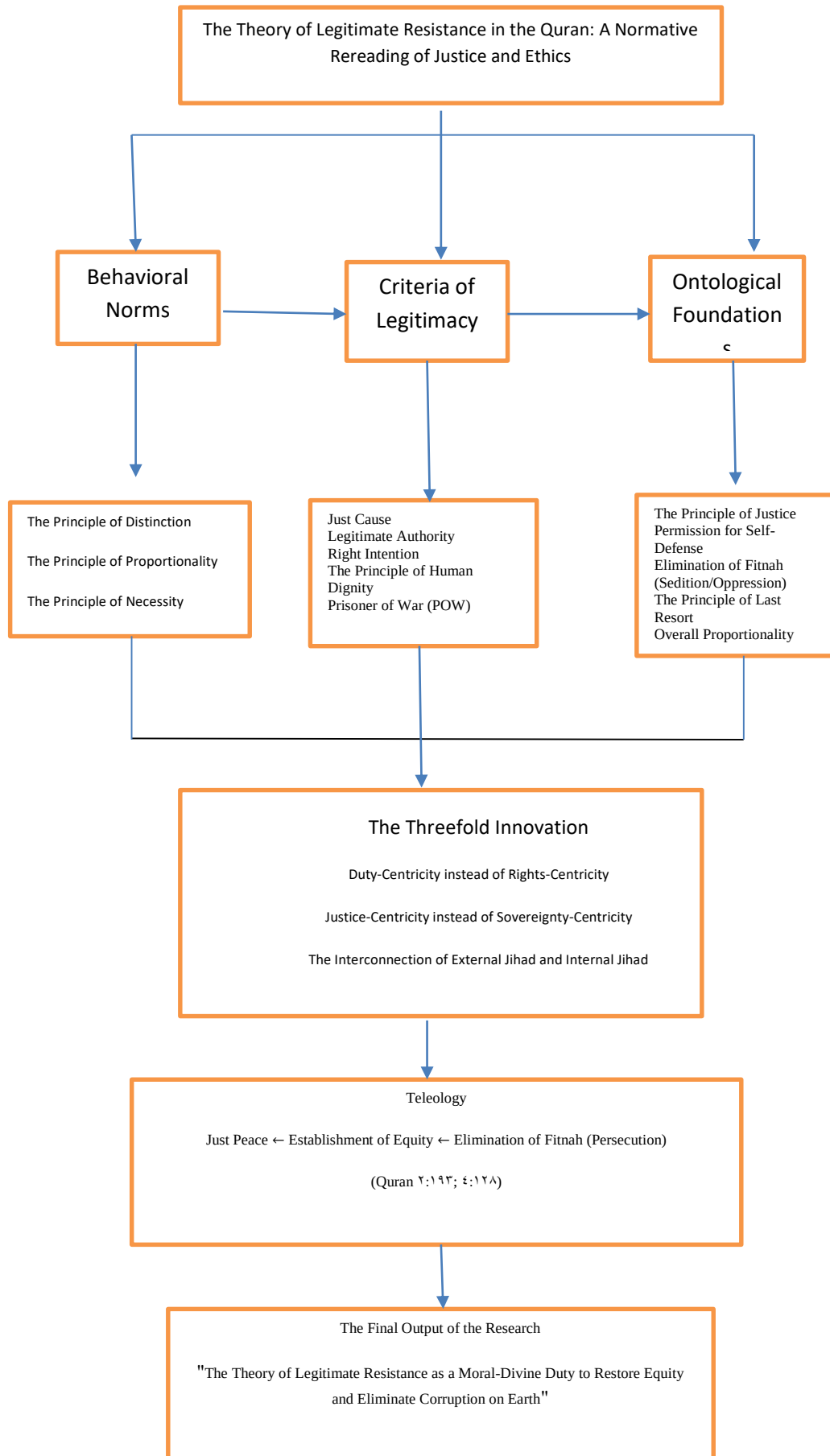
			jurists, relying on arguments such as the rational practice of people of sound judgment, whereby societies in every era refer social issues to religious experts, the principle that divine grace requires the Islamic community not to remain without guidance during the occultation, and widely transmitted traditions such as the <i>Maqbūlah</i> of ‘Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah (appointing the jurist as ruler and judge), have advanced the theory of <i>Wilāyat al-Faqīh</i> as an extension of this principle during the occultation (Javadi Amoli, <i>Wilāyat al-Faqīh</i> , p. ٨٣).		
Criteria for Initiating War	Right intention	Refraining from concealed motives such as economic interests and expansionism	<i>Fī sabīl Allāh</i> (in the way of Allah), understood as adherence to justice and the establishment of equity rather than any unsupported religious claim	al-Baqarah: ١٩٠; al-Anfāl: ٦٧	Full convergence
Criteria for Initiating War	Last resort	Pursuing peaceful alternatives before resorting to war	Priority of peace and reconciliation; obligation to accept peace when the adversary inclines toward it	al-Anfāl: ٦١; Muḥammad: ٢٠	Full convergence
Criteria for Initiating War	Overall proportionality	The harm caused by war should not exceed its benefits	Responding proportionately to the degree of oppression, without exceeding it	al-Naḥl: ١٢٦	Convergence with greater precision (the Qur’an explicitly requires equivalence)
Criteria During War	Distinction	Distinguishing between combatants and civilians	The principle do not transgress (al-Baqarah: ١٩٠); the Prophetic practice prohibiting the	al-Baqarah: ١٩٠; Prophetic practice concerning the prohibition of	Convergence (supported by revelation and practical Prophetic precedent)

			killing of women, children, the elderly, and monks in military campaigns; the Prophet's instructions to commanders, including "Make things easy and do not make them difficult" addressed to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and Mu'adh ibn Jabal; and the Prophet's treaties with tribes, including the Constitution of Medina and peace agreements	killing civilians in warfare; military instructions to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and Mu'adh ibn Jabal	
Criteria During War	Proportionality in the conduct of war	Avoiding attacks disproportionate to military advantage	The same principle: "Then retaliate with the equivalent of what you were subjected to"	al-Nahl: ١٢٦	Full convergence
Criteria During War	Military necessity	Using the degree of force necessary to defeat the enemy	Avoiding excess in killing and destruction; limiting action to what is necessary to repel evil	al-Baqarah: ١٩٠	Convergence
Teleology	Ultimate objective of war	Negative peace (absence of war) or securing national interests	Just peace ; removal of trial; establishment of equity	al-Anfāl: ٦١; al-Nisā': ١٢٨	Divergence (justice-centeredness vs. security-centeredness)
Teleology	Exit doctrine	Surrender, ceasefire, or treaty	Immediate acceptance of peace when the adversary inclines toward it	al-Anfāl: ٦١	Convergence with greater responsiveness

The table above demonstrates that the Qur'anic framework possesses a three-layered normative superiority. The first layer consists in its ontological grounding in transcendent justice rather than earthly contractualism. In the Qur'an, defense, through the principles "So that the people may uphold justice" and "Had Allah not repelled some people by means of others," (al-Baqarah: ٢٥١) constitutes an ontological duty to prevent corruption. The second layer involves a transformation

in the criterion of "Legitimate Authority," from sovereignty-centeredness to justice-centeredness. Through verse ٧٥ of Surah *al-Nisā'*, the Qur'an identifies being subjected to oppression as the basis of defensive legitimacy, thereby opening a conceptual space for addressing the problem of non-state actors (Bellamy, ٢٠٠٦). The third layer links external *Jihād* to internal *Jihād* through legitimate authority. In Imami jurisprudence, external *Jihād* is contingent upon authorization by the infallible Imam or his representative (Javadi Amoli, ٢٠١٦ AD/١٣٩٥ SH: ٢١٥). This institutional condition guarantees the purity of intention and prevents arbitrary action. In contrast to the normative dualism of the Western tradition (Moseley, ٢٠٢٢), the Qur'an connects these two domains by institutionalizing ethics. The ethical principles derived from the Qur'an, including distinction, proportionality, avoidance of excess, the dignity of prisoners, and the priority of just peace (al-Baqarah: ١٩٠; al-Naḥl: ١٢٦; al-Insān: ٨; al-Anfāl: ٦١), apply to contemporary armed conflicts and link the legitimacy of resistance to the occurrence of oppression rather than to formal structures of power (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ٨٩; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ٥, ١١٢).

Conceptual Framework of the Study: A Four-Level Structure of the Theory of Legitimate Resistance in the Qur'an



The diagram illustrates the study's conceptual framework as a four-level hierarchy, with each level building on the previous one. It serves as a simplified model of the normative framework, as previously defined in the methodology. All four levels converge in the study's final output.

- Level One: Ontological Foundations

This level comprises three fundamental pillars:

- ١) The principle of justice and the rule "You shall neither wrong nor be wronged" (al-Baqarah: ٢٧٩), which is presented as an objective of creation (al-Ḥadīd: ٢٥).
- ٢) Authorization for defense in verse ٣٩ of Surah *al-Ḥajj*, which identifies being subjected to oppression as the sufficient cause for the legitimacy of resistance.
- ٣) The obligation to prevent trial and corruption (al-Baqarah: ١٩٣, ٢٥١), which connects resistance to a transcendent end. These three pillars lead to three key innovations: duty-centeredness over rights-centeredness, justice-centeredness over sovereignty-centeredness and the inseparable link between external and internal *Jihād*.

- Level Two: Criteria for the Legitimacy of Initiating Hostilities

This level is devoted to comparing five key criteria of the Just War Doctrine with their Qur'anic foundations. The principal finding is that there is full convergence with respect to "Right Intention," "Last Resort," and "Overall Proportionality"; convergence with expansion with This level compares five key criteria of the Just War Doctrine with their Qur'anic counterparts. The main finding is full convergence on right intention, last resort, and overall

proportionality; convergence with expansion on just cause (including defense of the oppressed without formal request).

- Level Three: Behavioral Norms in Combat

This level comprises four ethical principles: Distinction (separating combatants from non-combatants), proportionality (a response commensurate with the magnitude of the injustice), military necessity (avoiding excess), and the dignity of captives (feeding them and prohibiting torture). Across all these components, a complete or relative convergence is observed between the Qur'anic paradigm and the just-war doctrine, with the difference that, in components such as proportionality and the treatment of captives, the Holy Qur'an sets forth more explicit and more binding rules.

- Level Four: Teleology (Ends-Based Analysis)

This level addresses the fundamental divergence between the Qur'anic paradigm and the Western doctrine. Whereas the just-war doctrine aims at "Negative Peace" (the absence of war) or the securing of national interests, the Holy Qur'an defines *just peace* as the ultimate end of resistance: "And peace is better." (al-Nisā': ١٢٨) This end is representable within a hierarchical chain, resistance → deterrence → removal of injustice → repulsion of discord → establishment of equity → just peace — the terminal point of which is the verse "Until there be no discord." (al-Baqarah: ١٩٣)

Ultimately, the proposed model concludes that the "Theory of legitimate resistance in the Holy Qur'an" constitutes a divine-ethical duty to restore equity and prevent corruption on earth. While maintaining firmness in confronting oppression, it is simultaneously constrained by stringent ethical requirements. It defines its ultimate objective not as the destruction of the enemy, but as the

establishment of a just peace. This theory can serve as a normative model for rethinking contemporary international humanitarian law (the law of armed conflict) and for redefining the "Right to Resistance" in international instruments.

V. A Critical Analysis and Elucidation of the Innovations of the Qur'anic Paradigm vis-à-vis Just War Theory

Having applied the criteria, we now turn to explicating the "Fundamental Innovations" of the Qur'anic paradigm that set it apart from the classical just-war doctrine.

V.1. First Innovation: Duty-Centeredness rather than Right-Centeredness

In Western political thought, from natural-rights theorists such as Grotius to philosophers of the ethics of war such as Walzer, recourse to force is defined predominantly within the framework of the right of states to defend territorial integrity or national interests. In this conception, a just war is a right that states enjoy under specific conditions, yet it is never defined as a binding duty incumbent upon non-state actors or oppressed communities (Grotius, ۲۰۱۲, Introduction; Walzer, ۲۰۰۶: ۸۹).

In the Qur'anic paradigm, however, the relation between right and duty is inextricably intertwined, and their dualistic separation is incompatible with the legislative structure of Islam. In the Islamic jurisprudential system, the rights of God and the rights of human beings are defined alongside one another, and many religious obligations are, precisely, the rights of society and of God. From this perspective, resistance against oppression is not a discretionary right that an individual may forgo, but rather a religious obligation whose abandonment entails moral and otherworldly responsibility.

The most significant Qur'anic evidence for this claim is the noble verse "Fighting has been prescribed for you, though it is detestable to you" (al-Baqarah: ٢١٦). The use of the verb "It was made written as a decree" in this verse, as opposed to permission was granted in verse ٣٩ of *al-Hajj*, demonstrates that, in the Qur'an, fighting is elevated from the level of a mere right to the level of a divine duty. It should be noted, however, that the obligation of fighting in the aforementioned verse is of the sufficiency type that is, it is not obligatory upon all, but is incumbent upon that group of Muslims who possess the capability and the means; and once a sufficient number have undertaken this duty, it is discharged from the rest. This point reveals the fundamental difference between the obligation of fighting and the personal obligation of prayer and fasting, showing that the Sacred Lawgiver, taking into account the interests and capacities of society, has legislated this duty in such a way that both the principle of resistance is preserved and the imposition of unnecessary harm upon the public is prevented.

A further subtle point is that, in the Qur'an, "Abandoning resistance against oppression" is presented as a sin and a neglect of duty. The noble verse "And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the way of God and [for] the oppressed?" (al-Nisā': ٧٥) with its interrogative-reproachful tone, rebukes the believers for their refusal to defend the oppressed, indicating that, in the Qur'anic logic, silence in the face of oppression is not permissible (Javadi Amoli, ٢٠١٦ AD/١٣٩٥ SH: ٢٦٠). Accordingly, what the Qur'anic paradigm posits as "Resistance" is not merely a waivable right, but a sufficiency-based, moral-divine duty laid upon the capable community, so that, by rising against oppression, it may undertake the restoration of equity and the repulsion of corruption from the earth.

٧,٢. Second Innovation: Justice-Centeredness Rather than Sovereignty-Centeredness

Within the Westphalian international system, national sovereignty constitutes a foundational principle. In the Qur'an, however, the decisive criteria are justice and equity. The verse, "Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence" (al-Nahl: ٩٠), indicates that any structure that violates justice forfeits its legitimacy. This innovation theoretically permits non-state resistance groups to rise against oppressive governments, whereas the Just War Doctrine does not grant them such authority (Walzer, ٢٠٠٦: ٨٩).

٧,٣. Third Innovation: The Ontological Integration of External and Internal *Jihād*

In the Western tradition, the ethics of war and individual morality are treated as separate domains (Moseley, ٢٠٢٢). In the Qur'an, however, *Jihād* is defined hierarchically through four levels: "*Jihād* against the self, *Jihād* against Satan, *Jihād* through speech and expression, and *Jihād* through wealth and life." External *Jihād* (the fourth level), without internal *Jihād* (the first three levels), is not merely illegitimate; it is characterized as "Hypocrisy."

٨. Assessing the Qur'anic Paradigm in Relation to the Challenges of the Contemporary World

This section evaluates the theoretical capacity of the Qur'anic theory of resistance to address four major challenges confronting the contemporary world.

٨,١. First Challenge: Asymmetric Warfare

Through the principle, "And prepare against them whatever force you can muster," (al-Anfāl: ٦٠) the Holy Qur'an permits those engaged in resistance to

employ whatever means are available to them. However, this permission is itself constrained by the prohibition "Do not transgress."

Accordingly, the use of chemical weapons, cluster bombs in populated areas, or any indiscriminate weapon remains prohibited, even in asymmetric warfare.

٨,٢. Second Challenge: The "Terrorism" Label and Media Representation

The Qur'anic theory of resistance provides a clear criterion for distinguishing legitimate resistance from terrorism: (١) its objective is to remove oppression rather than kill civilians; (٢) it is bound by normative rules governing conduct during warfare; and (٣) once trial has been removed, it turns toward peace.

٨,٣. Third Challenge: Economic Sanctions and Blockade as Invisible Warfare

The Qur'an regards a blockade that results in the death of children and the sick as oppression and transgression. The verse, "Do not kill your children because of poverty," (al-An'ām: ١٥١) together with the principle "You shall not be wronged," (al-Baqarah: ٢٧٩) encompasses forms of blockade that deprive populations of food, medicine, and water.

٨,٤. Fourth Challenge: Media Representation and the War of Narratives

Within the Qur'anic theory, *Jihād* through clarification and exposition constitutes a dimension of resistance. The verses "Speak to people good words" (al-Baqarah: ٨٣) and "Strive against them with it with great striving" (al-Furqān: ٥٢) demonstrate that resistance is not confined to the battlefield but also operates within the spheres of discourse and media.

٩. Propositional Formulation of the Normative Framework of Legitimate Resistance in the Qur'an

Based on the study's findings, the normative framework of legitimate resistance in the Qur'an can be formulated as three general and two conditional propositions.

First general proposition (ontological): Resistance constitutes an "Ethical-divine duty" to restore equity and prevent corruption. This duty is derived from the principle "You shall neither wrong nor be wronged" (al-Baqarah: ٢٧٩) and the principle "So that the people may uphold justice." (al-Ḥadīd: ٢٥)

Second general proposition (behavioral normative basis): Every act of resistance, regardless of how just its objective may be, is subject to three ethical requirements: avoidance of transgression; distinction between combatants and non-combatants; and proportionality in responding to oppression.

Third general proposition (teleological): The ultimate objective is "Just Peace."

First conditional proposition: If oppression occurs, defense authorization is established.

Second conditional proposition: If the enemy demonstrates an inclination toward peace, acceptance of peace becomes obligatory.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing analysis, this study has demonstrated that resistance within the Qur'anic paradigm, contrary to reductionist interpretations, is "Rights-oriented," "Duty-centered," and "Justice-based," grounded in the epistemic framework of revelation. The normative framework of legitimate resistance developed in this study, founded upon the key principle "You shall neither wrong nor be wronged" and the explicit authorization of defense in verse ٢٩ of Surah *al-Ḥajj*, establishes a coherent framework in which the occurrence of a "State of Oppression" in itself creates the ethical and legal basis for resistance.

This framework differs from the Just War Doctrine on three levels:

- The ontological level (duty-centeredness versus rights-centeredness);
- The legitimizing level (justice-centeredness versus sovereignty-centeredness);
- The ethical level (the integration of external and internal *Jihād* versus the normative dualism of the Western tradition).

At the same time, this normative system is constrained by stringent ethical requirements, including distinction, proportionality, avoidance of excessive killing, and the dignity of prisoners of war, thereby preventing the transformation of resistance into anarchic violence.

Today, as the international system faces legitimacy crises and ethical fragmentation, returning to a justice-centered ethics of resistance may provide a normative foundation for liberation movements.

Limitations: The study focuses on the Qur'an and does not examine hadith reports or the Prophetic tradition; it also does not address contemporary instances of resistance.

Suggestions for Further Research:

- Developing a comparative legal framework between the Qur'anic right of resistance and international legal instruments;
- Conducting empirical research into the application of Qur'anic norms within contemporary liberation movements.

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