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Quránic Foundations for Intelligence Functions in Imami Exegesis: Information Gathering, Assessment, Preparedness, and Confidentiality

Ibtihal Qasim Hasim

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Karbala
Karbala, Iraq; ibtihal.q@s.uokerbala.edu.iq

Khuthier Jassim

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Karbala
Karbala, Iraq

Ahmed Jasim Hamza Al-Turfi

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Karbala
Karbala, Iraq

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Abstract

This study examines whether selected Quránic passages, as interpreted in Imami exegesis, provide normative principles relevant to four intelligence-related functions: information gathering and verification, competent assessment of security information, preventive preparedness, and protection of confidential information. The study does not treat the Qurán as a technical manual for a modern intelligence agency and does not claim that the selected verses legitimate every institutional structure or intelligence method. Instead, it adopts a qualitative doctrinal-exegetical method based on purposively selected passages and a comparative reading of classical and contemporary Imami commentaries. The analysis distinguishes the original context of each passage from its limited functional application to contemporary security administration. The hoopoe narrative in Qurán 27:20–28 supports the value of relevant reporting, source confidence, leadership review, and independent verification before action. Qurán 4:83 cautions against uncontrolled circulation of security or fear-related information and sup-

ports referral to competent authority, while the Imami identification of the Messenger and those vested with authority prevents an unqualified transfer of their status to ordinary institutions. Qurán 4:71 supports proportionate preparedness in a concrete threat context, rather than unrestricted surveillance. Qurán 3:118 provides a basis for safeguarding intimate or sensitive information, but its contemporary application should rest on lawful authorization, demonstrated trustworthiness, role-based necessity, and evidence rather than blanket identity-based exclusion. Read together with Quránic principles of verification, privacy, non-spying, justice, and responsibility for knowledge claims, the selected passages support a limited ethical-functional framework for intelligence work. The study concludes that the legitimacy of particular institutions and techniques requires additional jurisprudential, constitutional, and oversight analysis.

Keywords: Imami exegesis, intelligence functions, information verification, security information, preventive preparedness, confidentiality, Quránic ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

Political communities have always required reliable knowledge of conditions that may affect their security, public order, and capacity to make responsible decisions. In contemporary usage, intelligence may refer to information, the organized process through which information is collected and assessed, or the institution that performs those activities. These meanings should not be conflated. A Qur'anic passage may support a principle relevant to information verification or preparedness without thereby establishing the complete legal authority, structure, or methods of a modern intelligence agency.

The Qur'an does not employ the modern institutional term "intelligence system." Nevertheless, it contains narratives, commands, and ethical principles concerning reports, rumors, threat awareness, preparation, confidentiality, privacy, justice, and the responsible use of knowledge. The interpretive question is therefore not whether contemporary terminology appears explicitly in the text, but whether carefully delimited principles may be derived from selected passages without projecting a ready-made modern security institution onto them.

This study examines four core textual units: the hoopoe's report concerning Sheba in Qur'an 27:20–28; the instruction concerning news of security or fear in Qur'an 4:83; the command to take precautions in Qur'an 4:71; and the prohibition against taking certain persons as intimate confidants in Qur'an 3:118. These passages are examined as possible foundations for limited intelligence-related *functions* involving information gathering, security-information assessment, preventive preparedness, and protection against unauthorized access. They are not treated as conclusive proof of the legitimacy of an entire modern intelligence system.

For the purposes of this study, an *intelligence function* means a legally and ethically constrained activity involving the acquisition, verification, interpretation, protection, or use of information that is materially relevant to a lawful collective-security purpose. The term does not automatically include covert surveillance, interception, infiltration, detention, data retention, or any other specific technique. Each technique requires an independent legal basis and must remain subject to the applicable principles of necessity, proportionality, privacy, justice, and accountability.

The term *legitimacy* is also used in a limited sense. It denotes the compatibility of a defined function with the normative principles reasonably derived from the selected Qur'anic passages as interpreted in the Imami exegetical tradition. It does not mean that every act performed in the name of security is lawful, that an intelligence institution possesses unlimited authority, or that the selected verses determine a complete constitutional design for security administration.

Against this background, the study asks four principal questions. First, what methodological conditions must govern the movement from Qur'anic narrative or context-specific instruction to a contemporary intelligence-related principle? Second, what distinct function can reasonably be associated with each of the four selected textual units? Third, what limits arise from the Imami exegetical context, especially in relation to the authority of the Messenger and those vested with authority? Fourth, how do broader Qur'anic principles of verification, privacy, non-spying, justice, and responsibility constrain intelligence activity?

The study argues that the selected passages support a limited and conditional framework. Information of public significance should be gathered and reported accurately, independently verified, referred to competent and lawful authority for assessment, used to support proportionate preparedness, and protected through justified access controls. These functions are not self-legitimizing. Their permissibility depends on lawful purpose, reliable evidence, authorized competence, necessity, proportionality, minimization of intrusion, confidentiality, and accountability.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT, CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. SOURCE CORPUS AND RESEARCH GAP

The selected Imami commentaries discuss the four principal passages in different textual and doctrinal contexts. Al-Tusi, al-Tabrisi, al-Tabataba'i, al-Fayd al-Kashani, al-Sabzawari, Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya, Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Nasir Makarim al-Shirazi, Ja'far al-Subhani, and other commentators address such matters as the epistemic quality of the hoopoe's report, the danger of broadcasting security news, the meaning of deduction by competent authority, the requirements of caution, and the meaning of *bitana*, or intimate confidants [1–11].

Within this source corpus, the relevant discussions are distributed across interpretations of separate verses. They are not ordinarily organized as a complete modern theory of an intelligence agency. The contribution of this article is therefore analytical integration: it identifies four related functions and tests the limits of connecting them to contemporary intelligence work. It does not claim that the Qur'an supplies a technical blueprint for institutional organization, surveillance powers, classification systems, or oversight arrangements.

The research gap is specific: a functional synthesis is needed that preserves the original context of each verse, distinguishes descriptive narrative from normative command, identifies the level of inference involved, and places security-related principles alongside Qur'anic restrictions protecting privacy, dignity, and justice.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS

Three distinctions govern the analysis. First, *information* is not identical to *intelligence*. Information becomes intelligence only after its relevance, reliability, context, and implications have been assessed for a defined decision-making purpose. Second, an *intelligence process* is not identical to an *intelligence institution*. A text may support verification or precaution without determining which agency should act, how it should be constituted, or what coercive powers it may possess. Third, the permissibility of a general function does not establish the permissibility of every means used to perform it.

These distinctions prevent the selected verses from being used as blanket authorization. Information gathering may be legitimate when directed toward an identifiable lawful threat, yet prohibited when it becomes unjustified spying into private life. Confidentiality may protect a community from genuine harm, yet secrecy may become unlawful if it conceals abuse or prevents accountability. Preparedness may be required in a military emergency, yet the same verse cannot automatically justify permanent intrusive monitoring in ordinary civil life.

2.3. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative doctrinal-exegetical method. The four core passages were purposively selected because they address four sequential functions relevant to the inquiry: acquisition of relevant information, assessment of security information, preparedness in response to threat, and protection of sensitive information. Additional Qur'anic passages are used only as ethical control principles and not as an expanded claim to exhaust all Qur'anic material relevant to security.

The analysis proceeds in five stages. First, each core passage is situated in its immediate narrative, communal, or military context. Second, the principal semantic and interpretive propositions found in the selected Imami commentaries are identified. Third, the study distinguishes whether the passage is descriptive, commendatory, prohibitory, or expressly directive. Fourth, a limited functional principle is formulated only where the textual context and interpretive material support it. Fifth, that principle is tested against Qur'anic controls concerning verification, privacy, non-spying, justice, and action based on knowledge.

The study compares interpretations within the selected Imami source corpus but does not claim an exhaustive survey of all Imami commentaries or of the wider Sunni, legal, historical, and intelligence-studies literature. It also does not resolve the jurisprudential authority of every contemporary state institution during the occultation, nor does it evaluate individual technologies such as communications interception, biometric surveillance, or predictive analytics. These questions require separate legal and institutional analysis.

3. INFORMATION GATHERING AND VERIFICATION IN THE HOOPOE NARRATIVE

3.1. NARRATIVE CONTEXT AND THE QUALITY OF THE REPORT

Qur'an 27:20–28 narrates Solomon's inspection of the birds, the hoopoe's absence, its return with news from Sheba, and Solomon's decision to test the truthfulness of the report. The hoopoe states that it has encompassed knowledge not yet possessed by Solomon and has brought certain news from Sheba. The selected commentaries understand the report as significant rather than trivial and emphasize its claimed certainty and relevance [1, vol. 8, p. 88][2, vol. 3, p. 185][4, vol. 15, p. 355].

The report is also structured. It identifies a political community, its ruler, material capacity, and central religious practice. Al-Fayd al-Kashani and al-Sabzawari treat the episode as involving information that bears directly on leadership judgment and subsequent action [5, vol. 4, p. 63][6, vol. 5, p. 32]. The narrative therefore presents more than the mere transmission of an isolated fact. It portrays the communication of relevant information with contextual detail.

Nevertheless, the hoopoe's assertion of certainty is not the final epistemic stage. Solomon responds, in substance, that the report will be tested to determine whether the hoopoe has spoken truthfully. Al-Tabataba'i's analysis of the subsequent verses emphasizes that action follows examination rather than uncritical acceptance [4, vol. 15, pp. 355–357]. This element is central to any contemporary application: source confidence does not remove the decision-maker's obligation to verify.

3.2. FROM NARRATIVE TO A LIMITED FUNCTIONAL PRINCIPLE

The narrative is not an explicit statute creating a permanent intelligence institution. It is a Qur'anic account of a prophet-king, a non-human messenger, and a specific encounter. Its contemporary relevance must therefore be stated as a limited principle rather than as direct institutional legislation.

Three elements can reasonably be extracted. First, decision-makers may require relevant factual information that they do not personally possess. Second, a report intended to influence collective action should be sufficiently specific to permit assessment of its significance. Third, even apparently confident reporting should be independently examined before

consequential action is taken.

The resulting intelligence-related principle is therefore one of *relevant collection, structured reporting, and verification*. The episode does not legitimate indiscriminate collection, unauthorized intrusion into private life, or action based solely on an untested source. Its strongest contribution lies in the sequence from observation, to reporting, to leadership review, to verification, and only then to a proportionate response.

3.3. DECISION SUPPORT RATHER THAN AUTOMATIC AUTHORIZATION

The hoopoe's report altered Solomon's informational position and enabled a reasoned response. It did not itself dictate the final decision. The leadership evaluated the source, tested the claim, and selected a course of action. This distinction is important for contemporary intelligence ethics. Intelligence should inform decision-making, not displace lawful political, judicial, or administrative responsibility.

Accordingly, the narrative supports a model in which collectors and analysts provide accurate and contextually complete information, while authorized decision-makers remain responsible for verification, legal assessment, proportionality, and the consequences of action. The verse does not erase the difference between information providers and those who possess lawful decision-making authority.

4. SECURITY INFORMATION AND COMPETENT ASSESSMENT IN QUR'AN 4:83

4.1. UNCONTROLLED CIRCULATION OF SECURITY OR FEAR-RELATED NEWS

Qur'an 4:83 addresses people who disseminate news concerning security or fear before referring it to the Messenger and those vested with authority, from whom persons capable of drawing sound conclusions could understand it. The selected commentaries connect the verse with reports circulating in Medina concerning safety, victory, danger, or possible attack [1, vol. 3, p. 272][7, vol. 9, p. 80].

The problem identified by the verse is not ordinary public discussion as such. It is the uncontrolled circulation of sensitive information without adequate examination of its truth, context, or likely effect. Al-Sabzawari, al-Tabataba'i, Fadlallah, and Mughniyya emphasize the destabilizing consequences of rumor, exaggeration, and premature dissemination in circumstances involving security and fear [6, vol. 2, p. 317][4, vol. 5, p. 21][8, vol. 4, p. 374][9, vol. 2, p. 391].

This supports a distinction between information that may be openly circulated and information whose premature disclosure creates a concrete risk to public safety, military operations, or the integrity of decision-making. It does not support the classification of all inconvenient information as secret. The sensitivity of the information, the probability of harm, and the lawfulness of restricting circulation must be demonstrated.

4.2. THE AUTHORITY PROBLEM IN IMAMI EXEGESIS

The verse directs referral to the Messenger and those vested with authority. In Imami exegesis, the identity of *ulu al-amr* is a substantive doctrinal question, not a detail that can be ignored. The selected Imami commentaries connect the expression with divinely authorized leadership and the capacity to derive the correct significance of the information [4, vol. 5, p. 92][9, vol. 2, p. 392][7, vol. 9, p. 80].

A contemporary administrative body cannot simply claim the same status as the Messenger or the infallible Imams. The verse therefore does not, by itself, establish the legitimacy of any existing security agency or make its assessment infallible. The functional principle that may be extended is narrower: sensitive security information should be referred to a lawfully authorized and demonstrably competent body capable of verification, contextual analysis, and responsible decision support.

Any institutional application during the occultation requires an additional jurisprudential account of lawful authority, jurisdiction, professional competence, review, and accountability. The present study does not resolve that broader constitutional question. It only identifies the verse's support for competent assessment in place of uncontrolled rumor or unqualified public interpretation.

4.3. ASSESSMENT, CIRCULATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The notion of drawing conclusions in the verse is interpreted as extracting the significant truth of a matter from information that may initially be ambiguous [4, vol. 5, p. 92]. In modern functional terms, this resembles analysis: separating verified facts from conjecture, identifying context, evaluating implications, and communicating conclusions to lawful decision-makers.

This principle must be accompanied by safeguards. Central assessment cannot mean arbitrary censorship, suppression of lawful criticism, or concealment of official wrongdoing. A decision to restrict circulation should be based on an identifiable security interest, limited in duration and scope, and subject to appropriate review. Where disclosure would not

produce a concrete and proportionate harm, secrecy should not be imposed merely to protect institutional convenience.

Al-Subhani distinguishes between prohibited intrusion into individual secrets and the collection of information genuinely connected with the protection of the community [10, vol. 2, p. 541]. That distinction is valuable but must be operationalized through law. The existence of a claimed collective interest does not automatically remove privacy protections; the connection between the information and the lawful security purpose must be demonstrated.

The limited principle derived from Qurán 4:83 is therefore that security-sensitive information should be verified and interpreted by competent, authorized, and accountable actors before it is used for major decisions or publicly disseminated. The verse does not establish unlimited governmental control over information.

5. PREVENTIVE PREPAREDNESS AND THREAT ASSESSMENT IN QUR'AN 4:71

5.1. THE MILITARY CONTEXT OF THE COMMAND

Qurán 4:71 instructs believers to take precautions and then advance in groups or collectively according to circumstances. The immediate context concerns armed danger and communal defense. Imami commentators connect the command with practical readiness, weapons, organization, and the manner of responding to an enemy [3, vol. 3, p. 128][11, vol. 3, p. 322].

The military context must remain visible. The verse should not be transformed into a universal authorization for permanent surveillance of the population. Its direct normative force concerns precaution and organized readiness in the presence of a relevant threat. Any broader application must preserve that connection to an actual or reasonably assessed danger.

5.2. PREPAREDNESS BASED ON DIFFERENTIATED THREAT ASSESSMENT

The verse permits different forms of movement—in detachments or together—which the selected commentaries connect with variation in the enemy's strength, conditions, and the requirements of the situation. Al-Tabataba'i interprets the differentiated command in relation to the reality of the threat, while al-Sabzawari emphasizes that taking precautions requires knowledge of the enemy's circumstances and methods [4, vol. 4, p. 416][7, vol. 9, pp. 21–22].

The functional inference is not that every uncertainty demands maximum security measures. Rather, preparedness should be informed by an assessment of the nature, probability, and scale of the threat. Measures should be adapted to the circumstances instead of being imposed mechanically.

In contemporary terms, this supports early warning, contingency planning, protection of vulnerable capabilities, and readiness to respond. It does not independently authorize intrusive techniques. The collection of information needed for threat assessment must itself satisfy the ethical and legal limits discussed below.

5.3. NECESSITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

Preparedness is legitimate only when connected to a lawful protective objective. The scale of the response should correspond to the seriousness and likelihood of the threat. A minor or speculative concern cannot justify unlimited intrusion, indefinite emergency measures, or collective suspicion.

The verse's contribution is therefore a principle of *proportionate preventive readiness*. It supports acting before damage occurs where there is a credible basis for concern, while its differentiated form implies that the response should be tailored to actual conditions. The passage does not eliminate the need for evidence, legal authorization, or review.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS CONTROL IN QUR'AN 3:118

6.1. THE MEANING AND CONTEXT OF BITANA

Qurán 3:118 warns believers against taking certain persons as *bitana*, a term referring to intimate confidants who gain access to internal affairs and secrets. Al-Tusi, al-Tabrisi, al-Tabataba'i, al-Shirazi, and al-Kashani explain the term through the image of an inner circle or close associate who knows matters concealed from the general public [1, vol. 2, p. 570][3, vol. 2, pp. 372–373][4, vol. 3, p. 386][11, vol. 2, p. 661][12, vol. 1, p. 547].

The verse's warning is connected to persons whose conduct demonstrates a wish to cause hardship and whose speech reveals hostility. Its textual logic is therefore not simply that every person outside a formal identity category is inherently untrustworthy. The danger arises from hostile intention, harmful conduct, and privileged access to sensitive internal affairs.

This context supports a principle of confidentiality: information whose disclosure would create a concrete and lawful security risk should not be made available without justified authorization. The principle does not require the isolation of communities from ordinary social, professional, or civic interaction.

6.2. FROM COMMUNAL WARNING TO INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS CONTROL

A contemporary institution may translate the functional aspect of the verse into access-control rules based on lawful authorization, professional role, demonstrated trustworthiness, competence, and a genuine need to know. Access should be limited to the information required for the assigned function, and disclosure should be recorded and reviewable where appropriate.

The modern application must not turn religious, ethnic, political, or social identity into automatic evidence of disloyalty. The selected commentaries include discussions of hostile outsiders, hypocrites, and persons whose outward affiliation conceals harmful intent [5, vol. 1, p. 477][13, vol. 5, p. 352]. Those discussions should not be converted into collective attribution of guilt. Institutional reliability must be assessed through lawful criteria and evidence concerning conduct, responsibility, and access requirements.

The distinction between identity and behavior is also consistent with the analysis of Qur'an 4:83: the harmful informational function matters, not merely the label attached to the person performing it. A lawful security system should therefore avoid blanket exclusion and rely on individualized, evidence-based assessment.

6.3. BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS AND THE DANGER OF UNSUPPORTED SUSPICION

The verse observes that hostility may become visible in speech even when more remains concealed. The selected commentators treat outward discourse as an indicator that may reveal deeper attitudes [4, vol. 3, p. 386][11, vol. 2, p. 662]. In contemporary analysis, statements and conduct may legitimately form part of a threat assessment.

However, an indicator is not equivalent to conclusive proof. Ambiguous speech, criticism, disagreement, or association should not automatically produce punitive classification. Indicators should be corroborated, interpreted in context, and assessed according to fair procedures. The Qur'anic demand for justice and verified knowledge prevents speculative inference from becoming a substitute for evidence.

The limited principle derived from Qur'an 3:118 is therefore one of *lawful confidentiality and evidence-based access control*. Sensitive information may be restricted where disclosure creates a demonstrable risk, but the restriction must be based on role, necessity, trustworthiness, and conduct rather than generalized prejudice.

7. ETHICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL LIMITS ON INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY

The four core passages describe or support functions that can contribute to collective security, but they cannot be interpreted in isolation from Qur'anic restrictions. A legitimate intelligence-related function must remain within an ethical framework that protects individuals and prevents security authority from becoming a justification for arbitrary intrusion.

7.1. VERIFICATION AND EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Qur'an 49:6 instructs believers to verify consequential reports brought by an unreliable source so that people are not harmed through ignorance. Qur'an 17:36 likewise warns against pursuing that of which one has no knowledge. These principles reinforce the verification sequence in the hoopoe narrative and the competent-assessment requirement in Qur'an 4:83.

Intelligence conclusions should therefore distinguish verified fact, reasonable inference, uncertainty, and speculation. Source reliability, corroboration, context, and alternative explanations should be documented. Decisions affecting rights or safety should not rest on rumor, coerced claims, fabricated evidence, or unreviewed algorithmic output.

7.2. PRIVACY AND THE PROHIBITION OF UNJUSTIFIED SPYING

Qur'an 49:12 prohibits spying in a moral context, while Qur'an 24:27 protects private homes through the requirement of permission before entry. These passages establish that private life is not an unrestricted field for state or individual investigation. Security concerns may justify narrowly defined inquiry in particular circumstances, but the burden lies on the authority to establish a lawful purpose and a necessary connection between the intrusion and the threat.

The distinction between private secrets and information materially connected to collective protection, noted by al-Subhani, should therefore be governed by clear criteria rather than institutional assertion [10, vol. 2, p. 541]. Collection should be minimized to what is relevant, retained only as long as necessary, protected from misuse, and subject to review.

7.3. JUSTICE, NON-DISCRIMINATION, AND PROPORTIONALITY

Qur'an 5:8 requires justice even in relation to people toward whom hostility is felt. This principle is essential in security contexts, where fear may encourage overgeneralization and collective suspicion. Religious, ethnic, political, or social identity cannot by itself establish guilt or disloyalty. Restrictions should be based on conduct, evidence, lawful authority,

and individualized assessment.

Proportionality requires that the expected protective benefit of a measure be weighed against its intrusion into rights and social trust. The least intrusive effective measure should be preferred. Emergency restrictions should be limited in duration, periodically reviewed, and terminated when the factual basis no longer exists.

7.4. AUTHORIZATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND REMEDIES

The selected verses do not define a contemporary oversight system. Nevertheless, the Qur'anic emphasis on entrusted responsibility, justice, and truthful knowledge is incompatible with unreviewable power. Intelligence-related activity should be assigned by law, confined to a defined jurisdiction, documented sufficiently for oversight, and subject to institutional or judicial remedies when unlawfully exercised.

Confidentiality should protect legitimate operations and individuals, not shield misconduct. Where secrecy is necessary, access to review mechanisms may itself need protection, but the existence of secrecy cannot eliminate accountability. The legitimacy of an institution therefore depends not only on the purpose of its functions but also on the legality of its means and the availability of correction when errors or abuses occur.

These controls lead to a conditional formulation: intelligence-related functions may be legitimate when they pursue a lawful protective purpose through authorized, necessary, proportionate, evidence-based, minimally intrusive, confidential, and accountable means. The four core passages support parts of this framework, while the additional Qur'anic principles prevent an expansive or abusive reading.

8. INTEGRATED FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The selected passages do not perform identical roles. Their contribution becomes clearer when each is connected to its original context, limited functional principle, and corresponding ethical constraint. Table 1 summarizes the resulting framework.

Table 1. *Selected Qur'anic passages, intelligence-related functions, and governing limits*

Textual unit	Original context	Limited functional principle	Principal limit
Qur'an 27:20–28	The hoopoe's report to Solomon concerning Sheba	Relevant observation, structured reporting, leadership review, and independent verification before consequential action	Narrative does not authorize indiscriminate collection; source confidence is not a substitute for verification
Qur'an 4:83	Circulation of news concerning security or fear within the early Muslim community	Referral of sensitive information to competent and lawful authority for verification and assessment before decision or dissemination	Imami authority of the Messenger and <i>ulu al-amr</i> cannot be transferred uncritically; no arbitrary censorship or concealment
Qur'an 4:71	Military precaution and organized movement in the presence of threat	Proportionate preparedness, early warning, and adaptation of the response to assessed conditions	Wartime instruction does not justify permanent or unlimited surveillance; necessity and proportionality remain required
Qur'an 3:118	Warning concerning intimate confidants with demonstrated hostile intent	Confidentiality, role-based access, need-to-know, and protection of sensitive internal information	No blanket identity-based exclusion; access decisions require lawful authority, evidence, individualized assessment, and review
Qur'an 49:6, 49:12, 24:27, 5:8, and 17:36	Verification, non-spying, privacy, justice, and responsibility for knowledge claims	Ethical controls governing all intelligence-related functions	Security purpose cannot displace privacy, justice, evidentiary reliability, minimization, or accountability

The functional sequence begins with the acquisition of materially relevant information. The information must then be verified, analyzed, and distinguished from rumor or speculation. Where it concerns security or fear, it should be referred to a competent and lawful authority capable of drawing responsible conclusions. The resulting assessment may support proportionate preparedness. Sensitive information may be protected through justified access controls. At every stage, privacy, non-spying, justice, necessity, proportionality, and accountability restrict the means used.

This sequence does not prove the legitimacy of an intelligence institution “as a whole.” Institutional legitimacy requires additional answers concerning who possesses authority, how jurisdiction is defined, which methods are permitted, how rights are protected, and what oversight and remedies are available. The Qur'anic material analyzed here supplies normative inputs to that inquiry rather than a complete institutional settlement.

9. DISCUSSION

The first contribution of the study is conceptual. By distinguishing information, intelligence process, and intelligence institution, the analysis avoids treating any Qur'anic endorsement of truthful reporting or precaution as automatic authorization for a modern agency. This distinction narrows the claim but makes it more defensible.

The second contribution is hermeneutical. The four core passages arise from different contexts and cannot be generalized at the same level. The hoopoe passage is a narrative whose normative relevance emerges through its treatment of reporting and verification. Qur'an 4:83 is a communal instruction concerning sensitive news and competent authority. Qur'an 4:71 is a wartime command concerning precaution. Qur'an 3:118 is a warning about intimate confidants and hostile access to internal affairs. The contemporary framework is therefore analogical and functional; it is not a literal institutional transplantation.

The third contribution is the integration of ethical limits. A complete account of intelligence-related functions must examine not only the principles that enable protective action but also the verses that constrain intrusion and prevent abuse. The framework therefore treats verification, privacy, non-spying, justice, individualized assessment, necessity, proportionality, and accountability as constitutive conditions of legitimacy rather than optional additions.

The fourth contribution concerns Imami authority. Qur'an 4:83 cannot be used to declare every contemporary security body equivalent to the Messenger or the infallible Imams. The selected Imami commentaries reinforce the need for authoritative and competent interpretation, but the extension of that function to institutions during the occultation requires an additional jurisprudential theory. This unresolved issue limits the article's institutional conclusions.

The analysis also shows that confidentiality and access control should not be framed primarily through communal identity. Qur'an 3:118 addresses intimate access in the context of demonstrated hostility and harmful intent. A contemporary security application should focus on lawful authorization, competence, need-to-know, trustworthiness, and evidence. Otherwise, a verse intended to protect a community could be misused to justify discrimination and collective suspicion.

The four functions are therefore related but not self-sufficient. Collection without verification produces error; assessment without lawful authority produces arbitrary control; preparedness without proportionality produces permanent emergency; and confidentiality without accountability conceals misuse. Their integration becomes normatively defensible only when each function is paired with an appropriate limitation.

10. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study examined four Qur'anic textual units through selected Imami exegetical sources and assessed their relevance to intelligence-related functions. The hoopoe narrative supports the importance of materially relevant reporting, contextual completeness, and independent verification before action. Qur'an 4:83 cautions against uncontrolled circulation of security or fear-related information and supports referral to competent authority, while the Imami understanding of the Messenger and those vested with authority prevents an unqualified identification of contemporary institutions with infallible leadership. Qur'an 4:71 supports proportionate preparedness in the presence of a credible threat. Qur'an 3:118 supports the protection of sensitive internal information from persons whose conduct and access create a demonstrable risk.

The analysis does not establish that the Qur'an creates a complete modern intelligence institution or legitimates every intelligence technique. The selected passages support a limited ethical-functional framework involving collection, verification, assessment, preparedness, confidentiality, and access control. Particular institutional structures and methods require separate jurisprudential and legal authorization.

The legitimacy of intelligence-related activity is conditional. A lawful function must pursue a genuine protective purpose and be exercised through reliable evidence, competent authorization, necessity, proportionality, minimal intrusion, confidentiality, non-discrimination, accountability, and access to correction or remedy. Qur'anic principles concerning verification, non-spying, privacy, justice, and responsibility for knowledge claims provide essential limits on the four core functions.

The study has several limitations. It analyzes only four principal passages and a purposively selected group of Imami commentaries. It does not offer an exhaustive account of Qur'anic security ethics, compare Imami and Sunni approaches, establish a full jurisprudence of intelligence institutions, or evaluate specific contemporary technologies and covert methods. It also does not resolve the constitutional and jurisprudential basis of institutional authority during the occultation.

Future research should examine the legal authority to establish intelligence institutions, the conditions governing surveillance and counterintelligence, the protection of personal data, judicial and legislative oversight, remedies for unlawful intrusion, and comparative approaches across Islamic legal traditions. Such analysis is necessary before a complete claim can be made about the legitimacy of a modern intelligence system.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the course of preparing this manuscript, the authors employed ChatGPT to improve the readability of the content. After utilizing this AI tool, the authors conducted comprehensive review and necessary revisions to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and scientific rigor of the manuscript. All authors bear full responsibility for the final content of the published work, including any errors or inconsistencies that may arise.

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