

# The Arguments of Proponents and Opponents of “Islamic State and Religious Politics”

## Question No. 4: The Arguments for Islamic State

**What are the arguments presented by proponents of Islamic State among Muslim scholars?**

Muslim scholars generally consider a “righteous Islamic State” as necessary, and there are found no considerable divergences among them in this regard. The reasons provided by them are numerous and variegated. The reasons proving the necessity of the Islamic State in the time of Imam's presence also prove its necessity in time of occultation; what has been presented for the advantages of the Islamic State also attest to its rational preference. Besides, many transmitted arguments prove the necessity of a righteous Islamic State. These are divided into the following categories:

### The First Category

Some of these reasons are the definite transmitted ones such as Quranic verses asserting that authority, legislation and ruling belong to Almighty God, and rejecting any other law, government or leadership inconsistent with divine law. Some of them are the following verses:

1. Verses restricting the right to governance, legislation, judgment and leadership to God, such as the following verse:

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۚ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

***“... the decision rests with Allah only who has commanded you that you worship none save Him; this is the right religion but most men know not.” (12:40)***<sup>1</sup>

2. Verses which assert that leadership and Imamate are divine trusts; such as the following verse:

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

**“And [remember] when his Lord tried Abraham with [His] commands, and he fulfilled them; He said: Lo I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. [Abraham] said: and of my offspring [will there be leaders]? He said: my covenant includeth not wrong-doers.” (2: 124)2**

3. Verses regarding the divine law and ordinance as the foremost one. Such as:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

**“Who is better than Allah for judgment to the people who have certainty [in their belief]?” (5:50)3**

4. Verses that describe any judgment not based on divine law as infidelity, vicious conduct and injustice; such as:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

**“Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers.” (5:44)4**

5. Verses negate seeking judgment, following and accepting the sovereignty of the following groups based on a corresponding or implied indication:

a) **Illegitimate ruler:**

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُتَحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ

**“... they would go for judgment [in their disputes] to false deities when they have been ordered to abjure them.” (4:60)5**

b) **Infidels:**

وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا

**“... and Allah will not give the disbelievers any way [of success] against the believers.” (4: 141)6**

c) **Evil-doers:**

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا ۗ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ

**“Is he who is a believer like unto him who is an evil-liver? They are not alike.” (32: 18)<sup>7</sup>**

**d) The oppressive:**

وَلَا تَرْكَنُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ

**“And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the [hell] fire touches you, and you have not protecting friends against Allah, and afterwards you would not be helped.” (11: 113)<sup>8</sup>**

**e) Sinners and the ungrateful:**

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آئِمًّا أَوْ كَفُورًا

**“So submit patiently to thy Lord's command, and obey not of them any guilty one or disbeliever.” (76:24)<sup>9</sup>**

**f) The foolish:**

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا

**“Give not unto the foolish [what is in] your [keeping of their] wealth which Allah hath given you to maintain [your life] ...” (4:5)<sup>10</sup>**

**g, h) The prodigal and the corruptors:**

وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۗ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

**“And do not obey the command of the prodigal; [those] who spread corruption in the earth and reform not.” (26: 151-152)<sup>11</sup>**

**i, j) The negligent and the capricious:**

وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

**“... and obey not him whose heart we have made heedless of our remembrance, who followeth his own lust, and whose case hath been abandoned.” (18:28)<sup>12</sup>**

k) They who consider their evil deeds as good deeds:

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ كَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ

*“Is he who relieth on a clear proof from his Lord like those for whom the evil that they do is beautified while they follow their own lust?” (47: 14) [13](#)*

l) The ignorant:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

*“Say [unto them, O Muhammad!]: are those who know equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed.” (39:9) [14](#)*

## The Second Category

Some of the arguments consist of verses including a specific reference to the Prophet's or some other religious authorities' leadership, such as:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ

*“Say obey Allah and obey the Messenger ...” (24:54) [15](#)*

## The Third Category

Some arguments include verses or traditions describing the characteristics and qualifications of government agents and their duties. The duties mentioned therein are only consistent with Islamic State and ruling of the pious politicians who are knowledgeable about religious decrees and believe in their enforcement. These verses – through a corresponding or implied indication – assert the following qualifications to be necessary or useful for the leader:

**1. Power and capacity.** The Holy Quran asserts, regarding the reason for giving the sovereignty to Talut, that:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلَكُهُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

*“...Lo Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath increased him abundantly in wisdom and stature. Allah bestoweth his sovereignty on whom He will. Allah is All-embracing, All-knowing.”*

(2:247)<sup>16</sup>

**2. Trustiness and commitment.** The prophet Joseph describes himself as knowledgeable and trustworthy when accepting the charge of the treasury – a governmental responsibility:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ

**“He said: set me over the storehouses of the land; Lo, I’m a skilled custodian.” (12:55)<sup>17</sup>**

**3. Knowledge.** The above-mentioned verses attest to this qualification as well.

**4. Justice.** Here, the Holy Quran uses a rhetoric question:

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

**“... is he equal with one who enjoineeth justice and followeth a straight path [of conduct]?” (16:76)<sup>18</sup>**

**5. Being in the right path.** The previous verse attests to this qualification.

**6. Insight and following divine revelation.**

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

**“... say are the blind man and the seer equal? Will you not then take thought?” (6:50)<sup>19</sup>**

**7. Being guided and a guide.**

أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

**“... is he who leadeth to the truth more deserving that he should be followed or he who findeth not the way unless he [himself] be guided? What aileth you? How do you judge?” (10:35)<sup>20</sup>**

**8. Faith.**

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ

**“Is he who is a believer like unto him who is an evil-liver? They are not alike.” (32: 18)<sup>21</sup>**

This verse contains a rhetoric question and negates the equality of a believer with a disbeliever to prove the believer's priority in different ways, including leadership.

## The Fourth Category

Another group of the reasons presented include the social decrees of Islam whose enforcement is impossible without establishment of Islamic State. This series of Islamic decrees are very extensive and heavily outnumber the individual ritual decrees.[22](#)

Another group of reasons include the way of life of the Impeccable in establishing Islamic State when it was possible.[23](#)

Finally, it is noteworthy that religious scholars have adduced the Four Proofs (the Book, practice, unanimity and reason) in this regard.

In view of what has been said, the necessity of Islamic State in Islamic society is unanimously acknowledged by all Muslims – Shiite and Sunni.

## Question No. 5

**If we regard religion as an individual affair and government as a social one, can we still conceive of Islamic State?**

This idea belongs to John Locke's view of separating the realms of religion and politics;[24](#) it is one of the theoretical bases of political secularism. This idea, however, is challenged by the following objections:

**First.** There is no accurate, universal and proper demarcation between individual and social affairs.

**Second.** Restricting religion to “individual affairs” may be consistent with a religion devoid of divine laws (or Sharia); however, it is never consistent with the reality of the comprehensive religion of Islam, especially as the growth and development of Islam was concomitant with the policy and government established by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) since his arrival in Medina. As Hamilton A.R. Gibb writes, the early Christian society was, in principle, subject to a non-religious and traditional power when it emerged so that it suddenly found itself in a situation not prepared for... Islam, however, has grown up in a world whose political organization was established by Islam itself.[25](#)

**Third.** Even in the western world – which is the cradle of secularism, wherein the common religion lacks a comprehensive religious law – secularism and the separation of religion from politics and society is declining, with the religion's influence gradually strengthening in this sphere. This shows the impossibility of a complete separation between religion and politics.[26](#)

## Question No. 6

### **How is governance consistent with spiritual goals and otherworldliness?**

To answer this question, some points are referred to briefly:

1. The Holy Quran mentions both otherworldly and worldly goals for the prophets' mission, such as establishing just social relations, attempting to make human beings free from slavery and subjugation to others. The goals mentioned by the Holy Quran for prophetic mission are as follows:

- 1.1. reciting and mentioning the divine verses;[27](#)
- 1.2. purifying human soul;[28](#)
- 1.3. teaching the Book and wisdom;[29](#)
- 1.4. God's Unity and worshipping Him;[30](#)
- 1.5. disgusting illegitimate rulers;[31](#)
- 1.6. establishing social justice;[32](#)
- 1.7. judging and ruling among human beings based on justice;[33](#)
- 1.8. releasing human being from chains of slavery;[34](#)
- 1.9. enjoining good and forbidding evil;[35](#)

The martyred scholar, Murteza Mutahhari, writes: “Since the time of the prophet Noah, every prophet who came to change the existing religious order has attended to the social order as well, trying to reform it”.[36](#)

He then refers to the following verse:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

***“We verily sent our messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the Scripture and the Criterion to establish justice among people.” (57:25)***[37](#)

and writes: “[this] means that disturbing an existing corrupt order and establishing a just ideal order has been the objective for all prophetic missions, but this is more distinct and definite in Islam”.[38](#)

Therefore, the strict stress of the religious texts on hereafter does not contradict dealing with the worldly affairs – providing that it is not inconsistent with human's felicity in the hereafter. Worldly government as

a final goal has no value at all; but it is much favorite and desirable for establishing justice and dominance of the religious values. Amir al-Mumenin, Imam Ali (a.s), says:

*“I swear by God! This worn-out pair of shoes is, in my view, more valuable than governing you unless I can protect the truth or eliminate falsehood.”*<sup>39</sup>

2. According to religious texts, the world and the hereafter are closely related, and it is much rejected to engage in one of them and leave the other. So while we find that the world has been reproved in some verses, we find elsewhere that those verses refer to secularism, attachment to the world, and negligence in remembering God and the hereafter. Engaging in the necessary worldly affairs, reforming or improving them, and setting proper personal and social relations are not reproved; rather, they have been emphasized by religion and lead to felicity in the hereafter as well. In a tradition transmitted from Imam Sajjad (a.s), it has been stated that:

*“The world is of two kinds: one leads us to the hereafter, and the other is the cursed one [preventing us from engaging in otherworldly affairs]”*.<sup>40</sup> In another tradition, Imam Ali (a.s) says: *“The hereafter is acquired through this world”*.<sup>41</sup>

3. Government is one of the most important necessities of human’s social life, without which life would be impossible. In case there is no righteous government, the society would be tangled in an unrighteous government; as Imam Ali (a.s) says:

*“There is no way out for people under a righteous or unrighteous ruler”*.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, the Holy Quran has emphatically prohibited following the unrighteous and non-divine rulers and governments. So there is no way to elude establishing a “righteous government”; otherwise, the society would be tangled in anarchy. Some of the verses denoting the necessity of the government of knowledgeable and competent righteous people were mentioned previously.

4. From a Quranic viewpoint, government has a religious basis. The Quranic verses explicitly declare that establishing a government, legislation, and judgment all belong exclusively to God and those who have received permission from God; any judgment and ruling not based on divine laws is infidelity, viciousness and injustice.

5. A short survey of Shiite Imams’ way of life clearly shows that a great part of their life consists of political and social activities.<sup>43</sup> In some cases, these efforts have not culminated in establishing a government and the complete seizure of political power. The mystery generally lies in lack of necessary conditions and the lack of cooperation on the part of the society.<sup>44</sup> Imam Ali says, on the event after the Prophet’s departure, that:

*“... then I came with Fatima, and my two sons, Hassan and Hussein, to the men of Badr and the outstrippers in Islam. I put forward my arguments on my right to caliphate, calling for their assistance.*

*None of them granted my request except four. They were Salman, Ammar, Miqdad and Abuzar*".[45](#)

Sayings of other infallible Imams to the effect that establishing a government is their own right accorded to them by God, and no one shares this right with them, are completely expressive and explicit.[46](#)

Regarding this issue, they have frequently referred to Qadir incident, basing their arguments on it.[47](#)

Imam Ali (a.s) says regarding the Prophet's Household:

*"They are the repository of God's mysteries and the club of His ordinances. They are the treasury of God's knowledge and the referee of His decrees. They are the shelter for God's Book and the strong mountains for His religion. Through them God straightened the hunchback of the religion, removing the shakings of its entity*".[48](#)

Then Imam Ali referred to the oppression inflicted upon them, saying that: *"they diffused the seeds of impiety, and watered them with pride and deception, harvesting its crop which was all misery and obliteration. Verily none of them are comparable to the Prophet's progeny, and those who are feeding upon Muhammad's progeny can not be equal to them. They are the pillars of religion and faith.... The valuable features of government belong to them, and the Prophet's will and legacy exist among them. Nonetheless, when the right went to its owners, it returned to the first place once more!"*[49](#)

Elsewhere, Imam Ali says:

*"I found that tolerance and patience is closer to wisdom, so I exercised patience, but I was like someone whose eyes are full of pickles and has a piece of bone in his throat. I was beholding that my legacy was being plundered. The first caliph died and reposed caliphate to someone else."*[50](#)

Another point deserving attention is that Islamic State is not, in principle, inflexible and compulsory; thus, it is not realizable without support from people. Therefore, Imam Ali's assuming power after people's paying homage to him does not contradict his divine right; rather, it is closely related to the divine and popular nature of the Islamic State.[51](#) As for Imam Hassan's signing the peace treaty with Mu'awia, the plentiful historical evidences show that Imam had no better choice because the society did not accompany him.[52](#)

Imam Hussein's decision to return home in his way to Kufa after they breached their allegiance was an ultimatum for the enemy, since the conditions were no longer good for struggle and uprising there. Therefore, Imam had no other choice except changing his plans and setting out in another direction. This is, however, no sign of his submission to the unjust rulers of his time and leaving his uprising and struggle against them. He persevered up to the end of his life and sacrificed all beloved members of his family for the sacred goal of Islam, not stopping his struggle even for a moment.

Imam Sadiq rejected Abu Muslim Khorasani's request, for his rising lacked the conditions of an Islamic struggle and was not consistent with religious goals; so Imam could not endorse such a rising.[53](#)

Imam Reza refused to be Mamun's vicegerent for many reasons, including the following reasons: firstly, Mamun's offer – as Imam himself affirmed – was a mere pretense void of reality. Secondly, Imam's giving his assent to Mamun's offer would mean legitimizing his government and breaking down the political philosophy of Shiite and the basis of divine Imamate. Imam's rejection was thus the most intelligent way of frustrating Mamun's plot.<sup>54</sup>

- <sup>1.</sup> The Qur'an, Yusuf (12), 40. See also An'am (6), 57, 62; Yusuf (12), 67.
- <sup>2.</sup> The Qur'an, Baqara (2), 124.
- <sup>3.</sup> The Qur'an, Maida (5), 50. See also Tin (95), 8; A'raf (7), 87; Yunis (10), 109; Naml (27), 78; Shura (42), 10; An'am (6), 114.
- <sup>4.</sup> The Qur'an, Maida (5), 44; See also *ibid.*, 45; *ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>5.</sup> The Qur'an, Nisa (4), 60. See also Baqara (2), 257.
- <sup>6.</sup> The Qur'an, Nisa (4), 141. See also Al-e Imran (3), 100; *ibid.*, 28; Maida (5), 51.
- <sup>7.</sup> The Qur'an, Sajda (32), 18.
- <sup>8.</sup> The Qur'an, Hud (11), 113.
- <sup>9.</sup> The Qur'an, Insan (76), 24.
- <sup>10.</sup> The Qur'an, Nisa (4), 5.
- <sup>11.</sup> The Qur'an, Shu'ara (26), 151–2.
- <sup>12.</sup> The Qur'an, Kahf (18), 28.
- <sup>13.</sup> The Qur'an, Muhammad (47), 14.
- <sup>14.</sup> The Qur'an, Zumar (39), 9.
- <sup>15.</sup> The Qur'an, Nur (24), 54.
- <sup>16.</sup> The Qur'an, Baqara (2), 247.
- <sup>17.</sup> The Qur'an, Yusuf (12), 55.
- <sup>18.</sup> The Qur'an, Nahl (16), 76.
- <sup>19.</sup> The Qur'an, An'am (6), 50.
- <sup>20.</sup> The Qur'an, Yunis (10), 35.
- <sup>21.</sup> The Qur'an, Sajda (32), 18.
- <sup>22.</sup> For further information, see Ja'far Subhani, *Ma'alim al-hukumat al-Islamiya*.
- <sup>23.</sup> Muhammad Hassan Qadrdan Qaramaleki, *Taqabul-i mashyi-e a'Imma ba secularism*, *Ma'rifat Magazine*, no. 19.
- <sup>24.</sup> See: John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. P. Romanell, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955); see also a review of this book by Sayyid Ali Mahmoudi, *Edalat va Azadi*, pp. 79–99.
- <sup>25.</sup> H.A.R. Gibb, *Religion, Politics and Islam*, tr. Mahdi Qayeni, p. 26–7.
- <sup>26.</sup> For further information, see: Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, tr. Afshar Amiri, p. 17–33; Jean-Paul Willaime, *Sociologie des Religions*, tr. Abdu-Rahim Govahi.
- <sup>27.</sup> The Qur'an, Al-e Imran (3), 164.
- <sup>28.</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29.</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30.</sup> The Qur'an, Nahl (16), 36.
- <sup>31.</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32.</sup> The Qur'an, Hadid (57), 25.
- <sup>33.</sup> The Qur'an, Baqara (2), 214; Nisa (4), 105.
- <sup>34.</sup> The Qur'an, A'raf (7), 157.
- <sup>35.</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36.</sup> Murteza Mutahhari, *Piramon-e Inqilab-e Islami*, p. 128, Qom, Sadra Publications 1369.
- <sup>37.</sup> The Qur'an, Hadid (57), 25.
- <sup>38.</sup> Mutahhari, *op. cit.*

- [39.](#) Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon no. 33.
- [40.](#) Muhammad Muhammadi Rey Shahri, Muntakhab-e Mizan al-kikma (tr.), I, p. 364, Qom, Dar alHadith publications, 1381.
- [41.](#) Ibid.
- [42.](#) Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon no. 40.
- [43.](#) For further information, see Rasul Ja'fariyan, Siriy-e siyasi-e Imaman-e Shia; and also Mahdi Pishvaie, Simay-e Pishvayan.
- [44.](#) Many proofs attest to this fact, including people of Medina's not responding to Imam Ali's call for allegiance after the Prophet's departure, Imam Hassan's army's refusal to fight Mu'awia, people of Kufa's breaking with Imam Hussein and killing him.
- [45.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, 29, p. 419; Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, p.75.
- [46.](#) For further information, see Usul-e Kafi, 1, Kitab al-Hujja.
- [47.](#) See: Allama Amini, al-Qadir, 1, p. 159-213: al-munashida va-l-ihitijaj bi-hadith al-Qadir, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut 1387/ 1968.
- [48.](#) Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon no. 2.
- [49.](#) ibid.
- [50.](#) ibid, Sermon no. 3.
- [51.](#) For further information, see Question no. 30.
- [52.](#) For further information, see Mahdi Pishvaie, Simay-e pishvayan dar ayiniy-e tarikh, pp. 27-38, Qom: Dar al-Ilm, 1st ed. 1375; see also idem, Siriy-e pishvayan, pp. 92-140, Qom: Tawhid Publications, 13th ed. 1381.
- [53.](#) For further information, see ibid, p. 109-11; and also idem, Siriy-e pishvayan, pp. 382-410.
- [54.](#) For further information, see Murteza Mutahhari, seiri dar sirey-e a'immay-e athar, p. 194-216, Qom, Sadra Publications, 11th ed. 1374; see also Muhammad Hassan Qadrddan Qaramaleki, Taqabul-i mashyi-e a'imma ba secularism, Ma'rifat Magazine, no. 39.

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