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RESTORING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE FORMATION OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. *This article concerns research on the basic ways to increase the trust of Ukrainian society in its government via a sociological study conducted among public servants. Based on this study, it is established that the main way to increase confidence in government is to implement harsher, more definite punishment for those who break the laws of Ukraine. In addition to this, ensuring the openness and transparency of power is also an important way of increasing trust. The Polish approach to this issue is also analyzed, and it is concluded that social dialogue between government bodies and society is an important element in the formation of constructive public relations. Alongside the issue of trust, the level of corruption in government over the last several years is discussed in this article. Finally, it is concluded that trust is the most important attribute of effective public administration, and one of the prerequisites for the stable and predictable development of Ukraine.*

Keywords: *trust, public administration, corruption, authorities, openness of the power, public service, society.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *pasitikėjimas, viešasis administravimas, korupcija, valdžia, valdžios atvirumas, valstybės tarnyba, visuomenė.*

Introduction

Trust in the government is a prerequisite for effective democratic governance. Without public trust, neither economic nor political institutions can perform, and it is impossible to carry out serious reforms of the state without the trust and the active participation of society in this process.

Regardless of the type of society, trust plays an important role in fostering interaction between the government and citizens. The leader of the state, as the representative of citizens' interests and a pillar of securing state sovereignty, should focus their attention towards mechanisms for building and maintaining trust. The absence of effective political dialogue significantly reduces the level of people's trust in government.

Increasing trust in government departments and local government has become a very important task at present, as trust is an important factor in improving governance and is a prerequisite for reforms. Trust is a complex social phenomenon and an element of the sustainability and stability of all social relations. The trust or distrust of the population in the government represents the reaction of the people to the effectiveness of the government's work, so the level of trust of citizens can be considered one of the main indicators of the effectiveness of government actions. At the same time, the level of public trust in government departments mainly depends on the assessment of their overall activity, since it is the quality of life of citizens that largely determines the perceived effectiveness of government work.

The phenomenon of trust in power has been relevant for many thousands of years. According to Confucius, three things are necessary for successful management: there must be enough food; there must be enough weapons; and the people must trust the government (or the ruler). Of these three things, it is possible to refuse two of them—weapons and food—but without the trust of the people no state can remain standing. The issue of trust in power is linked to sacrifice. Confucius believed that you can trust only those who are capable of self-sacrifice; those who do not love their life more than their kingdom (Confucius 2001, 865).

It should be noted that trust in public authorities is an important characteristic of public relations, a key socio-cultural phenomenon that largely determines the effectiveness of public policy in the formation of civil society, the development of democracy, and the socio-economic development of the state in general. According to Petroe, the results of sociological surveys that were conducted during the years of Ukraine's independence reflect the critically low levels of trust of citizens in almost all governmental institutions (Petroe 2009, 233). The task of restoring trust in the authorities is of particular importance in the current context of a prolonged political crisis.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The current crisis of confidence, which is observable in both developing societies and developed democratic states, provokes the interest of scientists from different countries and industries towards its resolution. Among these scientists, there is still no single joint understanding of the phenomenon of trust due to the wide variety of conceptual typologies that surround it. In English, for example, there are a few words that are commonly used to denote the concept of “trust”: confidence, trust, and faith. This absence of a unique interpretation of the term is also the case in other languages.

Using Ozhegov’s dictionary, one can provide a general definition of trust as representing confidence in someone’s integrity or sincerity, the correctness of something, or the quality of being based on this attitude towards someone or something (Ozhegov and Shvedova 1997). However, this definition has its own characteristics and differences depending on the context and the area of study. For example, in sociology and psychology, trust represents confidence in the actions of another person—in their decency and goodwill. Political science identifies trust as an important factor in ensuring political stability in society and the political atmosphere of the state. Although trust in power is often considered a desirable or even necessary quality of democracy, unstable democratic regimes also require political trust as a guarantee of social harmony and stability.

Based on the theoretical developments of international and domestic authors, Litvinova (2018) concludes that trust in power depends on the perception of the successes of the political and economic activities of public administration to some extent. Thus, trust in the authorities is an expression of the hope that public authorities will act for the sake of people’s welfare, and realize the urgent interests and needs of society.

Marin Mrčela, the President of GRECO, noted that lack of trust in the functioning of institutions results in slow economic growth and, in turn, causes populism and extremist behaviors. In other words, corruption—in all its forms and manifestations of unethical and dishonest behavior—feeds into the surge of populism and extremism which surfs the wave of growing dissatisfaction with the way in which public affairs are run (Mrčela 2017).

The book *Trust and Public Policy* emphasizes the idea that trust is a very important element of effective public administration. Few perceptions are more tangible than trust or lack thereof, and governments ignore this at their own risk. Nonetheless, public trust is lost when it is most needed by policy makers: in the context of constant unemployment, rising inequality, and a variety of global pressures. Large-scale research shows that two fundamental principles can help to restore confidence. Firstly, the professional implementation of state mandates and, secondly, decision-making based on a values approach. These two principles are fundamental to building trust between governments and citizens across the wide range of areas of public policy that are most relevant today (OECD 2017).

The analysis of research and publications made it possible to identify the works of scholars of the post-Soviet states on this issue, namely: Dimitrova-Grajzl, Grajzl, and Guse (2012); Ledeneva (2014); Djankov, Nikolova, and Zilinsky (2015); Pavlovskaja-Hilal (2016); Ledeneva, Bratu, and Köker (2017); Tomkiewicz (2018); Uberti (2018); and Bašná (2019).

According to the Ukrainian scientist O. Vishnyak, trust in state and political institutions (like any other social institution) involves, above all, citizens' expectations regarding the decisions and actions of these institutions in the future, not just in the past. In this sense, we can speak of the existence or absence of a "credit of trust" in certain state or political institutions. This credit of trust represents citizens' expectations of more positive actions from these institutions in the future than they are perceived to have achieved in the past. Conversely, lack of credibility is the confidence of citizens that no good will come from these institutions in the future (Vishnyak 2010, 32).

Meanwhile, many European and Ukrainian sociological centers are constantly monitoring the level of public confidence in all branches of government, and these studies show a constant decline in confidence to unacceptable levels. Although modern scholars pay great attention to the problem of trust, they do not pay enough attention to the ways of restoring it.

Therefore, the purpose of our study is to explore the most effective steps towards increasing confidence in public services in Ukraine based on sociological studies.

Methodological approach. The authors used a set of complementary methods to achieve the goal of the study, including those of a general scientific as well as an empirical nature. Among the general scientific methods are: the systematic approach; generalization; critical analysis; synthesis; and comparison.

The application of a systematic approach made it possible to produce a theoretical generalization of the scientific concepts and developments of leading scientists devoted to the study of trust as an important factor of political stability in society. The method of critical analysis was used in the study of domestic experience of this problem—in particular, during the analysis of the modern situation surrounding anti-corruption policy in Ukraine.

The comparison method was used to study the feasibility of international experience on introducing constructive public relations and ensuring the transparency of power. The generalization method was used to draw conclusions and develop proposals that related to the purpose of the paper.

An interdisciplinary approach is also necessary in the study of the phenomenon of trust, since a holistic study of this phenomenon, taking into account the specific consideration of it from the standpoints of various sciences, must be undertaken. Therefore, this approach is widely used in the article, as this study affects not only the sphere of public administration but also the fields of political science, law, and sociology.

The main empirical method of this study is the use of sociological survey, which made it possible to determine the most effective steps for increasing public confidence in the government. In our study, the most common survey method was used: anonymous questioning with specifically designed tools.

These tools included a questionnaire which consisted of 18 questions, among which four questions related to the demographic information of the respondent (age, gender, location, and length of service with the authorities), and 14 questions related to the subject matter.

This article will present only a small part of the survey results—namely, the results of the respondents' answers to the 2 questions of the questionnaire which relate to the research problem. These questions are presented below.

A sociological survey was conducted from March to June 2019 by Sorokina Nataliya, associate professor of the Department of Public Administration and Local Government of Dnipropetrovsk Regional Institute for Public Administration National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine (DRIDU NADU). The collection of primary information took place during seminars and training events involving public servants at DRIDU NADU.

A total of 448 public servants age 22 and above took part in the survey. The sample was therefore 448 people, which provides a representation error of 5 percent with a 95 percent probability. Random sampling was used according to the simple probabilistic selection method, which was representative based on the gender, age, and length of service of public servants.

The data obtained were processed using OCA software, a program designed to process and analyze sociological and marketing research data. The OCA database is compatible with databases in SPSS. One- and two-dimensional distributions, factor analysis (using the principal component method), and variance analysis (a statistical method of analyzing results that depend on qualitative traits) were used to analyze the information.

Respondents were asked to answer the question: “Which of the proposed steps is the most effective for increasing public trust in a public servant?” They were asked to rank the proposed steps from 1 to 4, where 4 was the most effective step in restoring confidence in the authorities according to the respondent and 1 was the least effective. This ranking is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranking steps according to their importance, % of respondents
(1 – the least effective step, 4 – the most effective step)

Potential steps	1	2	3	4	No response
Harsher punishments for those who violate the laws of Ukraine	10.9	13.6	18.8	49.3	7.4
Increasing the openness and transparency of the authorities	15.4	20.8	27	29.2	7.6
Improving the moral environment of public services by updating their framework, including management personnel	16.7	21.4	25.7	28.1	8
Providing daily constructive public relations briefings informing citizens about positive results, shortcomings, and problematic issues	27	19	22.1	22.8	9.2

Source: own data

In describing the obtained results, it should be noted that, according to the opinions of the respondents, the most effective step in increasing public trust in public servants was harsher punishments for those who violate the laws of Ukraine. Of all the suggested

proposals, the largest proportion of the highest rating (4) was given to this step – 49.3 percent in total. The median levels of agreement (3 and 2) were expressed by 18.8 percent and 13.6 percent of respondents, respectively, and only 10.9 percent of those surveyed indicated that this step would be the least effective. Thus, the points of positive agreement (4 and 3) exceed the negative ones 2.8-fold.

Increasing the openness and transparency of the authorities, according to the respondents, would be the second most effective method of increasing public confidence in a public servant. 29.2 percent of respondents gave this step the highest rating (4). The third most effective suggestion was improving the moral environment of public services by updating their framework, including management personnel, with 28.1 percent of respondents grading this most highly (4), and the fourth—providing daily constructive public relations briefings informing citizens about positive results, shortcomings, and problematic issues—was given the highest rating (4) by 22.8 percent of respondents. In general, it was found that all of the steps mentioned at the beginning of the survey resonated with the respondents, since the highest indication of effectiveness (4) prevails in the first three steps.

Conducting research and results

The directions of anti-corruption for increasing trust in the authorities.

The results of the study show that society is waiting for decisive steps to be taken by the state to punish and imprison corrupt public service officials. This is a somewhat paradoxical problem of modern Ukraine, in that the principle of the inevitability of punishment loses its purpose precisely because of corruption. Through corruption, public officials avoid responsibility at various stages of investigation. This may be due to the corruption of the corruption system itself, the competition between anti-corruption structures, or the prolongation of corruption cases in the courts.

Modern scientific thought does not yet have a unified understanding of the essence of the anti-corruption actions of the state, nor the place and role of public administration in the processes of preventing and fighting corruption. The statements of various authors on the formulation of the concept of corruption are versatile because they evaluate it based on the different criteria of this approach. Where there is unanimity among authors, however, is in considering it a socially dangerous phenomenon.

The definition of corruption which is cited more often than any other was proposed by Transparency International, a global anti-corruption organization: “Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs” (Transparency International, n.d.).

According to Delia Ferreira Rubio (the chair of Transparency International), corruption most often flourishes in countries where democratic foundations are weak, and where non-democratic politicians can use it to suit their interests.

The 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows that most countries are unable to control corruption, which contributes to a crisis of democracy around the world (Transparency International 2019).

It should be noted that many steps have been taken in the legislative sphere to improve the situation surrounding anti-corruption policy in recent years. After all, a number of extremely important and high-quality basic and strategic documents have been adopted. In 2014, there was a fundamental redistribution of the roles of different state authorities in the formulation and implementation of anti-corruption policy. This in turn has ostensibly had a positive impact on the eradication of corruption in government, and yet the level of corruption in these bodies has unfortunately hardly changed. This is confirmed by the results of our study, where we asked the question “Do you think the level of corruption in public authorities has decreased since the Revolution of Dignity?” The overwhelming majority of public servants surveyed noted that the level of corruption had not decreased (53 percent), and only 8 percent of public service reported a reduction in corruption. At the same time, every third respondent noted a partial decrease in the level of corruption (Figure 1).

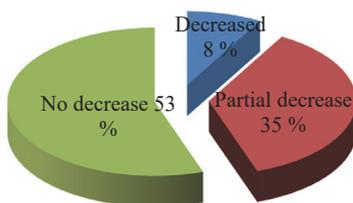


Figure 1. Public servants' assessments of the dynamics of corruption after the Revolution of Dignity, %

Source: own data

It is also interesting to note that according to the results of the alternative report on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of state anti-corruption policy—which consists of 44 anti-corruption measures defined by the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2014–2017—as of February 1, 2019 (that is, taking into account the results achieved in 2018), only 11 measures had been fully implemented, 23 partially implemented, and 10 not yet implemented (Kalitenko, Kalmykov, and Koliushko 2019, 31)

Moreover, none of the goals set in the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2014–2017 have been fully achieved. It follows that none of the issues raised in the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2014–2017 had been resolved as of February 1, 2019. Additionally, for the second year in a row in Ukraine there is no key strategic document in the field of the prevention of and fight against corruption. Under such circumstances, anti-corruption institutions act in an unbalanced and inefficient manner, while other state and local self-government bodies carry out those anti-corruption measures that they consider appropriate, or in some cases do not take any measures in this area (Kalitenko, Kalmykov, and Koliushko 2019, 18).

Thus, it can be concluded that society is already tired of “widely publicized arrests which ultimately result in nothing. Society expects justice and results in the form of the return of the funds of corruption to the state budget and the just punishment of crimes relating to corruption.

Openness and transparency of government: domestic and foreign experience.

As noted above, the second most effective step towards increasing trust in public servants, according to the respondents of the survey in this paper, is to increase the openness and transparency of the authorities. 29 percent of respondents categorized this step as “4”, indicating that they thought it was the most effective measure for increasing public trust in authorities. It is worth noting that transparency and openness of public authorities is a prerequisite for the participation of citizens in the management of public affairs. Access to information is a prerequisite for public scrutiny, and a key element in the development of a civil society. The transparency of the activities of public authorities and the availability of information regarding their current activities and the decisions that they have made is not only a necessary element of permanent and reliable communication between society and government, but is also a means of the effective functioning of state authorities and local self-government bodies.

According to V. Nesterovich, the key to improving domestic experience in this field is institutional support for the practical implementation of the principles of openness and transparency in the activities of public authorities. In particular, this can be achieved by creating units that are special in their composition, whose main task is real, informal assistance to citizens and public associations (2016, 72). Firstly, this would prevent the various abuses, manipulations, and violations that exist in the activities of public authorities, since the lack of openness and transparency in their activities is a favorable basis for manifestations of corruption (2016, 67).

An open government policy can help to increase public confidence, as it focuses on citizen engagement and access to information. In this way, initiatives are receiving traction in an increasing number of Member and non-Member countries. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization that works to build better policies for better lives. Their main goal is to develop policies that promote prosperity, equality, opportunity, and well-being for all. OECD countries have put forward a number of methods to support an open and inclusive government, ranging from access to information to consultation processes, and culminating in a fully-fledged open government policy. At the heart of these efforts is the goal of increasing citizens' trust: 61 percent of OECD countries report trust to be their main goal when investing in the openness and engagement of citizens, with other goals including strengthening social cohesion, raising awareness, and increasing citizens' scrutiny. Besides the fact that countries are moving towards the implementation of open government policies, these efforts have resulted in an international movement: the Open Government Partnership, to which 19 OECD Member countries have commitments (OECD, n.d.).

In order to join the Open Government Partnership, governments must be committed to upholding the principles of an open and transparent government by endorsing the Open Government Declaration. Members must meet the Eligibility Criteria and pass the Open Government Partnership Values Check. Prior to submitting the first action plan, Open Government Partnership members should identify the responsible government departments and engage with civil society toward a clear and open process of participation. The first step towards full participation in the Open Government Partnership is meeting the Core Eligibility criteria and successfully passing the Open Government Partnership Values Check assessment. Core Eligibility metrics measure a government's performance across four key areas of open government: Fiscal Transparency; Access to Information; Public Officials Asset Disclosure; and Citizen Engagement. The Open Government Partnership Values Check is an effort to ensure that new countries joining the OGP adhere to the norms and values of democratic governance set forth in the Open Government Declaration, and applies to governments wanting to join Open Government Partnership (Open Government Partnership, n.d.).

Thus, by increasing the openness of the authorities, the level of public trust in them is significantly increased. Therefore, adherence to the principles of openness and transparency in the activities of public authorities is an important factor in the democratization of the state, the emergence of the civil society, and the establishment of a partnership dialogue between the public and the authorities.

Upgrading the framework of public service.

The third most effective step, according to the respondents of our survey, would be to improve the moral environment of public services by updating their framework, including management personnel. 28 percent of respondents categorized this step as “4,” indicating that they thought it was the most effective measure of increasing public trust in authorities. Firstly, it is important to note that updating framework also plays an important role in raising public confidence in public servants. “Public servant” is a special profession that, on the one hand, represents the broad powers of government but, on the other hand, also bears double responsibility for the state of affairs in society. The degree of satisfaction of the legitimate interests of citizens, the authority of the state, the sustainable development of the state, and the state's competitiveness in the international arena depend on the professionalism and transparency of public servants. Ultimately, trust in power starts with the person who solves day-to-day issues. When celebrating the 100th anniversary of public service in Ukraine, it was necessary to remember the statement of the founder of the public service and hetman of the Ukrainian state, P. P. Skoropadsky. In 1918, when assessing the work of the government and local administrations, he said: “I do not want to say that they work well, there are many people who are inappropriate based on their knowledge and their moral qualities, but it takes time to disinfect all these institutions” (Doroshenko 1930). After 100 years, one might argue that little has changed. It is perhaps time to develop a unified governmental approach to creating a highly professional public service (Grischenko 2018, 66).

In current discourse, modern demands on public servants are shaped by public consciousness. Calls for their patriotism, responsibility, and civic courage are ubiquitous. Today, Ukrainian society demands people who are willing to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of nationality; to perform important state functions in stressful situations. Thus, the most important moral demand of the public is faithfulness to the power of the state, a virtue that therefore has great social significance (Tomkina 2014, 70).

Therefore, it is now time for the introduction of a selection of highly qualified personnel, who simultaneously meet the requirements regarding the integrity of their behavior, into the public service. A high level of integrity should be ensured in public servants by raising the requirement of integrity in public authorities to the level of a principle. This principle should be enshrined in the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, and implemented in the relevant by-laws. It is likely that the regulation of this principle would provide for increasing the moral and ethical requirements for public servants. This would allow for the recruitment of professional, decent people into the public service, as well as ensuring an adequate level of remuneration and the monitoring of the activities of public officials (Sorokina 2017, 41).

Constructive public relations: domestic and foreign experience.

The fourth proposed step involved providing daily constructive public relations briefings informing citizens about positive results, shortcomings, and problematic issues. A total of 22 percent of respondents categorized this step as “4,” indicating that they thought it was the most effective measure of increasing public trust in authorities. One promising method of restoring trust and forming constructive public relations is the establishment of a permanent social dialogue between authorities and society regarding the solution of social problems. In our view, one of the most effective ways to implement this approach could be to implement such large-scale projects in Ukraine as have been successfully embedded in Poland. In particular, the “Transparent Poland” (Przejrzysta Polska) project, and before that “Friendly Administration”, amongst others. These projects aimed primarily at introducing clearly regulated administrative procedures to public authorities based on the ethical behavior of employees in providing quality management services to citizens, as well as improving mechanisms for involving the public in decision-making in the interests of the territorial community.

“Transparent Poland” was the largest program of its kind in the country, and was aimed at improving the effectiveness of local self-government activities—becoming truly massive. Almost 800 applicants from across Poland submitted applications, representing more than 30 percent of all communes and counties within the state. This voluntary action was initiated by a number of institutions, including: the Foundation for Local Democracy Development; the Newspaper Election; the Polish-American Foundation for Freedom; the Stefan Batory Foundation; and the Center for Civic Education. The project was based on six principles of effective governance: transparency; intolerance to corruption; citizen involvement; predictability; expertise; and accountability. Naturally, the results of such a large-scale project—ongoing in Poland since 2000 on a continuous

basis—contribute to the accumulation and dissemination of the best practices of effective management, have an anti-corruption orientation, and enhance the image of the authorities and their public relations. Such social projects contribute to the rapid transition of the social system to a qualitatively new state of functioning by enhancing positive feedback.

Perhaps the defining feature of such actions is that they are not imparted down from above by force. They are predominantly carried out from below, i.e., on a voluntary basis at the initiative of public organizations and via the wide involvement of all segments of the population. This approach contributes to the formation of a civil society, strengthens the democratic foundations of government, ensures the implementation of the rule of law, actively shapes the negative attitude of society towards corrupt officials, and ensures the participation and influence of the community on the affairs of self-government (Se-rohin and Pysmennyi 2015, 65).

Conclusions

1. Based on the results of our study, we can conclude that the main directions for increasing trust in authorities are:
 - minimizing the level of corruption in public authorities via the harsher punishment of those who violate the laws of Ukraine;
 - creating the conditions for the transparency and openness of authorities, allowing citizens to understand the essence, goals, and tasks arising in the relevant areas;
 - improving the moral environment of public service, updating personnel, and introducing the selection of highly qualified personnel that would simultaneously meet the requirements of honest conduct to the public service;
 - establishing a partnership dialogue between society and government, enabling citizens to participate in decision-making processes.
2. Trust is an important attribute of effective public administration, and one of the prerequisites for the stable and predictable development of the state. Trust can be viewed as one of the main intangible resources of government that is needed to achieve socially significant results. Trust also stipulates that members of the public voluntarily commit themselves to the exercise of public functions.
3. The role of trust for the stable functioning of the state as a whole is increasing every day. Ensuring and maintaining social stability, the sustainability and predictability of social interactions, and the minimization of risks are all necessary for the successful development of the state and to maintain a healthy climate in society. In addition, society must be confident in the honesty, openness, and sincerity of the authorities, as well as in their readiness to act not only effectively but also in compliance with established rules and regulations. It is in this case that the level of trust in public authorities must increase, which in turn will positively affect both the development of public service in particular and the state as a whole.

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Pasitikėjimo vyriausybę atkūrimas kaip veiksmingo viešojo administravimo Ukrainoje sąlyga

Anotacija

Straipsnyje tiriama efektyviausi visuomenės pasitikėjimo valdžios institucijomis Ukrainoje didinimo žingsniai. Tyrimo metu autoriai atliko sociologinę valstybės tarnautojų apklausą. Nustatyta, kad pagrindiniai būdai, siekiant atkurti pasitikėjimą valdžios institucijomis, susiję, pirma, su neišvengiamumu bausti tuos, kurie pažeidžia Ukrainos įstatymus, antra, valstybės tarnautojo kontrolės ir priežiūros sistemos iš visuomenės pusės tobulinimu, atvirumo didinimu, ir, trečia, valdžios skaidrumu. Taip pat buvo pažymėta, kad vienas iš perspektyvių pasitikėjimo didinimo ir konstruktyvių socialinių santykių formavimo būdų yra nuolatinis valdžios institucijų ir suinteresuotos visuomenės socialinis dialogas sprendžiant socialinio gyvenimo problemas. Pateisinama, kad pasitikėjimas yra svarbus efektyvaus viešojo administravimo atributas ir viena iš sąlygų stabiliai ir nuspėjamai valstybės raidai.

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