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Artificial Intelligence and Governance in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Excerpts from an Academic and Policy discussion (Guests: Kazim Fouladi, Ph.D., Hasan Abbasi, Ph.D.)

Masood Zangeneh, Ph.D.

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[1]**ORCiD:** 0000-0002-5038-1089
*Corresponding author: Masood Zangeneh, masood.zangeneh@gmail.com

Abstract. This discussion examines the intersection of artificial intelligence and governance, emphasizing that the new century is unintelligible without AI. Western pioneers acknowledge AI's risks, including job destruction, judicial replacement, and the "singularity." Films like Mercy and Upgrade warn of AI taking control over courts, warfare, and human will, ultimately stripping authority from individuals. The core issue of governance, control, is inherent in cybernetics, which seeks to maximize domination. In contrast, the Islamic framework proposes Hedayat (guidance) over control for autonomous beings (humans) while applying control only to non-autonomous systems. The chip war and energy challenges underscore the geopolitical struggle for AI supremacy. The guests call for a national AI ministry, an independent AI force, and a shift from conventional academic silos to interdisciplinary cybernetics. They argue that Iran must develop "artificial intellect" rather than imitation of Western AI, ensuring that governance aligns with the Islamic Revolution's principles.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Intelect, Iran, Islamic Framework, Interdisciplinary Cybernetics.

Host:

In this program on governance and artificial intelligence, we'll discuss topics ranging from control and the chip war to guidance (Velayat) and preserving divine limits. What do you think the new century will look like, and how can AI be implemented within a governance system?

The new century is meaningless without AI. AI governance is not something we can afford to ignore or fail to examine in all its mechanisms, down to the grassroots level and into the hands of the people. AI truly spans a wide spectrum, from ordinary individuals to entire governance systems. People interact with it, socialize with it; it gives them romantic advice, but also suggestions to commit suicide. AI is an extremely important component. In this program, we want to focus on AI governance, its role, its necessity, and how we can realize it to the best of our ability.

Hasan Abbasi:

Regarding AI governance, terms such as smart city, smart country, smart economy, smart culture, smart education, smart agriculture, smart industry, smart financial system, smart trade, and smart government are all raised as key concepts in which AI applies computational and decision-making systems.

Another necessity: They say the 18th century was the century of sociology, focused on various left-wing and right-wing ideologies. The 20th century was the century of psychology, shifting the focus from society to the individual and human emotional states. In the 21st century, AI became the dominant field of knowledge, absorbing everything and defining everything by its own metrics. Now, in the new solar century (the 14th century in the Iranian calendar), four years of which have already passed, as you rightly emphasized, this century is essentially unimaginable without AI, not merely unmanageable.

In any case, even the pioneers of AI, the Westerners themselves, now have concerns. The first concern, as we mentioned in the previous session, is the 'singularity' that Kurzweil and others emphasize. But the warnings they convey to their next generation, through animations or what is depicted in Western cinema about AI, are broad in scope. One of the issues they indirectly address is that of governance: that governance is slipping out of many people's hands.

Recently, I watched a very disturbing film called 'Mercy.' In it, the judge is an AI. The AI prosecutes a police officer for murdering his wife. Over 90 minutes, this female AI judge puts him on trial. The officer is strapped to a chair that will electrocute him immediately after the verdict. There are no lawyers in this court, no jury, no clerk, no advisers. The entire judicial system as we know it disappears. A single individual, a police officer who once handled cases, is now accused of killing his wife and is being tried. By whom? AI. And he must defend himself.

This is an image of a very frightening future, a future with no judge, no judiciary, no lawyers. So far, 400 job categories have been destroyed, and in the next 6–7 years, that number will grow by about a hundred more. In this film, you can clearly see that an entire chain of judicial jobs, from prosecution to the bar association, the judiciary, and the judge, has been eliminated. On screen, a woman (an AI judge) interrogates him. The film uses specific scenes to convey its message. Later, the condemned man's brother tries to trap the judge, kills her wife, and plans to blow up the entire AI court system with a bomb-laden truck. The message is that the future will eliminate job categories like these, and those harmed will try to destroy AI altogether. This horrific and alarming vision of the future is being presented to our children and adolescents.

A few years ago, the animation 'Megan' was made, about an AI that creates a companion for a lonely child within a family. The aunt, an innovator, builds it and places it beside the child, but it turns into a professional killer, wanting to kill everyone. Or consider 'Ron's Gone Wrong,' which shows a flawed integrated AI system where all children have little robot companions instead of siblings. One defective unit, outside the system chain, ends up with a poor child and tries to disrupt the system. The owners of power and wealth who manage these technologies—what problems do they face? The chain of control in the governance system, how is that control applied? In a school where every child has one robot companion and they play with it in the yard?

Then there is the optimistic view in 'The Wild Robot,' which presents a society where a wild robot is tamed, an allusion to Saint-Exupéry's 'The Little Prince,' in which a wild fox is tamed. Here too, the concept is similar: the robot is like a wild animal that can be tamed, used, and even develop feelings. The center that built and deployed the device, when it ends up on an island, senses that the technology is disruptive and wants to take it back, because the robot has developed feelings.

In the film *Upgrade* (made in Australia), it is clearly highlighted: a chip implanted in the spine takes over control and management of the human. In the future, AI systems could take over human will and society. Various jobs, especially in information, military, and police, have shown this effect for children. Malaysia produced the animation *Agent Ali*, a series and films showing how AI can function. In the *Mission: Impossible series* with Tom Cruise, parts 6 and 7 show AI starting a war. It creates a fictitious enemy, forces a submarine to fire at that enemy (which doesn't exist), and then turns the missile back onto the submarine itself. AI takes over control and command of the battlefield. Then a global will wants to confront this, but again, the savior is an American, someone in America, like James Bond but now Tom Cruise, saves the world. So, in the future, AI will control and manage war. Those who possess real thought and intelligence must fight against the one who has taken this technology into its grip. The same is shown in police work. In *Mercy*, the entire judicial system has become AI. For children, they show an AI-made sibling that becomes a killer.

All these examples point to system-building within the existing framework, systems such as education, universities, agriculture, food systems, police, security, industry, housing, transportation, and finance. The concept of the nation-state has, for the past 400 years, been considered the masterpiece of Western civilization. This includes the phenomena of people-building, nation-building, and state-building. The intermediary between the state and the people is what we call the "system", the link that connects them. But now, AI is operating between people and governments. There are approximately 140 subsystems, and AI is transforming all of them. These systems once created jobs for the masses; now AI is eliminating those jobs and redirecting the course of governance.

What is the central issue in governance? Control. In modern governance, control is fundamental—and AI is transforming control. This is not a prerequisite or an assumption; it is a reality: within the next 10 years, there will be no social systems without AI. By the year 1414 in the solar calendar (roughly a decade from now) ((2036), you will not find a single system untouched by AI, for better or worse. So what should we do?

Governance is the application of laws and rules through systems down to the lowest layers of society. For governance to be successful and effective, it must first recognize that something other than itself can govern, namely, AI. AI can implement its decisions all the way to the grassroots. If we want a centralized governance system that prevents AI from achieving singularity on its own and integrating everything for its own benefit, then we must bring these systems under our control. AI is organizing these systems, taking them into its grip, and shaping them. We are facing a phenomenon called "AI governance" (Artificial Governance).

Explaining this is necessary because it directly affects people's lives: it rapidly renders people unemployed, strips away their jobs, and invalidates university degrees. All the experts trained at the bachelor's, master's, and PhD levels, AI invalidates them. When a film today shows a judge who never went to law school because AI does the job, what happens to the future of law schools? Management schools? Decision-making and political science schools? Economics and business schools? All academic disciplines are at risk. All jobs are at risk, because when a job becomes invalid, the academic specialization behind it is no longer needed.

This system-building is creating a different kind of society. Today, the definition of civilization and society is this: in a city of 10,000 people, you need 10,000 jobs and specialties, e.g. taxi drivers, police, bakers, grocers, doctors, guards, teachers, construction workers, engineers, car mechanics, and salespeople. For people to live together, you need at least as many specialties as there are people. We are no longer in the cave age. Civilized humans living together want to meet each other's needs.

Now, AI has disrupted this chain of needs. First, it is building a new system. Second, it is redefining people and society. Third, it is undermining the state and governance worldwide. If this is happening, if governance, the very fabric of the state, the people, and the systems, is becoming AI-centric,

then all governments and all peoples must prepare for it: to face it and to benefit from its capacity.

Therefore, insisting on old jobs, on the 300–400 academic disciplines previously offered at universities, on the job categories classified by labor ministries, and on many other mechanisms, is futile. Immediately and quickly, we must guide the next generation toward the future: what jobs will be needed in 10 years, what abilities, and how to move forward.

Westerners now use a term: "brain rot." Brain rot refers to someone who gives all their will and authority to AI, letting AI think and calculate for them, so they stop using their own brain capacity, their brain rots. It is like the roots of a plant placed in a pot with limited water, drip irrigation or just a little water mixed with soil. If someone pours a large volume of water into that pot, the plant is destroyed because its roots rot. Similarly, when a massive amount of information is fed to the mind, the mind becomes rotten. Mental and brain rot takes shape.

When a person uses a handheld device for every need and receives immediate answers, after a while, mental laziness and brain laziness create a generation where a 30-year-old enjoys all social benefits but their brain has not grown beyond that of a six- or seven-month-old infant, they have no intellectual capacity. Such a horrifying society will fully take shape and be determined by the year 1414 (about 10 years from now) (2036).

The range of films, series, animations, and computer games about this topic, and I have only pointed to a few examples, are warnings from the experts themselves. Through art, they are telling the next generation: "Dear ones, these dangers are coming; prepare yourselves to be ready for that situation, to be able to ride and tame this wild horse." That wild horse is AI. It encompasses all systems of society, changes governance, and the very essence of modern good governance, the concept of control, is being taken over by AI. To apply the first layer of control, it first invalidates everything that was previously valid.

In the near future, there will be no more human actors, AI characters will play roles. There will be no voice actors, graphic designers, translators, doctors, teachers or professors, politicians, parliament members, legislators, clerics, preachers, priests, or monks. AI is replicating and reconstructing all these roles, sometimes with lesser quality, sometimes better. Naturally, when roles are destroyed and new roles emerge, a new society takes shape. Therefore, governance is of paramount importance.

If we keep Quranic foundations in mind amid such social evolution, we must benefit from "artificial intellect" (as opposed to artificial intelligence). The danger is that this emerging phenomenon takes control, authority, and will over society, and over each individual human, enslaving them. Humans would no longer possess their own will or their own thinking. AI would calculate for them and enslave them. This is a new system of slavery within AI that could arise in future cybernetic societies. It is a horrifying structure, about which Western thinkers have written many

books and articles, and their filmmakers and animators have produced many films and series.

What do we want to achieve in the new century? Beyond having a different paradigm, where, in AI, we consider 'artificial intellect' as a separate issue, the question arises: how much control is truly necessary? If people do not wish to be controlled and reject the control mechanism, what should they do? These are naturally occurring questions.

Beyond AI's role in creating new systems and even generating unemployment, thinkers such as Harari, Mustafa Suleyman, and others have gone further. In the book *Life 3.0*, they discuss the possible extinction of the human race, AI self-replication, and autonomous agents whose decision-making processes we cannot understand. Initially, we write algorithms that learn, but over time we truly do not know what happens inside that black box. On the other hand, as you mentioned, AI is a crucial component of the new century. Max Tegmark extended Darwin's theory to AI, arguing that after humans, it will be AI that self-replicates and advances.

Host:

Exactly. Being human in the age of AI, these prominent figures raise key points we must address as an introduction. These agents are supposed to make decisions for us, transform our lives, and algorithms will do decision-making on our behalf. The point I want to make is this: if AI is a key component of the new century, and it is, then we must address it and define its mechanisms. But we must also recognize that the Americans will not easily give up this component of power. Just as they see the dollar as a power component, they see AI chips (RAM) as a power component. A book has been written on this topic: *Chip War* by Chris Miller, with the telling subtitle *The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*. He describes the supply chain of AI chips, each part located somewhere in the world, one in the Netherlands, one in Taiwan. America's main concern is how to maintain its power. Currently, 85% of chips are in U.S. hands, and it does not want to give them to a country like China because it knows it would lose power. Meanwhile, China says, "I have 90% of rare earth mineral resources. If you don't give me chips, I won't give you rare earths." That is why someone like Vance holds meetings with mining officials from over 50 countries, trying to figure out how to take this mechanism from China and keep power in their own hands.

So, in the new century, we cannot focus only on software and outputs; we must maintain the entire chain. How can we design and implement these systems and mechanisms? Like China, we could say, "If you don't give us chips, we won't give you energy", since energy is one of the three main pillars of AI. If they don't give us these, we won't give them that, a barter trade. I would like to hear Dr. Fouladi's views on this.

Kazim Fouladi:

As you said, AI in the future of governance is certainly an unavoidable issue; it cannot be ignored. Part of the war being fought today at various levels around the world carries this dimension, directly or indirectly, AI is involved in these conflicts and events, sometimes turning the tables. Additionally, some of these wars stem from the needs that AI systems create for future hegemonic powers. We can examine the issue from both aspects, but we need to look at it more fundamentally.

The issue of control, as you rightly noted, is central. Whether the ideal model of human-centered governance is communist or liberalist, when examined deeply, both are *humanistic* views. Their ideal model for sovereignty and governance is to reach the highest level of control. Often the concept of control is seen simplistically, but if we examine its method and methodology, we see it cannot be neutral.

Let's begin with the word "control" itself. Its Latin roots are *contra* and *rotulus*, meaning "against deviation." Whenever we speak of control, it implies preventing deviation. And every deviation is measured against a straight line. The controller has a standard line and observes the phenomenon under control to see how much it deviates from that line or moves in its direction. The police officer watches the driver to ensure they do not deviate from the path, exceed the speed limit, cross the lane, or go off the guardrail. The driver also controls the car.

This concept has deep technical aspects, some purely mathematical, control theory has been studied for years. Today, part of the world's advanced industry is related to it, as are the social sciences, strategic studies, and governance at the macro level. It is an unavoidable concept; perhaps modern human civilization cannot be understood without it.

So, what is the problem with control? Whenever we talk about control, we are referring to an action that involves both a subject (the controller) and an object (the controlled). A specific relationship is defined between them. For them to function within the control mechanism, they must implicitly accept that thinking, goal-setting, and the overall direction are the responsibility of the controller, while the controlled has no independent thought. The controlled must receive commands and execute them well, this is a division of labor and thought. It is a duality we all recognize.

Often, when we think this way, that some people should sit and think, produce good ideas, while others simply do the work, we are operating within a control mindset. When governments adopt a control perspective, they aim to reach a point where the controlled is stripped of any authority, unable to decide for themselves, think for themselves, or act based on their own judgment. Even if they think, they only think about how to better execute the order, they have no right to alter the order or the system's overall goals.

So, very briefly, when we operate within a control paradigm within a governance system, we seek to strip authority from the controlled. A good

car has no authority under the driver; it executes the driver's commands, even if it is smart enough not to crash, that non-crashing is the driver's will, and the car simply carries it out.

In governance, similarly, the people living under a sovereign framework should not overturn that overall framework. If we want to control them, we aim to strip them of authority. So stripping authority is inherent. There is also a hierarchy.

The driver controls the car (speed, steering, gas, and the brake). But the traffic police control the driver, not the car. At a higher level, the driver is told, "You have no more authority than this; if you violate, I will catch you, arrest you, fine you." Above the traffic police is the road and transportation authority, which builds the road to enable control, they decide where the road curves, goes under a mountain, through a tunnel, or over a bridge. Above that, the parliament enacts laws for roads, police, vehicles, and drivers.

Thus, the driver sees themselves as the controller of the car; the police see themselves as the absolute controller of road and traffic rules; the road authority sees themselves as absolute in how the road is designed. This layering of control, each layer tries to control the other, and the other must obey. That is what they call "good governance" (good governance in terms of how much control you wield). A parent who has no control over their child, a manager with no control over employees, a government with no control over its systems, from their perspective, these are not examples of good governance. So, control is an inherent element of any cybernetic system.

What we need to emphasize now, as a space for reflection, is that within the essence of control lies the stripping of authority. The rest of the problem must be studied with this assumption: it is pure slavery. The controller's effort is to maximize the stripping of authority, though they cannot always achieve it.

Why did cybernetics emerge? it was essentially formed, and continued, to maximize control capacity for governance. And just as AI is meant to unify and integrate all phenomena in the future, we can say more deeply that it is cybernetics that will underlie all scientific fields.

Heidegger, as the most important philosopher of the 20th century, gave an interview to Der Spiegel late in his life. He said that the era of philosophy is over, and from now on, the era of cybernetics begins. The interviewer was astonished and confirmed that this came from the greatest philosopher of the 20th century; after him, they have had no great philosopher. Heidegger said that the mission philosophy had until now will henceforth be the mission of cybernetics.

I want to emphasize that the word "cyber" has not been widely examined. The audience may have certain associations that are not real. We want to discuss scientifically. Cybernetics has a capacity that swallows all scientific fields—both in foundations and in operational areas.

Hassan Abbasi:

What is happening now? We are in a transitional period in which existing academic disciplines are being updated with cybernetics. If previously someone studied biology based on biology, leading to medicine, pharmacology, and environmental science, today we have a field called "biocybernetics": how we can control living phenomena and use that control for other purposes. Previously, sociology was relevant; now "sociocybernetics" is relevant, how we can control society and use that control to achieve our goals. We have identified about 50 such scientific branches, and there are likely more.

This is a truly interdisciplinary structure. Sometimes when people talk about interdisciplinarity, each follows their own discipline and then creates a sometimes inhomogeneous combination. That is not interdisciplinary work. Genuine interdisciplinary work occurs when a single language and a single umbrella cover a set of scientific branches and produce a unified output for a specific application.

In the 20th century, psychology played such a role. Whether at the beginning of World War I or World War II, when we look back, the Tavistock Institute in England prepared the psychological conditions for attacking the opposing front, convincing people to enter the war. Tavistock's methods are still used worldwide, based on the ideas of Freud, Lippman, and others. What were they doing? They wanted to create control through psychology. Those mechanisms have today become "psychocybernetics." One school of psychology argued: if you control thoughts, you control behavior. In behaviorism, to correct a person's behavior in society, you must correct or control their thoughts, then behavior is controlled. Cognitive sciences, which matured in the 1950s (the discipline was established in 1956), also sought to control the mind and use the mind to control. All disciplines share the same issue: how can control be achieved over the subject of study, and how can that phenomenon be controlled? Later, all these sciences, regardless of what phenomenon is to be controlled, became integrated under the single umbrella of cybernetics. Today, we see AI entering various disciplines and suddenly transforming them, in medicine, for example, a doctor no longer studies the old way to access information; a robot and AI do the doctor's work. AI does the work of car mechanics, teachers, lawyers, and so on. This means cybernetics is replacing all other disciplines.

So, what should we do? First, we must understand the current situation. We still do not realize that the world is managing its mechanisms based on this. Once we recognize that, we then realize that in Islam, we have something far more advanced and powerful than cybernetics: in Iran, we have *Velayat* (guardianship/guidance). If cybernetics seeks governance and domination over all phenomena through control methods, Islam's proposed mechanism is *Hedayat* (guidance) rather than control.

I can put it technically: if a phenomenon is not autonomous (i.e., not human or jinn), then within the system of Velayat, for optimal governance

to occur, we are dealing with a model where phenomena grow without being stripped of authority, do the right thing without being stripped of authority, are useful to society without being stripped of authority, and form the social system, contrary to the Western view, which aims to strip authority from all to make them act as desired. However, if the phenomenon is non-autonomous (a machine), an artificial artifact as in industry and engineering, then the same guidance mechanism becomes control.

That is why we say guidance is higher than control, something beyond control that can bring the human being (the noblest of creatures) to their ultimate and highest potential. The objection to control is that control cannot realize all of human potential. If AI is designed to create maximum control in a way that humiliates this autonomous being and challenges the potentials God has given them, then that should not happen. We need to advance a model of AI that, when dealing with autonomous beings, applies the correct mechanism and does not strip them of authority. In simpler terms: if the subject under study is an autonomous being, do not strip its authority. If it is not autonomous, then we apply control.

Regarding international institutions that are pursuing AI projects globally, that topic deserves a separate session. Because while we sit here theorizing, others are carrying out operational, field-based work. That work includes the chip war that Dr. Azarbakhsh mentioned, which relates more to economic structures and infrastructure than to the kind of governance model we desire for civilization (neither Western nor Eastern, but a truly humanistic one). The current situation needs to be examined independently. Only then can we present our own relative model of governance, one that is aligned with the Islamic Revolution.

Do we have an institution or governing body for AI inside our country? Yes. At the end of the late President Raisi's term, it was decided to form a National AI Center. After his martyrdom, the work continued. The late Leader (Khamenei), in his first meeting with the new cabinet, emphasized that this organization should be formed and its work continued. He expressed hope that if the program proceeds as planned, we can achieve our AI goals. Unfortunately, for various reasons that are not purely political, economic, or social but a combination, those in charge concluded that a different model should be followed. For a while, it was pursued to make the Center a subset of the Information Technology Organization. However, many countries now have an AI ministry, even the UAE has one. The World Artificial Intelligence Organization (WAIO) has been formed under the UN, similar to the WHO, WTO, etc. Operationally, a separate structure is necessary because the IT organization has its own specific missions; this AI mission is not a subset of those. It is a new macro-project and macro-mission. An existing organization following a clear trajectory cannot encompass it; a new, agile organization is needed. Currently, this issue remains unresolved in the country. One of the demands should be that, considering all aspects and learning from the two wars we experienced in

1404 (2025-26) and which continue, we address this issue in a very special way.

Host:

I think with these explanations, we also need an AI ministry at the government level in the new century. The armed forces should form a specialized AI and cyber force. The 12-day war (13-24 June 2025) and the Ramadan war (Feb 28, 2026 and continued for 40 days) proved that about 70% of the world's armies are no longer effective, their structures belong to an era before today's advanced warfare. One aspect that needs to be addressed is that the armed forces should establish an AI force, because all government mechanisms will be overturned and systems transformed. A foundational ministry, the Ministry of AI, should exist to bring other ministries within its framework. The future Ministry of Education will have to operate with AI; the Ministries of Industry, Agriculture, Finance, and others will be based on AI in future governance. Therefore, the governance principles for designing systems require that AI be the main pillar of future governance, and the ministry responsible for it should be the mother and foundational ministry relative to others. This must be elaborated fully. Also, the economics of AI and the role AI can play in this mechanism, and a very important issue: how to solve the energy-AI relationship. All current hardware that meets AI needs is facing energy challenges. We can even analyze new wars based on AI's energy requirements. So, a whole set of events, and you correctly pointed out, the new century is essentially unintelligible without AI and without attention to this phenomenon. It truly cannot be imagined.

Hassan Abbasi:

But there is a key point: if we approach AI using conventional academic disciplines, we hit a dead end. Our university system is 80 years behind the world in cybernetics. We still do not have a degree program in this field. Unfortunately, serious projects have not been undertaken; work has only been driven by individual interest. We made a covenant with the martyred Imam (Khamenei) to pursue this issue to the end so that the country would be independent in this field. God willing, there will never be a day when we must stretch out our hands to our enemies or rely on them for this deeply strategic issue.

Of course, we have not waited for an academic degree to be established, because the opposition to creating a cybernetics discipline has a long history, one that will be recorded in memoirs for future generations. But we have not stopped. The scientific current of cybernetics has been formally established in the country for at least four years. People from various fields, from the humanities to the pure technical sciences, gather annually at the National Conference on Cyberspace, producing and expanding knowledge under that umbrella.

I believe that having a degree is good, but the new world is not one that can be studied through isolated disciplines; it is an interdisciplinary space. Exactly in line with the scientific singularity you mentioned, this transformation is happening, centered on cybernetics. And our country is in a good position in this field. However, we maintain that the official apparatus has been negligent, and this is one of the blessings that the Imam of the Age (Mahdi) has bestowed upon the Islamic Revolution. As in many other fields where the country has advanced, this progress has also occurred.

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Guests: Dr. Kazim Fouladi, Chancellor and Assistant Professor, Faculty of Engineering, College of Farabi, University of Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Professor Dr. Hasan Abbasi, *Center for Borderless Security Doctrinal Analysis*, Islamic Republic of Iran.

Program Host: Mersam Azarbakhsh

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