



Defensive Jihād in Imāmī Jurisprudence: Foundations, Rules, and Security Implications

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Abstract

Focusing on defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence, this study seeks to derive a coherent normative model of legitimate self-defense from authoritative jurisprudential foundations and textual sources, moving beyond a merely descriptive approach. The principal gap in the existing literature lies in the absence of an integrated analytical formulation capable of connecting ontological, anthropological, and eschatological foundations with the practical rules governing defense. Accordingly, the central research question is: What foundations underpin defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence, and what rules of action does it entail for safeguarding the security of the Islamic community?

The study employs an inferential normative analysis based on authoritative jurisprudential texts. Within the theoretical framework, the principal rules underlying Islamic defense thought are identified and analyzed, with particular attention to their scope and their relationship to the criteria governing their implementation. At the level of legal and jurisprudential rulings, the obligation to defend in the event of enemy aggression is reconstructed, together with its relationship to the constraints of necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression. The findings indicate that connecting foundational principles with operative rules provides a coherent framework for Islamic defense policy, one that remains open to theoretical evaluation and contemporary reassessment.

Keywords: Defensive jihād; Imāmī jurisprudence; *Qā'idat nafy al-sabīl* (Rule of the Prohibition of Domination); *Qā'idat al-muqābalah bi-l-mithl* (Rule of Reciprocity); Jurisprudential Security.

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1. Introduction

Rather than addressing the broader subject of the “defensive and security-oriented thought of Islam,” this study confines its scope to defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence in order to avoid conflating the formulation of a jurisprudential model with the resolution of specific executive issues facing the Islamic Republic of Iran. The aim of the article is to develop a coherent, problem-oriented formulation derived from authoritative Imāmī foundations and textual sources and capable of scholarly evaluation within the standards of an academic research article. The central question is therefore formulated as follows: What theoretical foundations underpin defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence, what operative rules and constraints does it entail for safeguarding the security of the Islamic community, and how does this model differ from approaches that are merely descriptive?

The research gap can be identified at two levels. First, the existing literature is dominated by descriptive and compilatory works that have not provided an integrated analytical framework for defensive jihād or clearly demonstrated the precise relationships among its principal concepts. Second, key concepts are repeatedly discussed across different sections without establishing a clear relationship among foundations, rules, and rulings. By avoiding generalization and concentrating on a clearly defined problem, the present article organizes its analysis around a normative model in order to derive a coherent and assessable framework from authoritative sources while minimizing conceptual fragmentation.

The innovation of the study is organized around three dimensions. First, it focuses specifically on defensive jihād and distinguishes it from offensive jihād, individual self-defense, and administrative or institutional security, thereby delimiting the subject matter in a precise and evaluable manner. Second, it integrates ontological, anthropological, and eschatological foundations with operative principles such as the prohibition of domination (*naḥy al-sabīl*), reciprocity (*muqābalaḥ bi-l-mithl*), invitation or religious persuasion, defensive preparedness, and the cultivation of goodwill (*taʿlīf al-qulūb*) in order to construct an explicit normative model. Third, it reconstructs the jurisprudential ruling concerning the obligation of defense in the event of enemy aggression and clarifies its relationship to the constraints of necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression. Accordingly, the article refrains from addressing specific executive or policy questions and limits its discussion to a generalizable jurisprudential model.

The research employs an inferential normative analysis. First, the key concepts are defined briefly and precisely. Subsequently, normative propositions are extracted from authoritative texts and organized into an interconnected

model. The evidentiary base is restricted to the previously specified jurisprudential and lexical sources, and no additional sources are introduced. To reduce verbosity and ambiguity, the article employs concise sentences, precise punctuation, and intermediate conclusions throughout the analysis. The evaluative criteria include assessability, internal coherence, and the possibility of independent reconstruction by another researcher.

The article is structured as follows. The first section explains the theoretical foundations and demonstrates the normative implications of *tawhīd*, human dignity, and the teleology of history for legitimate defense. The second section provides a concise conceptual analysis of *jihād*, defense, and security and clarifies the scope and boundaries of defensive *jihād*. The third section systematizes the relevant normative rules and principles and explains their respective domains and interrelationships. The fourth section reconstructs the jurisprudential ruling concerning defensive *jihād* and explains the absence of any requirement for specific prior authorization in circumstances of enemy aggression, while also identifying the constraints governing its implementation. Finally, the analytical conclusion summarizes the proposed model and identifies directions for further development of the research.

2. Statement of the Problem

The existing literature on the defensive thought of Islam is predominantly descriptive and often juxtaposes a collection of definitions and quotations without developing a coherent normative model. As a result, the distinction between defensive *jihād* and related concepts—such as offensive *jihād*, individual self-defense, and administrative or political security—remains insufficiently clear, while the relationship between theoretical foundations, operative rules, and jurisprudential rulings has not been systematically formulated. These ambiguities make it difficult to determine precisely what foundations underlie defensive *jihād* in Imāmī jurisprudence, under what circumstances it becomes obligatory, what constraints govern its implementation, and how one can move from scriptural texts and juristic positions toward an assessable model of collective security.

The central problem of this study arises precisely from this gap: the absence of an integrated normative model of defensive *jihād* in Imāmī jurisprudence that systematically connects its principal components—foundations, rules, ruling, and implementation constraints. Rather than addressing contemporary questions of executive practice or public policy, the study is limited to a theoretical and jurisprudential clarification of the issue. It seeks to identify the three foundational dimensions—ontological, anthropological, and eschatological—to determine the key rules relevant to legitimate defense, to reconstruct the

jurisprudential ruling concerning defensive jihād in the event of enemy aggression, and to clarify implementation constraints such as necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression.

On this basis, the main research question is formulated as follows:

What is the normative model of defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence, and how does the connection between theoretical foundations and operative rules lead to specific jurisprudential rulings and implementation constraints?

Three subsidiary questions are also addressed:

1) What is the conceptual boundary between defensive jihād and related concepts, and which elements constitute its defining characteristics?

2) Which operative rules constitute the normative core of legitimate defense, and what is the respective scope of these rules?

3) Under what circumstances does defensive jihād become obligatory, and what constraints govern and limit its implementation?

The proposed path to resolving the problem is an inferential normative analysis consisting of three interconnected stages: precise conceptual definition; extraction of normative propositions from authoritative Imāmī texts; and systematic organization of these propositions into a model that is assessable, internally coherent, and independently reconstructable by other researchers. This problem-oriented focus moves the article beyond mere description and toward the formulation of an evaluative jurisprudential model of defensive jihād.

3. Conceptualization

3.1. Operational Definition of the Concepts

In this study, conceptualization does not merely involve compiling definitions; rather, it entails specifying the boundaries and conceptual scope of the terms under investigation so that jurisprudential rulings and operative rules can subsequently be derived on their basis. Accordingly, the three principal concepts of jihād, defense, and security are clarified with particular emphasis on defensive jihād, and their distinctions from related concepts are established.

3.2. Jihād

Lexically, *jihād* is associated with strenuous effort and the exertion of one's utmost capacity. Authoritative Arabic lexicons convey from the term the idea of confronting hardship through maximum effort (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251). In ḥadīth literature, a range of practices—from commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong to standing up justly against a tyrannical ruler—has likewise been regarded as forms of jihād (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

In terms of its different levels, ethical literature distinguishes “external jihād”

(*jihād al-aṣghar*) from “greater jihād” (*jihād al-akbar*), with struggle against the lower self (*nafs*) assigned a higher spiritual status (Ḥasan-Zādeh Āmulī, 1392 SH, p. 138). The subject of the present article, however, is defensive jihād as a branch of external jihād: namely, defensive action undertaken to repel aggression and safeguard the integrity of religion and society. In terms of its legal ruling and conditions, it differs from offensive or initiatory jihād.

Conceptual Distinction

Offensive jihād: the initiation of armed conflict for purposes of religious invitation or expansion, subject to specific conditions and constraints.

Defensive jihād: a legitimate response to actual aggression aimed at neutralizing the threat and protecting the sanctity of religion, human life, and territory. Its scope and constraints are examined below on the basis of scriptural evidence and juristic positions.

3.3. Defense

Lexically, *difāʿ* (defense) denotes warding off, repelling, or removing harm (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251). In Qurʾanic usage, the semantic range of *dafʿ* varies according to its syntactic construction, including its use with the prepositions *ilā* and *ʿan* or without an intermediary. It may convey meanings such as returning, protecting, and repelling, as illustrated in the expressions: “*Fa-dfaʿū ilayhim amwālahum*” (Qurʾan 4:6), “*Inna Allāha yudāfiʿu ʿan alladhīna āmanū*” (Qurʾan 22:38), and “*Idfaʿ bi-allatī hiya aḥsan*” (Qurʾan 23:96) (Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).

In military terminology, defense refers to the set of methods and measures adopted to repel an enemy attack (Rīgī, 1374 SH, p. 441). In Imāmī jurisprudence, defense has both individual and collective dimensions. At the collective level, defense of the foundations of religion and the integrity of the Islamic community is addressed within the framework of binding legal norms and is understood in relation to principles such as *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*. Their detailed implications are examined in the section on operative rules.

3.4. Security

Lexically, *amn* and security signify being safe, reassurance, and tranquility (ʿAmīd, 1389 SH, p. 198). In contemporary conceptual literature, security is understood as freedom from danger and distress and as the set of measures adopted to protect against threats (Ḥāfiẓ-Niyā, 1393 SH, p. 326).

In *Nahj al-Balāghah*, the establishment of security is presented as one of the objectives of governance, while restoring the symbols of religion and extending peace and reconciliation are identified as conditions for securing the well-being of God's servants (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

In this article, security is employed in the sense of normative jurisprudential security: a condition in which, on the basis of Islamic legal principles and rulings, unjustified threats are repelled and the fundamental rights of the believing community are protected. Security, therefore, denotes not merely the absence of danger, but the presence of a legitimate normative order.

3.5. Key Distinctions for Avoiding Conceptual Conflation

- **Defensive jihād ↔ Offensive jihād:** defensive jihād is a response to aggression, whereas offensive jihād involves initiating hostilities.

- **Individual defense ↔ Collective defense:** individual defense concerns the protection of a person's life, property, or honor, whereas collective defense concerns the integrity of religion and the community and is examined within the framework of public legal obligations.

- **Public security ↔ Jurisprudential security:** the former refers primarily to a social condition characterized by the absence of danger, whereas the latter constitutes a juridically defined form of legitimate protection, governed by criteria such as necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression. These criteria are examined in the sections on rulings and operative rules.

- **Hard ↔ Soft threats:** hard threats, such as direct military aggression, and soft threats, such as external domination, the erosion of collective agency, and the imposition of subjugation, may both become relevant to legitimate defense. However, the jurisprudential rules determine both the appropriate authority for assessment and the permissible limits of response.

3.6. Complementary Terms Used in the Analysis

- **Rule of the Prohibition of Domination (*Qā'idat nafy al-sabīl*):** the prohibition of alien domination over believers. Its negative and affirmative implications for defensive policy are examined below.

- **Rule of Reciprocity (*Qā'idat al-muqābalah bi-l-mithl*):** the permissibility of a proportionate response, without exceeding the limits required to repel aggression.

- **Da'wah, defensive preparedness (*sabaq wa-rimāyah*), and ta'līf al-qulūb:** practical principles that reinforce prevention, deterrence, and social cohesion within the framework of legitimate defense.

- **Implementation constraints:** necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression—three normative constraints that determine the permissible limits of defensive response.

Within this framework, defensive jihād is defined as legitimate action undertaken to repel aggression and safeguard religion and the community; defense constitutes its conceptual instrument, while security represents the normative objective achieved through the application of Islamic legal rules and

constraints. This formulation provides the conceptual foundation for entering the subsequent discussion of operative rules and jurisprudential rulings in Imāmī law.

4. The Defensive-Security Theory in the Imāmī School of Jurisprudence

In this article, the theory of defensive security is understood as an interconnected system of foundations, rules, and legal rulings whose ultimate purpose is to preserve order and protect the integrity of the believing community. Accordingly, differences in scholars' conceptions of being, the human person, and the ultimate destiny of history lead to differences in the formulation of defense and security. Within the Imāmī tradition, this system rests on three categories of foundations: ontological, anthropological, and eschatological. The practical outcome of these foundations is the construction of a normative model of defense, which is analyzed throughout the article first through rules such as *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, and subsequently at the level of the jurisprudential ruling, particularly the obligation of defense in the event of enemy aggression. In order to avoid merely descriptive exposition, each foundation is presented together with a clear and assessable normative implication (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45; Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28-29).

5. Ontological Foundations

1) Problem Formulation and the Function of Ontology in Defense Theory

The Imāmī defensive doctrine cannot be transformed into a coherent normative model without a foundation in ontology. The central question of this section is: Which ontological propositions constitute the foundation for the legitimacy and limits of defense, particularly defensive jihād? The proposed answer is that five pillars—*tawḥīd*; divine lordship and the exclusive authority to legislate; divine knowledge and omniscience; the rejection of servitude to anyone other than God and the rejection of domination; and the teleological character of the universe—constitute the core of this system. These foundations entail clear normative implications for the rules of *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, as well as for the constraints governing implementation, namely necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression. Within our analytical framework, a foundation is relevant only when it leads to an assessable rule and ruling, rather than merely providing a descriptive account of religious beliefs (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45; Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28-29).

2) *Tawḥīd*: The Foundation of the Unity of Sovereignty and the Condition for the Coherence of Rules

Tawḥīd places all of existence under the sovereignty of the one God. This

unity has two normative consequences. First, it establishes the unity of the source of legitimacy in defense-related legislation. Second, it ensures coherence in rule-making throughout the security system.

The Qur'anic verse, "*He is Allah, there is no deity except Him, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace...*" (Qur'an 59:23), establishes God's ontological and normative sovereignty over creation. The direct normative implication of this proposition is that rules governing defense cannot derive their legitimacy from any source other than the Sharī'ah. Any claim to independent rule-making would, in effect, produce a plurality of normative sovereign authorities, which would be incompatible with *tawhīd*.

At the practical level, this foundation restricts conflicting and mutually incompatible interpretations of defense and integrates its various components into a single normative framework. In more theoretical terms, *tawhīd* constitutes a necessary condition for transforming fragmented legal rulings into a coherent system (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

3) Divine Lordship and the Exclusivity of Legislation: Normative Authority in Determining the Limits of Defense

Divine lordship (*rubūbiyyah*) locates the creation and governance of the universe within divine authority and, from this premise, the exclusive authority to legislate in the sphere of social and defensive rulings can be derived. The Qur'an states:

"It is not for a believing man or believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, to have any choice in their affair." (Qur'an 33:36)

Thus, once a divine ruling has been established, the legally responsible person no longer possesses an independent capacity to construct an alternative normative standard.

The practical implication for defense is clear: the legitimacy and limits of recourse to coercive force are determined by scriptural evidence and Sharī'ah-based proof, rather than solely by utilitarian calculations based on customary considerations. In the sphere of defense policy, executive preferences must likewise be organized within the framework of the relevant legal ruling and rule. This represents the transformation of ontological divine lordship into legislative normative authority in the domain of security (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

4) Divine Knowledge and Omniscience: The Epistemic Guarantee of Implementation Constraints

The Qur'anic statement, "*Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allah is Knowing of all things*" establishes an epistemic foundation for reliance upon divine commands in defensive decision-

making (Qur'an 49:16).

At the level of normative rules, this foundation supports three principal implementation constraints: necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression.

Necessity means that recourse to coercive force is permissible, and in some circumstances obligatory, only when the threat cannot be prevented through less harmful means.

Proportionality means that the intensity of the response must correspond to the nature and degree of the threat.

The prohibition of transgression means that exceeding legitimate limits remains impermissible even when action is undertaken in self-defense.

The lexical analysis of *dafʿ* ("repelling") in Qur'anic sources likewise points toward notions such as responding through what is best (*dafʿ bi-al-aḥsan*) and protective resistance, thereby narrowing interpretations of violence that operate outside normative constraints (Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).

Here, divine knowledge of the relevant benefits and harms constitutes the epistemic basis for confidence in the Shari'ah-based classification of defensive means, rather than a license for unrestricted human judgment.

5) Rejection of Servitude to Anyone Other than God and the Prohibition of Domination: The Foundation of the Rule of *Nafy al-Sabīl*

Because servitude and ultimate obedience belong exclusively to God, every form of imposed foreign domination over the believing community is rejected. This ontological proposition leads directly to the rule of *nafy al-sabīl*, expressed in the Qur'anic statement:

"And Allah will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers."
(Qur'an 4:141)

Its normative implication is that, in structuring external relations and designing defensive arrangements, any mechanism that creates the possibility of foreign domination or coercive avenues of influence must be rejected.

In rule-based terms, *nafy al-sabīl* has both a negative and an affirmative dimension. Negatively, it entails preventing political, economic, or military penetration by dominating external actors. Affirmatively, it entails the preservation of independence and defensive capacity.

Lexical interpretations of *sabīl* as a "path," "way," or "avenue" of access and influence reinforce this conceptual relationship (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251). Accordingly, the defensive doctrine is not concerned merely with reactive responses to actual attacks; it also recognizes the structural prevention of domination as one of its normative objectives.

6) Divine Ownership and Human Vicegerency: The Relationship between Trust and Defense

Ultimate ownership of the universe belongs to God, while the human being is understood in relation to Him through the concepts of vicegerency (*khilāfah*) and trust (*amānah*). The Qur'anic statement, “*That is Allah, your Lord... the Creator of everything, so worship Him*” establishes divine ownership and absolute lordship (Qur'an 6:102).

In contemporary Islamic literature, this relationship has been interpreted as implying human duty and responsibility to preserve order and prevent harm (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45). The normative implication for defense is that protecting religion and the security of the believing community is not merely permissible; under certain conditions, it becomes an obligatory duty.

It is at this point that ontology becomes directly connected to the jurisprudential question of “the obligation of defense upon enemy aggression”. *Nahj al-Balāghah* likewise presents among the functions of governance the revival of the symbols of religion and the establishment of peace and security for oppressed servants of God (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

7) The Teleological Character of Creation and the Normative Hope of Defense

The teleological character of the universe—that is, the movement of history toward the realization of truth—provides normative hope for the perseverance of legitimate defense. The Qur'anic teaching concerning the inheritance of the earth by the righteous, together with the promise of the ultimate triumph of truth, moves the rationale of defense beyond mere emergency response and places it within the framework of reform and justice.

The practical consequence is that legitimate defense must serve divinely oriented ends rather than reactive emotions. Hence, proportionality and the prohibition of transgression are not merely technical rules of engagement; they function as guardians of the teleological purpose of defense (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

This interpretation, by emphasizing “*Repel [evil] with that which is best*” (*udfa' bi-allatī hiya aḥsan*) and “*Allah defends those who believe*,” distinguishes legitimate defense from unrestricted retaliation or punishment (Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350; Qur'an 22:38; Qur'an 23:96).

8) Divine Laws (*Sunan Allāh*) and Forward-Looking Rationality in Defense

The divine laws governing the social world may be understood as the causal regularities and structured patterns through which social phenomena unfold. External and internal threats cannot be neutralized without capacity and preparedness.

Accordingly, practical teachings such as *sabaq wa-rimāyah*—organized defensive preparedness—can be understood within an ontology of an ordered and law-governed world. Successful defense requires resources and

preparedness (*‘uddah wa-‘uddah*), rather than good intentions alone.

Contemporary conceptual literature defines security as freedom from danger and distress together with the measures adopted to provide protection against threats (Hāfiẓ-Niyā, 1393 SH, p. 326). When this understanding is situated within the framework of divine laws, it implies the necessity of institutional deterrence and continuous monitoring of potential avenues of domination and penetration. Thus, prior preparedness constitutes an integral component of the normative model rather than a secondary recommendation.

9) The Semantics of “Repelling” and “Security”: Clarifying the Boundaries of Legitimate Defense

Reliance on lexical analysis, particularly of the concepts of *dafʿ* (“repelling”) and *amn* (“security”), allows the boundaries of defense to be specified more precisely. Lexical sources define *dafʿ* as warding off or removing harm, and in certain Qurʾanic contexts also associate it with the notion of protection (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251; Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).

This semantic field has two important consequences. First, legitimate defense is inherently purposive and limited to repelling an existing or imminent harm, rather than granting unrestricted permission to pursue additional objectives. Second, *amn* does not merely denote the absence of threat; it denotes an established condition of security, reassurance, and tranquility (ʿAmīd, 1389 SH, p. 198).

This understanding excludes responses that operate outside normative constraints and replaces them with responses that are proportionate and purpose-oriented.

10) Connecting Foundations to Rules: From *Tawhīd* to *Nafy al-Sabīl* and *Muqābalah bi-l-Mithl*

The transition from foundational propositions to operative rules can now be formulated as follows:

1) Tawhīd and divine lordship → exclusivity of legislation:

The legitimacy of defensive rules derives from the Sharīʿah; therefore, every fundamental rule must possess a valid religious basis (Qurʾan 33:36; Qurʾan 59:23).

2) Rejection of servitude to anyone other than God → *nafy al-sabīl*:

This entails preventing every avenue through which foreign domination and subjugation could be imposed upon the believing community (Qurʾan 4:141).

3) Divine knowledge and teleology → implementation constraints:

Necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression function as safeguards of the purpose of legitimate defense (Qurʾan 49:16; Qurʾan 23:96; Qurʾan 22:38).

4) Divine laws → defensive preparedness:

The institutionalization of *sabaq wa-rimāyah* and deterrence measures constitutes a set of prior normative requirements.

Contemporary conceptual literature likewise describes “defensive thought” as an interconnected theoretical framework rather than a collection of isolated propositions (Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29; Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

11) The Relationship between the Foundations and the “Obligation of Defense upon Enemy Aggression”

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, once actual aggression occurs, the combined force of these foundations elevates the status of defense from permissibility to obligation. This follows from several considerations:

- The exclusivity of legislation makes compliance with a binding defensive ruling obligatory (Qur’an 33:36).
- The rejection of servitude to anyone other than God renders acquiescence to avenues of foreign domination impermissible (Qur’an 4:141).
- Divine knowledge and teleology establish the implementation constraints required to prevent defensive action from devolving into injustice (Qur’an 49:16; Qur’an 23:96).
- This formulation will subsequently be reinforced through juristic opinions and jurisprudential proofs concerning defensive jihād, demonstrating how Tawḥīdic ontology leads to a binding legal ruling, rather than merely to an ethical recommendation.

12) Normative Summary

The ontological foundations of Imāmī thought provide a roadmap for formulating legitimate defense:

- The principle of Tawḥīd brings the rules of defense within a unified normative framework and establishes a single source of legitimacy (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).
- Divine lordship and the exclusivity of legislation determine the normative authority responsible for defining the limits of defense and prevent unconstrained utilitarianism from becoming the governing criterion (Qur’an 33:36).
- Divine knowledge and omniscience support the constraints of necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of transgression, thereby distinguishing legitimate defense from unregulated violence (Qur’an 49:16; Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).
- The rejection of servitude to anyone other than God leads to the rule of *nafy al-sabīl*, extending the scope of defense from structural prevention of domination to the repulsion of actual aggression (Qur’an 4:141; Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

- The teleological character of the universe directs defense beyond mere emergency response toward purposeful justice and places it in the service of preserving the signs of religion and securing the well-being of God's servants (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131; Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

- Divine laws (*Sunan Allāh*) require forward-looking rationality, including preparedness and deterrence, as integral components of a sound defensive order (Ḥāfiẓ-Niyā, 1393 SH, p. 326).

Thus, ontology is not an ornamental preliminary to defensive jurisprudence; it constitutes the generative core from which its rules and rulings emerge. In the subsequent sections, this core is translated systematically into the rule of *nafy al-sabīl*, the rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, practical principles—including *da'wah*, defensive preparedness (*sabaq wa-rimāyah*), and *ta'līf al-qulūb*—and ultimately into the formulation of the jurisprudential ruling governing defensive jihād (Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29; Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

6. Anthropological Foundations

Within the intellectual framework of Imāmī jurisprudence, every formulation of a defensive doctrine rests upon an anthropological foundation. This foundation determines the status of the human being, the source of human dignity, the limits of freedom and responsibility, and the relationship between the individual, society, and the Sharī'ah. Without making this foundation explicit, defense risks being reduced to a merely instrumental function, stripped of its normative meaning. This section therefore formulates the principal elements of religious anthropology that underlie legitimate defense in the Imāmī tradition.

First, the inherent dignity of the human being establishes a fundamental normative principle. The Qur'an describes human beings as honored and places the resources of creation at their disposal for their development: "*He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth*" and "*We have certainly honored the children of Adam*" (Qur'an 31:20; 17:70). Human dignity possesses both a creational and a legislative dimension, from which the inviolability of human life, property, and honor—and consequently the right to defend them—can be derived. This understanding transforms defense into a right and duty to preserve human dignity, rather than allowing it to be reduced to an instinctive reaction. Accordingly, defensive rules must safeguard human life and dignity, and every form of unjustified violation of these values is prohibited, even in the course of defensive action.

Second, the human being is a free and responsible agent. Human agency constitutes the basis of moral accountability and divine legal obligation and is the source of both social and religious responsibility. Within the logic of the

Sharī'ah, the responsibility to defend religion and society is grounded in this human agency and is thereby transformed into a legal duty. In particular, when direct aggression occurs, this responsibility gives rise to the immediate obligation of defense and thus goes beyond the level of an ethical recommendation. Imāmī jurisprudence, relying upon this anthropological foundation, regards defense as obligatory *upon enemy aggression* (*'inda hujūm al-'aduww*) and extends this obligation to the preservation of human lives, honor, and the integrity of Islam (*bayḍat al-Islām*) (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

Third, reason and innate disposition (*fiṭrah*) as sources of practical guidance play a methodological role in defense. Religious teachings regard the “greater jihād”—the struggle for self-purification—as the foundation of external action. The relationship between reason, moral refinement, and defensive action is therefore such that legitimate defense must be preceded by deliberative judgment, sound intention, and adherence to normative limits; it must not be driven by uncontrolled emotion or unjustified violence. In discussions of the levels of jihād, the continuity between the struggle against the self (*jihād al-naḥs*) and external jihād is emphasized. This continuity provides the normative discipline necessary for legitimate defense (Ḥasan-Zādeh Āmulī, 1392 SH, p. 138).

Fourth, the human being is a social being, and security is a collective good. From a revelation-based perspective, a justice-oriented social order is a condition for human flourishing. A righteous government has the responsibility to establish security so that oppressed people may live in safety and neglected religious principles may be restored. The purpose of religious political order is therefore not domination, but the revival of the signs of religion and the establishment of peace and security in society. Security is consequently not merely an instrumental objective; it is a normative end through which human dignity and responsibility can be realized. Defense serves as an instrument for safeguarding this end (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

Fifth, the Qur'anic conception of the human being combines the capacity for good with the possibility of deviation and wrongdoing. Forces of evil may violate human rights, while forces committed to the good are charged with resisting such violations. This duality clarifies the normative basis of the duty of defense. On the one hand, the primary principle is peace and invitation; on the other, when aggression occurs, failure to defend can itself constitute a neglect of duty. This understanding establishes a connection between invitation and guidance and the repulsion of aggression, while requiring every defensive action to comply with standards of necessity and proportionality so that the dignity of the opposing party is not violated without justification (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh,

1368 SH, p. 45).

Sixth, the dignified human being possesses fundamental rights, and these rights are formulated as operative norms within Islamic jurisprudence. The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* prohibits foreign domination over believers and requires the prevention of every avenue of subjugation. This rule is rooted in the preservation of human dignity and the rejection of servitude to anyone other than God; it therefore represents the normative expression of the corresponding anthropological premise. Alongside it, the rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* places defensive action within the framework of proportionality and equivalent response and prevents defense from degenerating into unjustified retaliation. These two rules can thus be directly derived from the conception of the human being as both dignified and morally responsible, and together they constitute a foundation of normative security (Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

Seventh, within the religious framework, the human being is addressed by the obligation of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*). This duty represents the social expression of defending collective human dignity. For this reason, certain cultural and civic actions have also been described as forms of jihād, preserving the connection between inner morality and social action. Its relationship to defense lies in the fact that society bears responsibility for repelling wrongdoing and strengthening what is right in response to both hard and soft threats. This responsibility extends from the family and local community to the wider Muslim community (*ummah*) (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

Eighth, Imāmī jurisprudence distinguishes between the right to defense and the limits of defense. From an anthropological perspective, this distinction means that the purpose of defense is to safeguard human flourishing and dignified life, rather than to permit indiscriminate destruction. Accordingly, even when defense becomes an objective legal obligation, rational standards of necessity and sufficiency of force, respect for noncombatants, and avoidance of destructive excess remain binding. These requirements reflect the dignity and responsibility of the believing human being. In Imāmī jurisprudential literature, this relationship has been articulated through legal rules that define the boundaries of defensive action (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

Ninth, Imāmī anthropology is inseparable from religious teleology. The ideal society is one in which faith and justice can be realized and expressed. This horizon prevents defensive policy from being detached from religious purposes, while simultaneously restraining security maximalism when it risks eroding human dignity. In other words, defense is meaningful within the framework of guidance and justice, rather than guidance and justice being subordinated to defense. Accordingly, every defensive action must remain capable of being

assessed according to the standards of guidance, justice, and human dignity (Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29).

Normative Synthesis: The combined implications of these anthropological foundations yield a normative model of defense: the human being, as a dignified, free, and responsible agent, possesses both the right and the duty to defend within a society in which security constitutes a normative objective of political order. Yet this defense is constrained by the prohibition of domination, proportionality, priority of peaceful invitation where possible, and preservation of human dignity.

Such a model simultaneously establishes the legitimacy of defense during the occultation (*ghaybah*) and incorporates mechanisms of restraint within the defensive framework itself, ensuring that defensive action does not depart from the principles of divine servitude and respect for human dignity (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45; Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18; *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

7. Eschatological Foundations

Within the normative model of defense in Imāmī jurisprudence, eschatology is not merely a doctrinal belief concerning the future. It has a strategic and normative function: it shapes the formulation of defensive obligations, determines their limits and constraints, and even informs the logic of deterrence and strategic patience. The teachings of revelation portray the horizon of history as moving toward the inheritance of the earth by the righteous, the triumph of truth, and the establishment of a just security order. Accordingly, defensive action should be understood as an instrument for safeguarding and advancing this trajectory, not as a substitute for it. This section explains the principal eschatological elements and their direct implications for Imāmī defensive thought.

1) The Promise of Inheritance and the Establishment of Just Security

The Qur'an portrays the future of history in terms of the inheritance of the earth by the righteous:

“And We have already written in the Psalms, after the Reminder, that the earth shall be inherited by My righteous servants.”

It likewise promises:

“Allah has promised those of you who believe ... that He will surely establish them as successors upon the earth ... and that He will replace their fear with security.”

(Qur'an 21:105; 24:55).

These verses present the transition from fear to security as a fruit of faith and righteous action. This eschatological horizon places defense within the objective

of just security and renders disproportionate violence or violations against civilians normatively indefensible, since such conduct contradicts the very purpose of establishing *amn* (security).

2) The Triumph of Truth and the Principle of Active Patience

The verses “*that He may make it prevail over every religion*” (*li-yuḏhirahu ‘alā al-dīn kullihī*) and “*the ultimate outcome belongs to the God-conscious*” (*al-‘āqibatu lil-muttaqīn*) articulate the logic of the eventual triumph of truth.

At the normative level, this triumph is not achieved through instrumental haste but through active patience and proportionate action. Such patience prevents both despair and excess and makes defensive action subject to the criterion of necessity. Within the ethical tradition of Imāmī thought, the connection between inner purification and external action ensures that defensive jihād is nourished by the higher level of *jihād al-akbar*—the struggle against the self—and is thereby protected from degenerating into unregulated violence (Ḥasan-Zādeh Āmulī, 1392 SH, p. 138).

3) Eschatology and the Rules of Defense: *Nafy al-Sabīl* and *Muqābalah bi-l-Mithl*

A truth-oriented eschatological vision gives direction to two fundamental operative rules within defensive thought:

a) *Nafy al-Sabīl* (Prohibition of Domination): Every avenue through which foreign domination over the life and faith of the religious community might be imposed must be closed. This norm constitutes the practical expression of rejecting servitude to anyone other than God and safeguards the historical movement toward dignity and security. Its practical implication is the legitimacy of measures aimed at preventing domination and subjugation, provided that the limits of legitimate defense are observed (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

b) *Muqābalah bi-l-Mithl* (Reciprocity): The defensive response must remain equivalent and proportionate to the threat. Since the ultimate horizon of history is justice and security, excessive retaliation would divert defensive action from its guiding purpose. This rule therefore requires attention to the sufficiency of force, the necessity of action, and the avoidance of transgression (Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

4) The Obligation of Defense upon Enemy Aggression and Its Relation to the Historical Horizon

Within this eschatological framework, Imāmī jurisprudence regards defense as obligatory upon enemy aggression. The preservation of human life, honor, and the integrity of Islam cannot simply be suspended, nor is defensive action in such circumstances necessarily dependent upon specific prior authorization. The immediacy of the obligation serves to prevent the historical trajectory toward security from being reversed into fear, humiliation, and domination.

Yet the immediacy of the obligation does not imply unrestricted implementation. The constraints of proportionality, necessity, and avoidance of destructive excess remain operative precisely because defense is situated within the broader teleology of justice and security (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

5) Eschatology and the Architecture of Security: From *Da'wah* to Defense

The revelatory framework emphasizes the priority of invitation and guidance (*da'wah wa-hidāyah*) over coercive response and punishment. A community whose ultimate objective is just security should, wherever possible, reduce threats through social reconciliation, the cultivation of goodwill (*ta'lif al-qulūb*), and peaceful means, resorting to hard defensive measures only in the event of aggression.

This sequence constitutes the practical expression of the historical movement from fear to security and establishes an ordered relationship between power and guidance: power is the servant of guidance, not the reverse (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

6) The Language of Eschatology in the Key Concepts of Jihād, Defense, and Security

Eschatological meaning is also embedded in the terminology itself.

- **Jihād:** In the religious tradition, jihād has multiple levels. External jihād, without the support of the struggle against the self, cannot attain the ultimate objective of guidance. Accordingly, divine intention, self-restraint, and adherence to normative limits constitute conditions for the legitimacy of defensive action (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

- **Defense:** At the lexical level, defense denotes repelling harm and warding off aggression. In Qur'anic usage, the construction with *'an* conveys the meaning of protection and support: “*Indeed, Allah defends those who believe*” (*inna Allāha yudāfi'u 'an alladhīna āmanū*) (Qur'an 22:38). This protective semantic dimension indicates that the objective of defense is the restoration of a condition of just security (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).

- **Security:** Security denotes not merely a psychological state but a normative condition of society in which human dignity can flourish and divine obligations can be fulfilled. Within the teleological structure of the theory, security is therefore an intermediate end and a precondition for religious and human development, rather than a mere by-product of political or military power (ʿAmīd, 1389 SH, p. 198).

7) Methodological Implications for Jurisprudential Research on Defense

An eschatological framework also entails methodological requirements:

1. Every defensive inference must be evaluated in light of the objectives of justice and security. If an interpretation produces corruption, destructive excess,

or permanent fear, it is incompatible with the teleological horizon of history.

2. Where competing options exist, the principle of minimum sufficient force should prevail. The objective is sustainable security rather than temporary domination.

3. Responsibility continues after the cessation of hostilities. Restoration of a just order and respect for rights constitute part of the defensive obligation rather than matters external to it.

These principles are consistent with transmitted norms and are reflected in Imāmī jurisprudential and ḥadīth sources (al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 4, p. 243, ḥadīth 778; al-Najāfī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

8) Summary: A Teleologically Oriented Formulation of Defense

The model may be summarized as follows:

Teleological end of history = inheritance by the righteous and establishment of just security

→ Guiding principle = priority of invitation and reform

→ Defensive rules = *nafy al-sabīl* / *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*

→ Jurisprudential ruling = obligation of defense upon enemy aggression

→ Implementation constraints = necessity, proportionality, avoidance of destructive excess, and preservation of human dignity

→ Post-conflict obligation = restoration of security and justice

This chain keeps defense within the teleological trajectory of guidance and justice and harmonizes it with ethics and the Sharī'ah. Accordingly, Imāmī defensive thought can be understood neither as security maximalism without a higher purpose nor as peace without the capacity for defense. Rather, within the Qur'anic horizon of the end of history, defense is construed as a normative duty to preserve human dignity, protect legitimate order, and advance justice (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45; Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18; Qur'an 24:55; Qur'an 21:105).

8. Islamic Defensive Thought

In this article, defensive thought in Islam is understood as a normative and argumentative system that, grounded in the Tawḥīdic principles and jurisprudential rules of the Imāmī tradition, seeks to safeguard the material and spiritual survival of the community and provides a framework for confronting both hard and soft threats while preserving collective human dignity. In this sense, defensive thought is not merely a collection of scattered recommendations; rather, it constitutes a conceptual–practical framework that establishes a systematic relationship among the foundations, rules, and legal rulings governing defense, while treating just security as its ultimate normative objective rather than endorsing security maximalism without constraints. This

understanding is consistent with established conceptions that define defensive thought as a coherent intellectual framework with theoretical foundations and principles concerning defense, sovereignty, and collective existence, while emphasizing its intrinsic relationship with the broader political and social thought of religion (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188; Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29).

The point of departure in Islam is Tawḥīd. Exclusive servitude to God constitutes the foundation for rejecting every form of foreign domination and *tāghūt*, and it is this foundation that gives defense its meaning and direction. Within this framework, power is an instrument for safeguarding guidance and justice rather than an independent end in itself. The Qur’anic conception of the future reinforces this horizon: the promise of succession (*istikhlāf*) and the transformation of fear into security demonstrates that the objective is the establishment of just security as a condition for the realization of human dignity and the implementation of divine norms. Defensive action is therefore defined precisely in service of this end (Qur’an 24:55).

The conceptualization of defense and jihād also possesses a clear lexical and transmitted foundation. Lexically, *dafʿ* denotes warding off evil and repelling aggression, while in Qur’anic usage, particularly when constructed with *ʿan*, it conveys meanings of protection and support: “Indeed, Allah defends those who believe” (*inna Allāha yudāfiʿu ʿan alladhīna āmanū*). This usage carries an explicitly protective dimension. Authoritative lexical sources likewise associate the term with repelling harm and providing protection, from which its normative implications can be derived (Ibn Manzūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

Jihād is likewise understood as multilevel and multidimensional. *Jihād al-aṣghar* (the lesser or external jihād), understood here in terms of outward defensive action, cannot be detached from *jihād al-akbar* (the greater jihād), namely the struggle for inner purification. Without this connection, external action may depart from its guiding and ethical purpose. Transmitted teachings accordingly emphasize the relationship between moral formation and defensive action (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

Moving from foundations to the level of normative rule-making, Islamic defensive thought rests, at minimum, on two strategic rules: *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*. The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* requires that every avenue through which foreign domination and coercive control over the faith and independence of the community could be established be blocked. Within the limits prescribed by the Sharīʿah, this rule thus provides the normative basis for measures aimed at preventing domination and subjugation. The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, by contrast, establishes proportionality in response,

ensuring that defensive action does not depart from the objectives of justice and security and degenerate into excess or destructive violence. These two rules have direct implications for structuring practical decisions within defensive policy (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188; Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

At the level of jurisprudential ruling, Imāmī jurisprudence regards defense as obligatory upon enemy aggression (*‘inda hujūm al-‘aduww*). The preservation of human life, honor, and the integrity of Islam (*bayḍat al-Islām*) is not regarded as a matter that can simply be suspended. Imāmī jurists emphasize both the immediacy of the defensive obligation in the event of aggression and the constraints governing its implementation, including necessity, proportionality, and the avoidance of transgression. Thus, the obligation to defend does not amount to an unrestricted authorization concerning means or methods; defensive action remains subject to the standards of Sharī‘ah-based justice (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14; al-Ardabilī, 1362 SH, p. 144).

At a more specific legal level, the relationship between defense and individual rights, together with the limits governing interference with life and property, is likewise regulated by the same considerations of necessity and proportionality. In transmitted sources, the protection of life, religion, and honor is articulated as a set of supreme values recognized within the normative structure of Islamic law (al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 4, p. 243, ḥadīth 778).

From the perspective of policy formation, Islamic defensive thought follows a guiding sequence in which invitation (*da‘wah*), the cultivation of goodwill (*ta’līf al-qulūb*), and continuous preparedness take precedence, where possible, over hard confrontation. Only in a condition of actual aggression (*‘udwān*) does legitimate coercive force become applicable. *Nahj al-Balāghah* formulates this orientation through its emphasis on establishing security, reviving neglected religious norms, and protecting the oppressed. The ultimate objective is just security; therefore, any action that directly undermines this objective or results in destructive excess falls outside the framework of legitimate defense (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131).

Within this framework, security is not merely a psychological condition or a balance of military capabilities. It is a normative social condition necessary for the flourishing of human dignity and the implementation of the Sharī‘ah. Lexically, it refers to safety, tranquility, and freedom from danger, while in geopolitical and security studies it is commonly associated with protection from threats and the measures adopted to neutralize them. Islamic thought, however, proposes a broader conception: just security functions both as a necessary condition and as an intermediate normative objective for the realization of social guidance and human flourishing (‘Amīd, 1389 SH, p. 198; Ḥāfiẓ-Niyā, 1393 SH, p. 326).

Accordingly, the normative structure of Islamic defensive thought can be summarized as follows:

Tawhīdic foundations and human dignity

→ Rules of *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*

→ Ruling: obligation of defense upon enemy aggression

→ Implementation constraints: necessity, proportionality, and avoidance of destructive excess

→ Guiding sequence: invitation and cultivation of goodwill wherever possible

→ Ultimate objective: just security as the basis for the realization of human dignity and the implementation of divine norms.

This chain simultaneously prevents the excesses of security maximalism without a higher normative purpose and the opposite extreme of unprotected pacifism. For this reason, Islamic defensive thought is defined in an intrinsic relationship with political and social life rather than outside them. Such a formulation is consistent with the broader framework of Islamic thought, in which defense is understood as an instrument for safeguarding the historical trajectory of social guidance and, from a methodological perspective, requires continuous reference to scriptural evidence, jurisprudential rules, and the objectives of the Shari‘ah (Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45; Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29; Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

9. Principles of Islamic Defensive Thought

This section formulates the normative principles of Islamic defensive thought in a problem-oriented manner and on the basis of authoritative Imāmī sources and textual evidence. Its purpose is to move the discussion beyond mere description and transform it into an analytical framework connecting foundations to rules, and rules to jurisprudential rulings and implementation constraints.

Within this framework, security is understood not merely as a psychological condition, but as a normative state in which human dignity can be realized and the Shari‘ah implemented. Lexically, security denotes “safety, tranquility, and relief from danger,” while in geopolitical analyses it is understood as “freedom from danger and measures for protection against threats” (‘Amīd, 1389 SH, p. 198; Ḥāfiẓ-Niyā, 1393 SH, p. 326). On this basis, the following principles constitute the principal pillars of Islamic defensive thought.

9.1. The Principle of *Da‘wah*: The Priority of Cultural Engagement over Hard Confrontation

Da‘wah constitutes the first strategy in external engagement and reflects the principle of peace and peaceful coexistence within the Islamic conception of defense. The Qur’an states:

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction.”
(Qur’an 16:125)

The meaning is clear: the primary targets of defensive engagement are hearts and minds, and the first instruments of defense are wisdom and sound counsel. The practice of the prophets likewise followed this sequence: invitation before combat, clarification before confrontation, and establishment of proof before the use of coercive force.

This priority given to cultural engagement safeguards the relationship between defense, justice, and guidance and prevents “legitimate defense” from becoming security policy without a higher normative purpose. Prophetic traditions likewise emphasize the relationship between ethics and defensive action; reports encouraging struggle alongside moral purification portray defense as an instrument of guidance rather than merely a military undertaking (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

From a jurisprudential perspective, the principle of *da‘wah* performs a dual function: it both establishes the proof (*iqāmat al-hujjah*) and reduces the human costs of conflict. Accordingly, a defensive strategy that entirely disregards invitation, clarification, and dialogue departs from the fullest framework of legitimacy. This principle also shapes the orientation of foreign policy by giving preference to soft instruments of persuasion and confidence-building so long as actual aggression has not occurred.

9.2. The Principle of Prioritizing Peace and Repelling Aggression: The Rule of *Lā Ta‘adū*

Islam does not prescribe initiating war as a default principle; rather, armed conflict is situated within the framework of repelling aggression and removing persecution:

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress.”
(Qur’an 2:190)

This verse clarifies the relationship between defense and justice: the legitimacy of combat is defined within the framework of repelling aggression and is simultaneously constrained by the prohibition of transgression. Accordingly, the fundamental principle of Islamic defensive policy is to prioritize peace and justice and to restrict the use of hard force to circumstances of aggression.

Nahj al-Balāghah likewise presents the objective of religious governance as the establishment of peace and security for oppressed people and the implementation of divine norms (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131). This formulation demonstrates that defense in Islam is an instrument for protecting the trajectory of social guidance, not an independent end.

9.3. The Principle of Defensive Preparedness: *Sabaq wa-Rimāyah*

The Qur'an prescribes continual preparedness:

"And prepare against them whatever you are able of power..."
(Qur'an 8:60)

Such preparedness does not consist merely of accumulating weapons. Rather, it encompasses a broader system of organization, training, equipment, and deterrence capable of addressing threats before they materialize.

Within Imāmī jurisprudence, the chapter concerning *al-musābaqah wa-al-rimāyah* provides an important technical basis for this principle and points to military training, weapons practice, skills development, and the creation of credible deterrent capability.

The Muslim community and Islamic government, insofar as they are responsible for preserving the integrity of Islam (*bayḍat al-Islām*), are not exempt from the obligation to maintain defensive capacity. Such capacity is achieved through continuous preparedness rather than episodic reactions. The position of this principle within the architecture of defense is therefore clear: without preparedness, even the principle of prioritizing peace cannot be sustained, since deterrence is a rational condition for preserving peace.

At the broader jurisprudential level, the protection of life, honor, and the integrity of Islam cannot simply be suspended; when enemy aggression occurs, defense becomes obligatory (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

9.4. The Principle of *Nafy al-Sabīl*: Blocking the Pathways of Domination

The Qur'an states:

"And Allah will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers..."
(Qur'an 4:141)

The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* constitutes a normative pillar of the independence and dignity of the Islamic community. It prohibits political, economic, or military arrangements that result in foreign domination. The rule has both a negative and an affirmative dimension: negatively, it requires the closure of avenues of foreign penetration and coercive control; affirmatively, it requires the establishment of conditions conducive to independence.

At the strategic level, *nafy al-sabīl* provides a criterion for evaluating treaties, security arrangements, patterns of dependency, and even economic structures. Its relationship with defensive preparedness is also clear: effective deterrence constitutes one of the affirmative manifestations of *nafy al-sabīl*, because the narrower the avenues available for coercion and extortion against the community, the more fully the rule is realized.

This principle is fully consistent with the Tawḥīdic and dignity-centered foundations of Islam and links security with independence and justice (Ḥusaynī

Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

9.5. The Principle of *Muqābalah bi-l-Mithl*: Proportionality in Defensive Response

In regulating defensive response, the Qur'an requires proportionality:

"So whoever transgresses against you, then respond against him in proportion to what he has transgressed against you." (Qur'an 2:194)

The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* functions as the ethical and legal measure of defensive action. The response must remain equivalent and proportionate, and must operate within the requirement of necessity rather than exceeding the scale of the aggression.

Contemporary jurisprudential literature likewise examines *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* as a regulatory principle governing legitimate defense, intended to prevent excess and ensure the justice of the response (Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

The result is that Islamic defense is constrained at both the decision-making and implementation stages by the requirements of necessity and proportionality, thereby preserving its protective and guiding objectives.

9.6. The Principle of *Ta'līf al-Qulūb*: Maximizing Inclusion and Countering Soft Threats

The Qur'an states:

"Charities are only for the poor ... and those whose hearts are to be reconciled ..." (Qur'an 9:60)

The inclusion of *al-mu'allafati qulūbuhum* among the recipients of zakāt provides scriptural support for the principle of *ta'līf al-qulūb*, namely cultivating affinity, trust, and social alignment among groups whose incorporation, neutrality, or reconciliation can reduce hostility and mitigate threats.

Imāmī jurists have discussed this category within the framework of Islamic financial policy and external relations. Its security function lies in reducing hostility, promoting cohesion, and preventing unnecessary confrontation (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 15, p. 341).

Within a defensive strategy, *ta'līf al-qulūb* complements *da'wah* and constitutes a foundation of soft deterrence. Wherever financial, media, diplomatic, or social measures can redirect groups away from hostility, there is no normative justification for rushing toward hard confrontation. This principle is particularly significant in border regions, neighboring communities, and among tribes or influential social groups, where it can contribute to balancing relations and reducing the potential for conflict.

10. Connecting Principles to Rulings and Implementation Constraints

The foregoing formulation becomes genuinely strategic only when connected

to operative rulings and implementation constraints. Within Imāmī jurisprudence, defense becomes obligatory and immediate upon enemy aggression. This obligation, however, remains subject to implementation constraints, including necessity, proportionality, and the prohibition of aggression against noncombatants or unjustified destruction (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

Transmitted traditions likewise treat the preservation of life, religion, and honor as values for whose protection defensive obligations are legislated (al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 4, p. 243, ḥadīth 778).

At the same time, the Qur'anic semantics of *dafʿ* (“repelling”) encompass protection and assistance against oppression:

“Indeed, Allah defends those who believe.” (Qur’an 22:38)

Lexical sources similarly define *dafʿ* in terms of repelling harm and warding off aggression (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

This semantic network, together with the rules of *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, forms the normative skeleton of legitimate defense.

11. The Relationship between the Principles and Dignity-Centered Security

Within Islamic thought, security constitutes an intermediate normative objective: a condition necessary for the realization of human dignity and the implementation of divine norms. Religious sources take the inherent dignity of the human being and the necessity of preserving it as foundational premises, from which the criteria of defensive action are derived.

When the principles of *daʿwah* and *taʿlīf al-qulūb* are placed at the forefront, this means that defense should, wherever possible, be low-cost, precise, and guidance-oriented. When *nafy al-sabīl* and defensive preparedness are emphasized, this means that security requires independence and credible defensive capacity. Finally, *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* establishes the ethical boundaries of implementation so that defense itself does not become a source of insecurity and destructive excess.

12. Final Formulation: The Normative Model of the Principles

For purposes of synthesis, the model of Islamic defensive thought can be formulated through the following six principles:

1) Prior invitation and clarification, as the primary pathway and the criterion of the cultural legitimacy of defense (Qur’an 16:125; al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

2) Priority of peace and the repulsion of aggression, together with the prohibition of transgression at every stage of confrontation (Qur’an 2:190; *Nahj*

al-Balāghah, Sermon 131).

3) Continuous preparedness and comprehensive deterrence at the levels of organization, training, and equipment (Qur'an 8:60; al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

4) Prohibition of domination (*nafy al-sabīl*) and closure of pathways of foreign control in the political, economic, and military spheres (Qur'an 4:141; Ḥusaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

5) Reciprocity (*muqābalah bi-l-mithl*) as the measure of proportionality and justice in defensive response (Qur'an 2:194; Iskandārī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

6) Cultivation of goodwill (*ta'līf al-qulūb*) for inclusion, neutralization of hostility, and reduction of soft threats (Qur'an 9:60; al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 15, p. 341).

This model makes the relationship “foundations → rules → rulings → implementation constraints” concrete and moves the article beyond mere reporting. It is also consistent with contemporary literature on defensive thought, which understands it as a coherent intellectual framework with theoretical foundations and principles concerning defense, collective existence, and sovereignty (Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29), and which, at the level of policy formulation, emphasizes planning for the material and spiritual survival of the community and for confronting hard and soft threats (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

A final point is that the orientation of these principles is fundamentally guidance-centered. Defense is legislated to safeguard the historical trajectory of social guidance. Whenever an action departs from the constraints of justice and guidance, it likewise departs from the framework of Islamic defensive thought.

For this reason, these principles possess value as criteria for scholarly evaluation. Any defensive policy or action can be assessed against these six principles and examined in terms of its contribution to dignity-centered security. If *da'wah* and *ta'līf al-qulūb* have been disregarded, if *nafy al-sabīl* has been compromised, if proportionality has not been observed, or if adequate deterrent preparedness is absent, the relevant policy or action requires reconsideration in light of the same normative principles.

This formulation represents precisely the added analytical value expected of a scholarly research article: transforming dispersed scriptural evidence and jurisprudential discussions into an assessable normative model, grounded in authoritative Imāmī sources and Qur'anic texts.

13. Rules of Islamic Defensive Thought

A. The Rule of *Nafy al-Sabīl* (Prohibition of Domination)

The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* constitutes a normative pillar of the independence

and dignity of the Islamic community. The Qur'anic text states:

"And Allah will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers."
(Qur'an 4:141)

Accordingly, any avenue through which foreigners may exercise domination or coercive control over believers is, under the Sharī'ah, to be blocked.

The rule has both a negative and an affirmative dimension. Its negative dimension consists in rejecting any strategy or arrangement that ultimately results in foreign political, military, economic, or cultural domination over the affairs and collective destiny of Muslims, whether through unequal treaties or through structural influence over decision-making processes. Its affirmative dimension entails the obligation to establish mechanisms capable of preserving the independence and dignity of the Muslim community, including strengthening deterrence, achieving strategic self-reliance in critical resources, designing equitable agreements, and monitoring potential channels of external penetration.

The transmitted basis for this understanding is reflected in the well-known ḥadīth:

"Islam is superior, and nothing is superior to it..."

which indicates the normative preeminence of the Islamic order and rejects a condition of permanent subordination (al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 4, p. 243, ḥadīth 778).

1) The Normative Logic of the Rule: *Nafy al-sabīl* is not merely a political rule; rather, it constitutes the social and political expression of Tawḥīd. Because the believing community is defined by exclusive servitude to God, it cannot legitimately submit to a form of external authority that results in the suspension of divine norms or the distortion of the trajectory of guidance.

Accordingly, security in the Islamic framework has a close and intrinsic relationship with independence. Any arrangement that weakens independence will ultimately erode security. This relationship is also emphasized within the broader Islamic guidance framework, in which the connection between Tawḥīd and rejection of ṭāghūtīc domination determines the general orientation of Islamic political order (Husaynī Khāmeneh, 1368 SH, p. 45).

2) Scope of the Rule: The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* has an explicitly multidisciplinary scope:

- **Political and legal:** rejecting any arrangement that grants a foreign actor effective "veto power" over vital decisions; reviewing treaties; and maintaining clear boundaries against security arrangements that undermine neutrality or defensive capacity.

- **Economic:** avoiding critical dependency within supply chains and strategic infrastructure and prioritizing balanced forms of economic interaction.

- **Military and security:** prohibiting arrangements that create coercive

foreign access or control, such as transferring control over military bases or sensitive security systems to foreign actors.

- **Cultural and knowledge-based:** monitoring channels of soft influence that may develop into a form of epistemic domination.

3) Criteria for Determining the Existence of a *Sabīl*: For purposes of implementation, a *sabīl* may be considered to exist when:

a) the external party acquires the capacity to impose its will upon fundamental decisions;

b) withdrawal from binding arrangements becomes excessively costly or practically impossible for the Muslim community; or

c) the implementation of religious norms and the preservation of the integrity of Islam (*bayḍat al-Islām*) become obstructed.

Identifying these conditions requires both jurisprudential rationality and strategic assessment. For this reason, *nafy al-sabīl* is among the rules that have a direct relationship with systemic jurisprudence (*fiqh al-niẓām*) and jurisprudence of public interest (*fiqh al-maṣlaḥah*).

Within this framework, defensive preparedness and credible power are also affirmative manifestations of the rule, because the more effectively avenues of coercion and extortion are closed, the more fully *nafy al-sabīl* is realized (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

4) Lexical and Scriptural Foundations: In lexical sources, *sabīl* denotes an evident and manifest path or way, while *‘ulūw* denotes superiority and ascendancy. This semantic context strengthens the transmitted understanding expressed in the statement “*Islam is superior...*” (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

Within the Qur’anic semantic field, *sabīl* encompasses not only a physical path but also a social course, method, or mode of influence. Accordingly, the prohibition of *sabīl* entails the prohibition of pathways of domination and subjugation (Qurayshī, 1371 SH, Vol. 1, p. 350).

5) Practical Applications: The rule of *nafy al-sabīl* can function as a criterion for evaluating policy choices:

- **Treaties:** principles of reciprocity, balance, and emergency withdrawal should be safeguarded.

- **Economy:** strategies of partner diversification and strategic localization should be pursued.

- **Security:** deterrence architecture and protection of sensitive data and technology should receive priority.

- **Culture:** identity resilience and media literacy should be treated as prerequisites.

Thus, *nafy al-sabīl* is simultaneously a foundational principle and an

operational checklist: wherever domination emerges, the rule has been compromised; wherever independence is strengthened, the rule is being realized.

This formulation also clarifies the connection between *nafy al-sabīl* and dignity-centered security, since independence constitutes a necessary condition for the realization of human dignity and the establishment of justice (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188).

B. The Rule of *Muqābalah bi-l-Mithl*: Proportionality in Legitimate Defense

The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* constitutes the normative measure of proportionality and justice in defensive response. The Qur'an states:

"So whoever transgresses against you, then respond against him in proportion to what he has transgressed against you." (Qur'an 2:194)

Accordingly, the response must be equivalent to the aggression and remain within the framework of necessity. This rule preserves the defensive character of the action, prevents legitimate defense from degenerating into retaliation or excess, and is consistent with the Qur'anic prohibition of transgression: *"Do not transgress"* (Qur'an 2:190).

1) Normative Status

Within the Islamic defensive framework, the objective is the removal of persecution and repulsion of aggression, not the exercise of force for domination in itself.

The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* safeguards this objective. If the response exceeds the aggression, it departs from justice; if it falls below the level necessary for effective deterrence and the repulsion of the threat, the objective of defense may not be achieved.

Thus, the rule serves simultaneously as both an ethical restraint and a criterion of effectiveness. Contemporary jurisprudential discussions likewise treat *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* as a rational formulation of legitimate defense and as a basis for constraining violence in international relations (Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

2) Criteria for Determining "Like-for-Like" (*Mithl*)

The concept of *mithl* in this rule is not merely quantitative; quality and consequences are also relevant. Its practical criteria include:

- **Intensity:** the magnitude of the response should correspond to the scale and severity of the aggression.
- **Scope:** the response must remain limited to the sphere in which the aggression occurred; unjustified expansion is prohibited.
- **Time:** action should occur within the period of necessity and urgency; unjustified delay may undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the response.
- **Means:** the use of means that are inherently indiscriminate or likely to

result in transgression should be avoided.

These criteria are examined within Imāmī jurisprudence in connection with the protection of life and honor and the preservation of the integrity of Islam. In circumstances of enemy aggression, defense may become an immediate and specific obligation (*wājib muḍayyaq*); nevertheless, implementation constraints—including proportionality—continue to apply (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

3) Relationship to Other Principles

The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* has a complementary relationship with *nafy al-sabīl*:

- **Just deterrence:** a proportionate response raises the cost of aggression and closes avenues of coercion and extortion.

- **Preservation of moral capital:** respect for proportionality preserves the guidance-oriented character of Islamic defense and leaves room for the cultivation of goodwill after conflict.

- **Prevention of attrition:** departures from proportionality can transform conflict into a prolonged and costly confrontation and thereby create opportunities for forms of soft domination.

4) Scriptural and Lexical Foundations

The Qur’anic formulation “*the recompense of an evil is an evil like it*” (*jazā’u sayyi’atin sayyi’atun mithluhā*) emphasizes the principle of equivalence: the response should correspond to the act rather than exceed it.

Lexically, *mithl* denotes similarity or equivalence in measure and quality, whereas *i’tidā’* denotes transgression beyond the proper limit. Accordingly, whenever the response exceeds the relevant limit, it falls outside the normative scope of the rule (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

5) Practical Applications

The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* has implications at three levels:

- **Tactical level:** rules of engagement (ROE) should be structured around distinguishing combatants from noncombatants, observing proportionality in the selection of targets and means, and employing the minimum sufficient force necessary to repel the threat.

- **Operational level:** secondary and unintended effects should be assessed, and a graduated escalation ladder should be designed to restore conditions of just peace rather than allow the conflict to expand without normative limits.

- **Strategic level:** the capacity and determination to defend should be demonstrated without crossing established ethical boundaries. Hard defensive measures should be combined with invitation, clarification, and persuasion so that the defensive arena does not become a permanent arena of hostility and

resentment (al-Kulaynī, 1363 SH, Vol. 4, p. 259).

14. Analytical Synthesis: The Two-Rule Model within the Defensive Framework

The two rules of *nafy al-sabīl* and *muqābalah bi-l-mithl*, together with principles such as *da'wah* and defensive preparedness, constitute the normative framework of Islamic defensive thought. The final formulation can be presented as follows:

1) Nafy al-sabīl = the criterion of independence and dignity.

Any policy or arrangement that opens a pathway to foreign domination and coercive control is normatively unacceptable, whereas any measure that closes avenues of coercion and extortion is desirable (Qur'an 4:141; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 4, p. 243, ḥadīth 778; Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 87; al-Zabīdī, 1414 AH, Vol. 3, p. 251).

2) Muqābalah bi-l-mithl = the measure of defensive justice.

The response must correspond to the scale of the aggression, remain within the framework of necessity, and avoid transgression: it must be neither insufficient, lest deterrence collapse, nor excessive, lest justice be compromised (Qur'an 2:194; Qur'an 2:190; Iskandarī, 1379 SH, pp. 16–18).

3) Connection with the defensive obligation.

Upon the occurrence of enemy aggression, defense becomes obligatory. Nevertheless, throughout every stage of defensive action, the constraints of proportionality and the prohibition of transgression remain operative, while preservation of the integrity of Islam (*bayḍat al-Islām*) constitutes the normative objective of defensive action (al-Najafī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 14).

4) Policy-making horizon.

The combined sequence of “invitation and clarification → cultivation of goodwill → deterrence → proportionate response → restoration of just peace” provides the operational pathway through which the relevant rules are translated into practice. This sequence is consistent with the objective of safeguarding the material and spiritual survival of the Islamic community and confronting hard and soft threats (Fīrūzābādī, 1391 SH, p. 188; Jamshīdī, 1383 SH, pp. 28–29).

Accordingly, the present study elevates these rules from the level of verbal or textual description to that of an assessable normative model. Any defensive policy or action can be evaluated against these two rules in order to determine its compatibility with independence, justice, and deterrence. Whenever an avenue of domination has been opened or proportionality has been compromised, the relevant policy or action must be reassessed and corrected in accordance with these normative principles.

This constitutes the principal analytical contribution expected of a scholarly

study of Islamic defensive thought: establishing a systematic connection between foundations and scriptural evidence, between rules and jurisprudential rulings, and between rulings and implementation constraints, while grounding the entire framework in authoritative Imāmī sources and the Qur'an.

Conclusion

Moving beyond merely compilatory approaches, this study formulated a coherent normative model of defensive jihād in Imāmī jurisprudence. Its point of departure was the absence of an integrated framework capable of connecting the foundations, rules, and jurisprudential ruling of defense within a clearly defined set of implementation constraints. On the basis of an inferential normative analysis and relying on authoritative jurisprudential and lexical sources, the principal findings can be summarized as follows:

1) The three foundational dimensions—Tawhīdic ontology, dignity-centered anthropology, and the eschatological triumph of truth—define the normative framework of defense. Tawhīd presupposes the exclusivity of divine legislation and the rejection of servitude to anyone other than God; human dignity establishes the imperative of protecting life, religion, and the community; and the teleological orientation of history strengthens strategic hope and the logic of deterrence. Collectively, these three foundations explain why legitimate defense is necessary.

2) The principal normative rules function as the bridge between foundations and legal rulings. The rule of *nafy al-sabīl*, with its negative and affirmative dimensions, prohibits submission to foreign domination while establishing the preservation of independence and defensive capacity as a normative obligation. The rule of *muqābalah bi-l-mithl* incorporates the requirements of proportionality and necessity into defensive response and prevents both excessive and insufficient action. Together, these two rules provide practical criteria for defensive decision-making.

3) Practical principles such as *da'wah*, defensive preparedness (*sabaq wa-rimāyah*), and *ta'līf al-qulūb* demonstrate that legitimate defense is not exclusively military in character; it also possesses cultural, educational, social, and diplomatic dimensions. *Da'wah* preserves the prior logic of just peace; defensive preparedness provides the foundation for deterrence; and *ta'līf al-qulūb* serves as a means of reducing threats and cultivating legitimate forms of social alignment and cooperation.

4) The jurisprudential ruling on defensive jihād is articulated in Imāmī sources as obligatory in the event of enemy aggression and, during the occultation (*ghaybah*), as not contingent upon specific prior authorization. This ruling derives its meaning from the same foundational premises and normative

rules and remains subject to implementation constraints: proportionality in the nature and scale of the response; necessity in resorting to coercive force; and avoidance of transgression against noncombatants and protected or neutral property. Legitimate defense is therefore not only justified but also constrained and assessable.

5) The principal added value of the study lies in transforming dispersed evidence into an integrated analytical model:

Foundations → Rules → Defensive Ruling → Implementation Constraints

6) This sequence makes it possible to evaluate defensive policies and jurisprudential opinions systematically and establishes a clear distinction between normative jurisprudential security and approaches that remain merely descriptive.

7) Implications and directions for further research:

First, any assessment of defensive policy within the Imāmī tradition should simultaneously account for the three foundational dimensions and the two central normative rules. Second, the precise differentiation of the political, economic, and military dimensions of *nafy al-sabīl*, together with the development of objective criteria for assessing proportionality in *muqābalaḥ bi-l-mithl*, represents an important field for further research. Third, the capacities of *da'wah* and *ta'līf al-qulūb* for crisis management and threat reduction require the development of clearer operational and ethical indicators.

The overall conclusion is that Imāmī defensive thought offers a normative, disciplined, and policy-relevant framework. Defense is simultaneously a right, a conditional obligation, and an action constrained by ethics and the Sharī'ah. Accordingly, any legitimate defensive strategy must be capable of passing the fourfold test embodied in this model: its foundations, governing rules, jurisprudential ruling, and implementation constraints must form a coherent and normatively defensible whole.

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