

STUDY ON THE EXISTING PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMPETITION IN BANGLADESH AND HOW THIS COMPETITION IS SHAPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO SECTORS

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Abstract

The benefits of public and private competition are potentially enormous. Allowing private providers to challenge a state's entrenched public-sector monopolies should be the original agenda to cope with the state's ongoing fiscal crisis or to ensure all-round development. At one time, no one would have considered letting private businesses do anything that is important for the country and countryman such as participating in security issues, to shape up the country's economic power in order to be able to compete with global economic power, take care of the poor etc. There was a time when public sectors were active investors in the private economy, routinely seeding new businesses by giving loans, aids and equitable investments. Now a days Governments large or small, Bangladesh or foreign, federal, state or local deliberately respond to the truth that public sector can't think of doing such things without the help of private sector. This paper is a sincere attempt to show a practical picture of public-private partnership and competition in Bangladesh that mitigate the appropriability, problems and effects associated with innovation that occurs in a dynamic market when competitive pressures are present. Finally, it comes up with a set of specific and effective policy recommendation.

Keywords: Public-Private Competition, Economic Power, Free market Economy

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Introduction

Privatization, or the transfer of functions from the public sector to the private sector (Salamon, 1989, Poole & Fixler, 1987), also necessarily entails the jobs and policies transfer from public to private sector. Public-private partnership picture shown by this paper and competition in Bangladesh that mitigates the appropriability, problems and effects associated with innovation that occurs in a dynamic market when competitive pressures are present. In order to make our government more effective, better ways have been discovered with launch of successful experiments, public sector have been trying frequently to engage themselves in

head-to-head competition with the private sector to retain government service delivery in-house. Today competitive arrangements involves both public and private service delivery agents to break the common pattern of service delivery in which services are produced exclusively by public employees for example handling security issues, shaping up the country's economic power in order to be able to compete with global economic power, taking care of the poor or exclusively by private investors for example making profit in the private economy, routinely seeding new businesses by giving loans, aids and equitable investments across the entire world. Instead, competitive systems allow both sectors to compete with one another.

Objectives& Methodology:

This paper is prepared based on a review of secondary information from relevant books, journals, articles and newspapers. In order to pinpoint the conceptual overview, this report examines:

- causes why competition deserves a central place in government service delivery;
- how much it is practiced in the country;
- key component of a good competitive process;
- how a competitive public-private sector relationship would work in Bangladesh.

Theoretical Framework:

Theoretically, the models and examples of public-private competition present a win-win relationship between government/public agencies and various private sector organizations which is paving the way to establish a satisfactory Public -Private Partnership (PPP) system. Competitive arrangements involving both public and private sector service delivery agents eschew notions of the inherent superiority of either sector as service producer. They break the common pattern of service delivery in which services are produced exclusively by public employees or exclusively by contractor employees across an entire jurisdiction. Instead, competitive systems allow the public and private sectors to compete with one another. Sometimes the competition is in the bidding process as private contractors vie with local government departments for the privilege of delivering services either jurisdiction-wide or commonly in a given sector and sometimes the competition pits public employees in one sector against contractor employees in another in a contest to demonstrate performance equivalency, if not superiority. Such arrangements reflect the belief that competition brings out the best among contenders and that by inserting government units into a competitive environment, service recipients stand to gain much while risking little.

Over the last 30 years, governments around the world enhanced the participation of private investors, specially through the public-private sector development competition as vehicles for the delivery services of a wide variety of goods. Projects involving highway and road transportation, rail and water in the United States influence the competition level between these two sectors resulting in interdependency between them has made Public-Private Partnership (PPP) a common practice. Water, energy, waste disposal, education and healthcare are examples of sectors where competitive attitude and agreements between private operators and local authorities are intensively used. Thus, as pointed out by Levin and Tadelis (2009), such “local government service provision is important from both an economic and public policy standpoint. Local government spending equals about one percent of GDP in the United States, so there are potentially large gains to be realized from efficiency

improvements.” Such competition level between public and private sector has also become widespread in Europe, in Canada and in many developing countries. The governments’ interest in encouraging a competitive market system is also reflected in the numerous laws and policies that many countries have passed or in the process of proposing, which aim at authorizing positive public-private relationship to attract private finance.

Nature and Extent of Public-Private Competition in Bangladesh:

In the recent years, most of the countries do not prefer a comfortable monopoly but competition which drives them to embrace innovation. That is true in Bangladesh also. The people providing services both in public and private have discovered that as they have to compete to achieve market economy goals they need to keep their costs low, quick response to changing demands and strive mightily to satisfy their customers and sometimes the government itself in order to have a stable economic system. Competition is not the only solution but it builds morale and encourages creativity that would unlock many gridlocks in the way of development. People also began to realize that the central issue in safeguarding their own interests as consumers was not ownership – it was competition.

Competition policy:

The basic goals of competition policy are designed in a way to promote competition by preventing agreements between public-private firms that lead to anti-competitive behavior through explicit cartels or tacit collusion. This policies deal with monopoly power and business strategies in the market such as mergers, contracts and acquisitions. Out of 149 members of WTO, 80 have developed and adopted competition policy but till now Bangladesh has no competition policy. Though initiatives were taken earlier by formulating Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practice (Control and Prevention) Ordinance, 1970 and at the Ministerial Conference 1996 in Singapore, Bangladesh government still considers it as a dead issue and gives it the least attention.

Competition ensures greater efficiency: more bang for the buck

Aviation Sector: Competition in the aviation sector is set to intensify as new private airlines will spread wings with the existing by expanding operations on short-haul international airways. The private flights now caring six international destinations. Novoair, starting its journey in January only a year before, plans its international flight within a few months. A new private carrier US-Bangla Airlines will commence operations as the carrier has already announced its flight schedule for domestic routes. Another new private carrier -- Epic Airways Ltd -- plans to operate flights on domestic routes with an initial fleet of two Boeing 737s by the end of 2014. The aviation market is heating up the flag carrier as Biman-Bangladesh Airlines and also expanding routes internationally and re-launching full-fledged domestic operations. Biman faces competition especially from the low-cost carriers in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. In Bangladesh, low-cost carriers currently account for about 15 percent of the total international seat capacity, as stated by Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA). The government has realized that they have to be more pragmatic in allowing new airlines and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh also permit new airlines based on business viability and growth rate of passengers. The local airlines are yet to develop the expertise needed to operate international flights and a lack of skilled manpower are the main challenges for the airlines now.

Telecommunication: State-run mobile operator Teletalk is struggling to keep up with the companies operating privately, because of inability of government to make sufficient investments into that entity. Operators like Robi, Telenor of Grameenphone, Airtel, Banglalink are owned and mainly shared by private investors and run by skilled personnel. It is as the entire management as well as the board as often been said that mainly formed with representatives from the government, which includes secretaries, military officials and a representative from the apex trade body does not qualify to run Teletalk, as like the case with each state owned enterprises in Bangladesh, the government should give up the operations of the company and sell it to the private sector and give it the shape of a private company. Similar was the case with “Doal” laptops and notebooks financed and run by state-owned Telephone Shilpo Sangstha (TSS). It couldn't make a mark in the market where internationally renowned private brands are doing so well in the business.

Education: In Bangladesh there are 38 public universities and 78 private which supply skilled human resources to man all economic activities. Till recently, public universities were the sole suppliers of highly expert manpower. The emergence of Private universities has changed situation. Some reputed private universities producing quality graduates those who compete with those of the good public universities. Private universities with the required capability are now allowed to offer M. Phil, Ph. D. programmes along with public universities. Private English medium schools have proved to be innovative, effective and most trusted institutions in Bangladesh. With the needed cooperation from all concerned foreign countries and donor agencies they have consolidated the growth of the quality education that has already taken place.

Competition forces public private monopolies to respond to the needs of their customers:

Banking Sector: Public monopolies that are thrust fully into competition have little choice but to please their customers compared to the private operators' monopolies. Unprecedented growth of banks in private and public sectors as seen in Bangladesh to serve the growing needs of the people. On the basis of profit, liquidity and capital surplus, 22 private banks (First and Second Category) have been enlisted as commercially fit to run and operate banking business and hoped to survive in the competitive world of free market economy. The Banks have extended their banking services to the rural Bangladesh at least up to Upazila level. Now they are planning to go for extensive Mobile Banking Operation in provided rural area. They have arranged the secured and tested mobile and online banking network. The provisions of Banking Companies Act and Companies Act have been enacted to avoid bank scams happened due to the mismanagement and corrupt practices of Board of Directors of banks.

At present four government owned banks namely Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali Banks operate in the country, crisis banks to operate at Upazila and Union level only but they do not have any network online and knowhow. Though some banks have computers in their offices but they do most of the banking jobs on manually by unnecessarily employed large number of employ. In recent years, it is evident that private banks are sanctioned to serve certain interested and purposeful politicians and bureaucratic persons. If the number of private and government banks remains limited, Bangladesh Bank can easily monitor, direct and control all banks in the most effective manner.

Agriculture: A new report published in 2008 by the World Bank and the IFC-SEDF, entitled High-value Agriculture in Bangladesh and explains the opportunities and constraints that Bangladeshi agro-businesses face in the market where the demand for food is growing rapidly around the world. At the same time, private sector also continues to take the lead in developing high-value agriculture and related agro-business, the role of government also remains essential in fostering an enabling business environment for market-led growth through stable and undistorted economic incentives, accentuate ongoing inequities, or regulating bad affect the environment. Active collaboration between the government, nongovernment and the private sector organizations would be extremely beneficial.

Health: Health accountability in Bangladesh improved when citizens' groups demand better services of health. In public hospitals, unsatisfactory services are forcing patients to seek treatment at private clinics. Rapidly growing private healthcare sector is going on with more than 100 private hospitals and 200 diagnostic centers opening every year. By contrast, growth in public sector services, which are free to poor people, is much slow going, with far increased bed occupancy than safe thresholds, chronic shortages of doctors and nurses and accommodative infrastructure want related to water, electricity and transport.

Transportation: Regarding transport, although public sector is providing infrastructure but not the transport service equally which is greater proportionately provided by the private sector. The rapid rise in population along with increased and versatile urban land use patterns has generated considerable travel demand as well as numerous transport problems in Dhaka city. It has resulted in deterioration in accessibility of patient, service level, safety, satisfaction, operational efficiency and environment of city. The public transport system and forms, such as underground, over ground and/or light railway/tram, BRTC buses are environment-friendly and also capable to carry lot of passengers at a time. Importance must be given on public transport rather than private ones in Bangladesh because public transport is being subsidized so that the general public can afford to travel.

Housing: More recently, as a result of progress with banking reforms, the real estate or private housing market has emerged as an outstanding activity. The private sector is trying to avoid the regulatory constraints on registration, license etc. through unacceptable private payments to concerned public agencies (Example: Purbachal) though they are in problem of affordability, primarily due to scarcity of land, higher tax and financial sector policies and the high cost of doing business but still they have succeeded to provide better services than public agencies.

Water: For piped water the D-WASA has a public sector monopoly. Private sector hand tube wells and groundwater extraction through motorized pumps are common sources of water supply for areas not served by D-WASA or where this supply is unreliable. No commercial private water provision activity, although private water markets which is not legal through control over use of public stand pipes by mastaans are known to exist in the slum areas. Sewerage and garbage disposal: Sewerage and garbage disposal is also primarily provided by the public sector (D-WASA and municipality). Private service delivery does not exist organizedly, though informal and small-scale private services of human waste (pits) and garbage disposal prevail in areas not served by public service providers or as an added community initiative to keep the neighborhood clean.

Competition Rewards Innovation:

Competition does not wait for good management. If the managers cannot keep costs down and improve quality, their customers go elsewhere and they go out of business. Competition is the permanent force for innovation that government normally lacks. The recent drive against systematic corruption, spearheaded by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), has received wholehearted support from the general people. The civil society, TIB, media and other organizations are working tirelessly to make corruption a difficult undertaking for the practitioners. The manual tendering based public procurement system presents many opportunities for manipulation by corrupt civil servants and tender "mafias." An e-procurement system based on a public-private partnership model has been established to absorb corruption. The system is ensuring no interaction between the public employees and the contractors during the whole process of bidding, the awarding of the contract, and in the post-bid stage. Currently, 8 government departments, including irrigation, roads and highways, tribal welfare, public health and local government, operate all their transactions through the portal.

Competition boosts the pride and morale of employees:

The job market is getting bigger day by day with a rise in private sector business. A recent World Bank report, "More and Better Jobs in South Asia", finds huge potential in Bangladesh in private sectors especially for the self-employed, casual laborer and regular wage or salaried earners. Private job sector in Bangladesh is doing good in meeting people's rapidly rising aspirations by creating jobs of higher quality. In fact, the Asian Development Bank has asked the government to focus more on the private services sector in bids to create additional jobs. Private service sector growth is expected to rise to 5.7 percent in fiscal 2014-15 especially due to an expected rebound in industry and agriculture output. In contrast, public sector jobs are losing their charm due to recruitment under political favor, insufficient salary, wages and other benefits that keep their lifestyle unchanged, well circulated corruption at each and every public office etc.

Relationship between Public-Private Sectors in Bangladesh:

The competition between private and public sectors have existed for centuries. Now this competitive attitude is turning into cooperation, collaboration and sometimes strong teamwork. The motives and interests for this competition have changed. It can be observed that socio-democratic options tending towards a traditional model of public services provision, whereas the neo-liberals privileged the major influence of the private initiative in public services provision. However, the political attitudes of the authorities towards private initiatives and especially towards the initiative for partnership varied significantly over the years. In the modern times, the political thought that rejects both neo-liberal trusts in previous reliance on the market by conservative governments and centralized planning is being stated. The competition and ongoing partnership process between two sectors have changed depending on the complexity of the medium through which the public service was provided. Private sector development and investment—tapping private sector initiative and investment for socially useful purposes—are critical for poverty reduction. Private investment in parallel with public sector efforts especially in competitive markets, is tremendously potential to

increase growth. Private markets are in the position of engine of growth productivity, making productive jobs and more incomes. And private initiative and investment playing a complementary role with government in regulation, funding, and service provision, can help provide the basic services and conditions that empower poor people—by improving health, education, and infrastructure.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in Bangladesh:

PPPs include organizations from public and private sector working together in order to satisfy public needs. PPPs represent various models of agreement between government and private sector entities to provide public infrastructure, community facilities and related public services. PPPs emphasize the efficient service delivery capability of private sector organizations that the public agencies require rather than the assets used to provide them. In August 2010, the Government of Bangladesh issued the Policy and Strategy for Public Private Partnership (PPP) to facilitate the development of core sector public infrastructure and services vital for the people of Bangladesh. The program named PPP is part of the Government's Vision 2021 goal to ensure an inclusive growth trajectory, more rapid and to better meet the need for improved, increased quality public services in an economically sustainable manner.

According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) if-- first, the government's financial resources or expertise are insufficient for the implementation of the project; second, private investment is expected to increase the quality or level of service or reduce the time to implement the project than the government ; third, there is an opportunity for competition, where possible, among prospective private investors, which may reduce the cost of providing a public service; fourth, private investment in public service provides an opportunity for innovation; fifth, there are no regulatory or legislative restrictions in taking private investment in the delivery of public service (Government of Bangladesh, 2010) is eligible for PPPs.

Example:

E-procurement: An e-procurement system based on a public-private partnership model can be the best way to restrain malpractices, as because it takes away the authority of awarding contracts from corrupt civil servants and transfers it to a neutral software based system that allows transparency, equal opportunity and competition for all eligible vendors. The system of e-procurement provides an web-based interface where buyers and sellers of all government procurements and contracts can participate in a fair and transparent manner.

Local Government: The setting of allocation of resources, expenditure priorities, procurement of goods and services and the implementation of projects can be properly done if local governments and city-corporation work hand in hand. City corporations have found it helpful to redefine the role of public-private partnership to provide those basic services which are in the nature of public good and let the private sector handle commercial activities. Thus, services such as gas, electricity and telephone are assigned to private providers with regulatory environment provided by the public sector. Both public and private supply in some case, have prevailed allowing consumers choices, thereby improving service quality, same time also meeting equity and "merit good" objectives.

Education: In Bangladesh, a vibrant private sector has emerged in the delivery of health services, education and telecommunications. There is also a strong partnership between the government and NGOs in the delivery of basic education services, which has contributed to important gains in reducing gender disparity and improved overall access to education.

Privatization and Private investment:

Since 1993, 75 state own enterprises have been privatized through direct sale, outright sale, offloading shares and rest are transferred to the association of workers and employees by which 709.9 crore Tk. was earned. Now 23 industrial enterprises are going through the process of privatization.

Contracting and Risk taking:

Contracting is another common method of injecting competition into public-private services. Contracting can save significant sums, particularly if public providers are inefficient. It actually works when public agencies can define precisely what they want done, generate competition for the job, evaluate a contractor's performance and replace or penalize those who fail to achieve expected performance levels. Contractors are required to provide comparable wages and benefits and to promote affirmative action governments can use competitive contracts.

Example: In Bangladesh, there has been a shift from competing for contracted services through compulsory competitive tendering towards more complex contractual arrangements managing multiple contracts and supplier relations, making and maintaining accountable partnerships with users, communities and other organizations where appropriate. For example, strengthening producer organizations is helping the enforcement of contract terms on the farmers' side, and a variety of other institutions can provide alternative for resolution of opinion difference. Unity formed around professions, industries, and commodities are playing a very prominent role in developing high-value agro-trade in Bangladesh. Active producer groups frequently enable small-scale farmers to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with private industry through contracts. Procurement arrangements like contract farming are expanding quickly in Bangladesh, and deliver for more orderly marketing with less price volatility and better sharing of risks and rewards. Enforceability of contracts remains in major challenge, with break of common among producers and purchasers. Making trust and developing positive social capital is ultimately the best way to improve contract enforcement, but this of course takes time.

It is one of the most difficult methods a public organization can choose, because writing and monitoring contracts require so much skill. Many governments act as if their job is done once they have signed a contract. As a result, too many private contractors fail to deliver what they promise or worse, commit fraud. For example, public procurement through government contracts has always been the primary source of corruption. Some experts suggest that, in government procurement and work tender, only 15% of the money reaches its intended destination as 85% is siphoned away through systematic leakages.

According to Peter Drucker, in the private sectors "the innovators ... are successful to the extent to which they define risks and restrict them. They are in success to the extent to which

they analyze systematically the sources of innovative opportunity, then pinpoint the plan and exploit it.” On the other hand entrepreneurs do not seek constraints, they seek opportunities.

Corporatization:

The relationship between public and private sector is going through another phase where the structure of a government entity/body is being changed in order that it can be operated on business lines with a mandate to trade public goods/services profitably, regulated by an obligation to account to the government for its financial performance. It indicates functions which are moved to the private sector but almost invariably taken over by corporations with a motive force of contributing to maximize the profit.

Example: Power Sector: Corporatism (corporate influence on government) in Bangladesh is heavily contributing to the power sector. With the vision of “electricity for all” by 2021, unbundling and corporatization of power sector entities are taking place. Establishment of Electricity Generating Company of Bangladesh (EGCB), a corporatized entity of BPDP has been responsible for overseeing the energy sector projects framed by the advice of WB.

Education: Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2006-2026 published by UGC stresses on the increase of internal revenues, making financially self-reliant and enabling government to cut subsidies of the public universities so that they take the façade to function as private universities.

Airlines: To correct lapses in security, supervision and monitoring the airports, CAAB (Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh) is planning to corporatize this sector in order to recover sufferings caused by staff shortage.

New Public Management: Emergence, Relevance and Relation

Public-Private Competition and NPM: In Bangladesh, international donor agencies and reform committees are mainly responsible who came up with the idea of NPM as unstable political situation caused weak economy, law and order and absence of security. All these barriers are undermining shift from traditional public administration to NPM for the last 43 years. Competition in this region compels private companies to continuously search for better products and services because if they do not improve, other companies will take over and they will not survive. On the other hand, the public sector has not been exposed to competition. Public sector organizations are in a monopoly situation and hence do not have similar drive for continuous improvements. The wide gap between political leaders’ commitment and actions results in political, administrative, institutional, technical incapacity along with bureaucratic failure to accomplish innovative policies. Since market disciplines are advocated for the public sector keeping in mind that the threat of competition and rivalry between providers fosters efficiency in service provision and choice of customer, NPM proposes to expose public sector organizations to be more competitive.

Public-Private Partnership and NPM: Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is one of the reform proposals of NPM. It is a way of building collaborative relation between the government and private sector. Lately, the government of Bangladesh seems to have displayed creating partnership skills within a dense set of business networks around the world. The continuing dominance of private sector management models and techniques can also be used to improve

public sector service delivery system through PPP. In today's era of development PPP might be viewed as an evolutionary and logical policy stepping stone involving major public works initiated and implemented by strong collaboration between these two sectors Example: 'Subarna Express', an intercity train, on the Dhaka-Chittagong route, is an example of successful PPP in Bangladesh. It's a state owned entity managed and regulated by the ministry of railways but the internal maintenance is provided and monitored by private corporations.

Benefits, Constraints and Recommendations:

Geographic, Technological and Institutional Proximity: As companies now accumulate capital, goods, information, technology and technical equipment from round the world, even as quickly as with the click of a mouse, the expected wisdom about how private companies and nations compete needs to be overhauled. More open global markets and faster transportation and communication make competition healthy. Anything that can be efficiently sourced from a distant through global markets and corporate networks is available to any company which changes the source of competitive advantage. In a global economy, one would expect location to diminish in importance with rapid transportation, accessible markets and high speed communication. Highly specialized skills and knowledge, institutions, rivals related business, and sophisticated customers can make the competition enduring. Geographic, cultural and institutional proximity leads to easy access, closer relationships, better information, powerful incentives and other advantages in productivity and innovation. As the world economy becomes more complex, practical knowledge based and dynamic the more this becomes essential for a country like Bangladesh.

Cluster: Leaders of public private businesses, government and institution all have a stake and role to play in the new economics of competition. Cluster reveals the mutual dependency and collective responsibility of all these entities for creating the conditions for productive competition. But this task requires fresh thinking on the part of business and political leaders and the willingness to abandon the traditional categories that drive our thinking about who can contribute better in the economy. The lines between public and private competition are no longer blur. This process which reveals how wealth is actually created in an economy competition open new public private avenues for constructive action.

For example: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA), Department of Women Affairs, National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) altogether undertake various programs for awareness building financed by government. Same programs are also undertaken by private firms and NGOs (like BRAC, Proshika) by making clusters. Recently Bangladesh tourism society along with the ministry of tourism have held seminars and visiting programs in Bandarban, Sylhet.

Use of public-private competition in administration: Many administrations have encouraged agencies to consider whether commercial activities performed by the government could be provided by the private sector in a more cost-effective manner. It is high time to institutionalize public-private competition as an effective and prudent management tool. Agency-specific competition can continually refine to reflect changed circumstances, improved insight into agency programs, and experiences with conducting competitions, a dedicated infrastructure within each agency to promote sound and accountable decision making; and Improved processes for the fair and efficient conduct of public-private

competition like the development of inventories of commercial and inherent activities of government, the determination of commercial activities whether are suitable for competition, the preliminary scheduling and planning of competition, including the coordination of resources to support the agency provider, the tracking of results and information sharing within the agency so past experiences can inform future actions.

Conclusion

With abundant opportunities, supportive fiscal, legal and administrative conditions, Bangladesh has grown its market up as a prospective and challenging one. Competition must be carefully structured and managed to make it work. Competition is here to stay, regardless of what our governments do. We can't ignore today's trend of private sector's rapidly taking market share away from public organizations and continue with business as usual, watching fewer and fewer people use public institutions, less people depend on it, finance it and the worse it gets. Altogether, need level and form of government support, risks of economic and financial returns, ultimate fiscal impact of investment, distribution of benefits and performance indicators are the considerable factors to make public and private sectors more competitive and for the successful implementation of PPP projects. If participatory government be at the heart of any move to regulate competition and it undertakes measures to increase transparency, prevent fraud and ensure corporate social responsibility then we can hope to have healthy competitive public and private sectors.

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