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Personal or Party Electoral Campaigns in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo* - Empirical Findings³

Abstract

The main hypothesis of this paper is that candidates who run for elections - run extremely party-oriented campaigns, not personal ones. We test this hypothesis with the help of empirical research (*Comparative Candidate Survey*), which was conducted in 2015. In the survey, 656 (268 - Serbia, 95 - Bosnia and Herzegovina, 136 - Montenegro and 157 - Kosovo*) respondents were interviewed. The electoral institution that is associated most strongly with the theme of our research is the design of the electoral ballots. In terms of the closure form of the list (blocked lists – Serbia and Montenegro), it can be said that the candidates who are on the electoral list are discouraged from leading personal campaigns and encouraged to direct activities during the election period at promoting the party and party leader. However, in countries with personal voting (not blocked lists – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*), the situation is the same. Through insight into the results of comparative research, we see that party campaigns are also dominant in systems with personalised ballots. Candidates for members of parliament only run party-based campaigns. The

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results of the research on the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament in the last election campaign confirm this tendency. The influence of the party leader, the leadership campaign, obedience and loyalty to the leader of the party, and good relations with him/her are much more important for the candidates than contact with the voters and leading personal campaigns.

Keywords: campaigns, party campaign, candidate for member of parliament, survey, intraparty relations

Introduction

In this paper, we discuss the election campaigns during the last four years (up to 2016) for parliamentary elections in the Republic of Serbia (SER), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BaH), Republic of Montenegro (MON) and Kosovo*⁴ (KOS*). **Our research question is:** What types of campaigns do the candidates for members of parliament (MPs) run in these countries? **The main hypothesis (H1)** of this paper is that candidates who run for parliament, run extremely party-focused campaigns, not personal ones, regardless of whether there is a personal vote or not. We test this hypothesis with the help of empirical research (*Comparative Candidate Survey*), which was conducted in 2015 in these countries. **Additional research questions** are: What is the cause of extremely party-focused campaigns? Is it the electoral system? **The second hypothesis (H2)** of this paper is: There is definitely an impact from the type of electoral system, which in combination with undemocratic intraparty relations leads to purely party-based campaigns in these countries.

This paper is a continuation of our first analysis of this hypothesis in the Republic of Serbia (Stojanović and Jović 2015). The conclusion of the first analysis is that the candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns. The results of the research on the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament during the 2014 election campaign in SER confirm this statement.

In this study, we are testing the same hypothesis in countries that also have proportional electoral systems, but with significant differences, and researching whether personal voting in BaH and KOS* has an impact on the election strategy of the candidates.

In Section 2, we present the framework in which we look at the topics of electoral systems in these four countries, electoral campaigns and the impact of the electoral system on the campaign in the context of the

4 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the *Kosovo* declaration of independence.

research. In Section 3, we lay out the research methodology. In Section 4, we present the results of the research, while in Section 5, we attempt to offer evidence in support of the working hypothesis.

Elections and Election Campaigns – Context of the Research

The issue of elections and electoral rules, as well as the rules defining the election campaign, are broad themes that we will not deal with in detail, but they will be presented in the context of the present research.

The electoral system is of special importance for the representation of citizens – namely, how citizens elect their representatives. This is significant in the context of nominations and the behaviour of candidates during the election campaign. The electoral system is certainly one of the key factors that influence the candidates' campaign strategies, so we present the electoral systems in these four countries.

It is important to emphasise that the election systems in all four countries are proportional, but also very different (possibility of voting for a candidate), and that is why it is important to research electoral strategies of candidates for representatives in different subtypes of the proportional electoral system. The electoral system not only affects the allocation of voters, but also the behaviour of the candidates during the election campaign.

The electoral system for the election of MPs in SER is proportional (list system, closed and blocked lists), with a single electoral unit, a threshold of 5%, and the distribution of mandates by the D'Hondt method. The election feature associated most strongly with the theme of our research is the design of the electoral ballot papers. The ballot paper states the name of the party, the leader of the party, and the first name on the party list. Since this is category voting, the voter votes by circling the ordinal number before the name on the list. The design of the ballot guides the voter to choose exclusively the party and its leader. During the voting, the voter has no opportunity to be informed about all the candidates standing for the party for which he/she will vote. The voter votes, but does not elect – the election of MPs is essentially left to the parties (Jovanović 2015: 29-30).

The electoral system for the election of members of the House of Representatives in BaH is proportional (list system - closed, but not blocked list - open list for voting for candidates within a list), with eight multi-member electoral units, a threshold of 3%, and the Sainte-Laguë

method of distributing mandates. As we see, the election system of BaH allows a voter to express preference for the candidates who are nominated on the list for which he/she wants to vote. The ballot shall allow a voter to vote for only one of the following options: an independent candidate, if there are any; a political party, coalition, or independent candidate's list, if there are any; one or more candidates on the one list chosen by the voter of one political party, coalition, or list of independent candidates. Where a voter validly marks one or more candidates on one list, the list shall be considered to have received one valid vote for the purpose of allocating mandates (Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The electoral system for the election of MPs in MON is proportional (list system, closed and blocked lists), with a single electoral unit, a threshold of 3%, and the distribution of mandates by the D'Hondt method. Voting is performed at parliamentary elections by circling the ordinal number before the title of the chosen list of candidates, the title of the list, or the name and surname of the leader of the list. Such a method of voting implies that the voter with his/her vote categorically expresses his/her preference in relation to the parties, one vote ballot – straight ticket (Dedović and Vujović 2015: 113).

The electoral system for the election of MPs in KOS* is proportional (list system - closed, but not blocked list - open list for voting for candidates within a list), with a single electoral unit, a threshold of 5%, and the Sainte-Laguë method of distributing mandates. According to the Law on General Elections, a voter is given a single ballot for the election to be marked with a vote for a political party. A voter can also select up to five candidates from a political subject (Krasniqi 2015: 51).

Table 1. Electoral systems in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo*

State	Number of seats	Type of electoral system	Lists	Electoral units	Threshold	Method of distributing mandates
Serbia	250	Proportional	Closed lists	1	5%	D'Hondt
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	Proportional	Closed, not blocked lists	8	3%	Sainte-Laguë
Montenegro	81	Proportional	Closed lists	1	3%	D'Hondt
Kosovo*	120	Proportional	Closed, not blocked lists (voting for 5 candidates)	1	5%	Sainte-Laguë

Research Methodology

The study, aimed at familiarising readers with the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament in snap parliamentary elections, was conducted in the period from March to June 2015. The research is part of the project: “Balkan Electoral Comparative Study: The Impact of Personal Vote on Internal Party Democracy”.⁵ In this paper, we carry out an additional analysis of inferential statistics. The research was conducted by means of a questionnaire containing 81 questions divided into the following sections: political background and activities; the campaign; questions and policies; democracy and representation; and personal data.

In the analysis of the obtained data, post stratification was performed by gender, age, education level, and political party. The analysis used classic descriptive analysis (frequency and cross-tabulations), then correlation tests, t-tests for independent samples and tests of variance analysis.

Description of the research sample

In the survey, 268 respondents in SER were interviewed. Gender stratification shows that overall 60.4% of respondents who took part in the survey are male and 39.6% female. The average age of the respondents is 41 years. Out of the total number of respondents, 8.7% live in rural areas, 37.6% in small or medium-sized towns, 5.7% in the suburbs of a large town/city, and 47.9% of respondents live in large towns/cities.

During the research, 95 respondents were interviewed in BaH. Gender stratification indicates that the survey covered a total of 56.8% of male respondents and 43.2% of female respondents. The average age of respondents is 48 years. Of the total number of respondents, 14.3% live in rural areas, 33% in small or medium-sized towns, 6.6% in the suburbs of a large town/city, and 46.2% in large towns/cities.

As part of the research, 136 respondents were interviewed in MON. Gender stratification indicates that the survey covered a total of 68.4% of male respondents and 31.6% of female respondents. The average age of respondents is 50 years. Out of the total number of respondents, 6.7% live in rural areas, 54.1% in small or medium-sized towns, 4.4% in the suburbs of a large town/city, and 34.8% in large towns/cities.

5 See: <http://balkanelectoralstudies.org/index.php> (10.09.2016)

In KOS*, 157 respondents were interviewed during the course of the research. Gender stratification indicates that the survey covered a total of 70.7% of male respondents and 29.3% of female respondents. The average age of respondents is 46 years. Out of the total, 17.4% of respondents live in rural areas, 11% in small or medium-sized towns,, 11% in the suburbs of a large town/city, and 60.6% in large towns/cities.

Research Results

The answer to the question “What was the purpose of your campaign?” best indicates how the candidate strategically conceived and implemented the campaign, as well as the role and place of the party in his/her promotion. Respondents were asked to rate this on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that the campaign goal was self-promotion and 10 means that the goal was party promotion. On this scale of 11 divisions, the average mark given by the respondents is: SER - 7.1; BaH - 7.21; MON - 8.24; and KOS* - 7.07. These data tell us that the campaigns were more focused on connecting personal candidacy to the party than on popularising and promoting the candidate.

In SER, as many as 34% of respondents said that the campaign was focused exclusively on the party, while a negligible 3% of respondents indicated that the campaign focused on them as candidates. The percentage of those who marked that the campaign was more focused on the candidates (score 0–4) is 15%, while the percentage of those who answered that the campaign was more focused on the party (score 6–10) is 64%.

In BaH, as many as 41% of respondents said that the campaign was focused exclusively on the party, while a negligible 7% of respondents indicated that the campaign focused on them as candidates. The percentage of those who marked that the campaign was more focused on the candidates (score 0–4) is 16%, while the percentage of those who answered that the campaign was more focused on the party (score 6–10) is 71%.

In MON, as many as 46% of respondents said that the campaign was focused exclusively on the party, while a negligible 1.5% of respondents indicated that the campaign focused on them as candidates. The percentage of those who marked that the campaign was more focused on the candidates (score 0–4) is 4%, while the percentage of those who an-

swered that the campaign was more focused on the party (score 6–10) is 87%.

In KOS*, as many as 39.5% of respondents said that the campaign was focused exclusively on the party, while a 10% of respondents indicated that the campaign focused on them as candidates. The percentage of those who marked that the campaign was more focused on the candidates (score 0–4) is 15%, while the percentage of those who answered that the campaign was more focused on the party (score 6–10) is 64%.

Table 2. What was the purpose of your campaign?

State	Serbia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Kosovo*
Average mark given by the respondents	7.1	7.21	8.24	7.07
Campaign focused exclusively on the party (score 10)	34.3%	41.1%	45.6%	39.5%
Campaign focused exclusively on them as candidates (score 0)	3.4%	7.4%	1.5%	10.2%
Campaign more focused on the candidates (score 0–4)	15%	15.9%	3.7%	15.2%
Campaign focused on the party (score 6–10)	64%	70.6%	84.6%	63.8%

Additional questions that say a lot about candidates' campaign strategies are questions regarding the most important issues in the campaign.

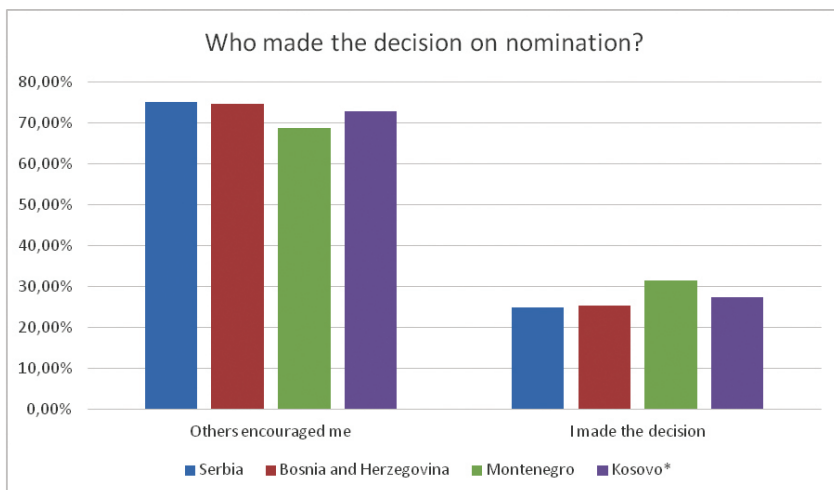
Respondents stated that the most prominent issue in the campaign was (on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very much”):

Table 3. Most important issues in the campaign

Most important issues in the campaign	Average mark			
	Serbia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Kosovo*
Openness towards voters in the electoral unit	4.1	4.0	4.6	4.5
Socio-economic welfare in the electoral unit	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.2
Specific issues of the party's platform	3.7	3.8	3.95	4.2
Policy advocacy that is required from voters in the electoral unit	3.4	3.6	4	4
Personal characteristics	2.9	3.8	2.6	3.6

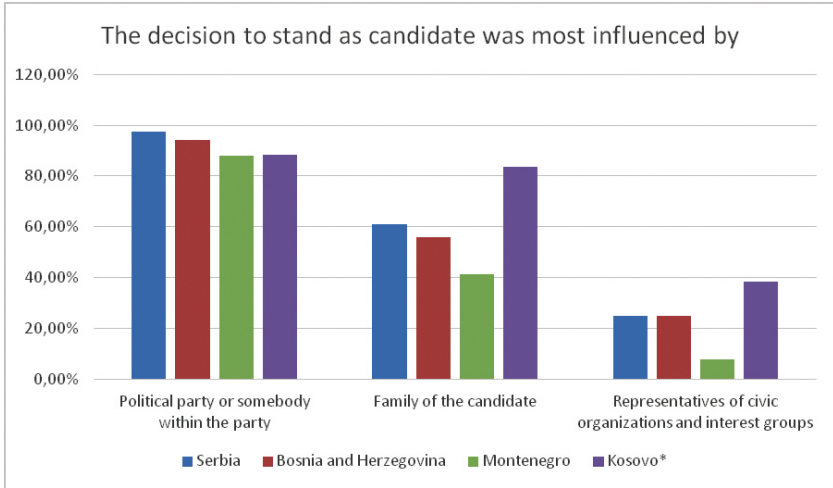
As shown in Figure 1, the respondents' decisions to run in the parliamentary elections were mainly based on the support from those around them, while approximately every fourth respondent / candidate decided independently.

Figure 1. Who made the decision on nomination?



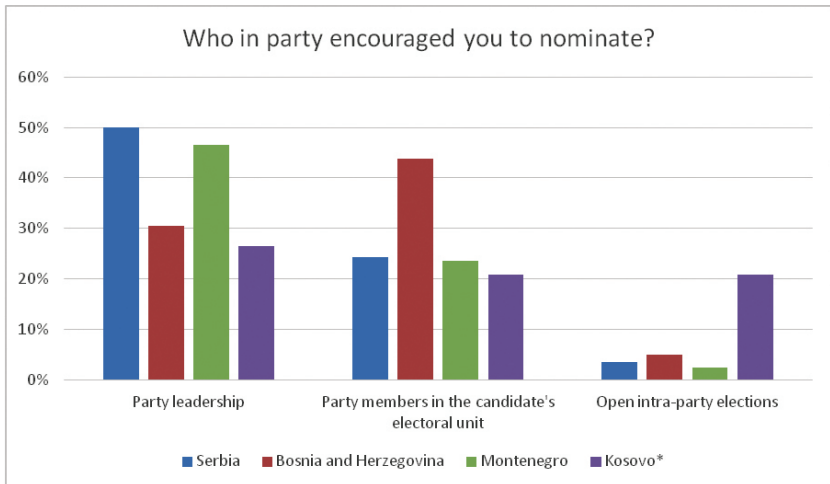
The decision to stand as a candidate was most influenced by the political party or somebody within the party in all countries (the average range of responses: 88% - 97.4%).

Figure 2. The decision to stand as a candidate was most influenced by



When it comes to incentives from the party to run, our respondents pointed out that the key role was played by party leadership in SER (50%), MON (46.5%) and KOS* (26.4%), while the main role was played by the party members in the candidate’s electoral unit in BaH (46.5%).

Figure 3. Who in the party encouraged you to nominate?



It is interesting to note that a large number of candidates were officials in their party at the time of nomination for members of parliament, except in the case of BaH. In SER, just 25.4% were not officials, in MON,

25.7% and in KOS*, 34.4%. In BaH, only 33.7% of candidates were party officials.

Party Campaign Instead of Personal Campaign

After reviewing the central findings in the research, in this section, we aim to show evidence in support of the hypothesis that the campaigns being run by candidates for members of parliament are predominantly party campaigns, and not personal ones. Some of the major questions in the questionnaire that can confirm or refute our hypothesis are the questions: “What was the purpose of your campaign? Where would you position yourself on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means attracting as much attention as possible to yourself as a candidate, while 10 means drawing more attention to your party?” The average value of the answers to the latter question is between 7.07 and 8.24 (SER – 7.1; BaH – 7.21; MON – 8.24; and KOS* – 7.07), which undoubtedly shows that the candidates were leading party campaigns in all these countries. **Of great importance is the fact that 34% of respondents in the survey in SER, 41.1% in BaH, 45.6% in MON, and 39.5% in KOS* answered 10 (i.e. for the party). This means that more than a third of candidates led only party campaigns. On the other hand, the proportion of respondents who led exclusively personal campaigns is only 3% in SER, 7.4% in BaH, 1.5% in MON and a little bit more – 10.5% – in KOS*. These data tell us that the campaigns were more focused on the personal connection with the party nomination than on popularising and promoting the candidates themselves.**

As already mentioned, the average response in SER is 7.1. In MON, the average value of the responses is 8.2. On the other hand, in countries where we have a personalised type of electoral system, the average value of the responses is not very different from the results obtained in SER. The average value of the respondents’ answers in BaH is 7.2 and in KOS* 7.1.

These results show that the subtype of electoral system and elements of personalised voting do not affect the campaigning by candidates for members of parliament. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who focused their campaign entirely on promoting their party (response: “for the party”) is lowest in SER (34.3%), while the percentages in BaH (41.1%) and KOS* (39.5%) are significantly higher. Thus,

although the institutional element certainly has an impact on the behaviour of candidates, it is not of crucial importance, as is evidenced by the surveys.

The stated hypothesis that party candidates predominantly wage party campaigns and that personal campaigns have been completely ignored is confirmed through the answers obtained to the question “To what extent have you pointed out in your campaign the following?” In all countries, respondents indicated attention aimed at highlighting personal characteristics as minimal.

All the results of the research show that candidates for members of parliament run party campaigns, not personal ones. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves what are the reasons for leading only party campaigns, and not personal ones? **As we have seen - despite the differences in electoral systems (preferential voting in BaH and KOS*, closed but not blocked lists), research results show that there are no significant differences in the attitudes of the candidates, as well as in their strategies and tactics in campaigns, in relation to the candidates who are selected through an exclusive voting for party list (closed and blocked lists in SER and MON).**

In the introduction, we presented the institutional factors that affect the individual campaigns of candidates. The proportional electoral system with closed lists can be one of the key causes for the absence of personal campaigns by candidates and the orientation of the campaign exclusively towards the party. SER and MON have electoral systems with closed and blocked lists, but BaH and KOS* have elements of personalised voting. We have compared the results of the candidates from these types of electoral systems.

An important indicator for research into the campaign is also the process of nomination. Only a quarter of the respondents came to the decision to stand as candidates independently. The most important indicator for our hypothesis is who had the most influence on the nomination, which was predominantly the political party in all countries. These data are somewhat expected, bearing in mind the way members of parliament are nominated (party list system). However, when we look at who in the party had the greatest influence on the nomination, the party leadership stands out with 50% in SER and 46.5% in MON. On the other hand, in KOS*, party leadership is the most contributing factor with only 26.4%, while the encouragement of members in the electoral units is the most powerful factor in stimulating the nomination in BaH. These

data demonstrate the highly significant role of the party leadership right from the beginning of the process of nomination, which consequently causes candidates to promote the party rather than themselves. Data show that the nomination process is affected by different factors of the election system. In BaH, where there are multiple electoral units, party members from electoral units have a powerful influence on the nominations, while the system in KOS*, with lists that are not blocked, reduces the influence of the party leadership.

However, the reasons for leading predominantly party campaigns should be sought in the common impact of the type of electoral system and in relations within the party. That is, we believe that the type of electoral system in SER and MON encourages highly undemocratic internal party relations. Parties in SER and MON are extremely centralised, with power concentrated in the hands of the party leader and a close circle of loyal people.

We now turn to intraparty democracy in SER. Although internal relations are, at least formally, democratically regulated (by statutes and other organisational rules) in the majority of parties, so that the membership may participate in determining the party's strategy and tactics and the election of party leadership and party leader, there is a tendency, for various reasons such as the efficiency and logic of party discipline, for decision-making power to be restricted to the narrowest circle and to the leader (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2013: 11). Candidates for members of parliament have no incentive to interact with voters and to conduct personal campaigns since, for their election to parliament, relations with the head of the party and the leadership are much more important; party leaders are the ones who draw up the electoral lists and establish the order of the candidates. Consequently, candidates are focused on the promotion of the party and its leader by accepting the general instructions that come from the party headquarters. Political parties in SER run leadership campaigns (Lončar and Stojanović 2015), and the candidates for members of parliament are only spokespeople who speak on behalf of the party leader.

It is obvious that, in MON parties, there is a low degree of inclusion and a high level of centralisation, as well as a low level of autonomy (Vujović and Tomović 2015: 181). Elections in MON are dominated by parties. Electoral lists of parties and coalitions participating in elections are established in party organs, which also determine positions on the electoral lists. In election campaigns, leaders of electoral lists are in the centre of attention (Vukićević 2015: 150).

However, the situation is no different when it comes to internal party democracy in the other two countries – BaH and KOS*. Although the electoral system (not blocked lists, the possibility of voting for party lists and for individual candidates) should encourage internal party democracy, this is not the case. It is interesting to note that all Bosnian-Herzegovinian political parties, regardless of their ideological orientation, national background or any other platform determinant, are characterised by a strong sense of discipline, strictly defined hierarchy, and important role of the party leader. Along these lines, it is worth mentioning the particularity of relationships between party members and their leaders. As a rule, this relationship is devoid of all forms of critical awareness and agency, and it is characterised by not questioning the leader's authority (Huruz 2015: 116).

When it comes to political parties in KOS*, they are characterised by the strong role of the party leader and weak internal party democracy. Based on political parties' statutes in KOS*, the impact of the leader in decision-making processes inside the party, or even outside, is very powerful. In practice, political parties do not have any democratic history regarding the election of the president (leader) of the party (Murtezi 2015: 72).

Regardless of the election systems in BaH and KOS*, which have elements of preferential voting, political parties remain distinctly undemocratic, and that may be an important cause for candidates for members of parliament to lead party campaigns, not personal ones. Furthermore, the lack of democracy is also a reason why their election strategies opt for the promotion of the party. Political parties keep their dominant role through the process of nomination of candidates (proportional electoral system - system list) and because of that, candidates are still in a dependent and subordinate position in relation to the leadership of the party and its leader, although it is also necessary that voters recognise them as quality candidates and vote for them.

Conclusion

Candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns. The results of the research on the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament (*Comparative Candidate Survey*) confirm this statement. Bearing in mind the type of electoral system, the

reason for non-personal and party-based campaigns led by candidates for members of parliament should be sought in institutional (proportional electoral system - list system with closed electoral list for voters and one electoral unit) factors in SER and MON. However, examining the results of the comparative research, we can see that party-based campaigns are also predominant in systems with a personalised ballot paper (not blocked lists in BaH and KOS*). Candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns regardless of whether there is a personal vote or not (H1). The results of the research confirm the hypothesis. There is an impact from the type of electoral system, which in combination with undemocratic intraparty relations leads to purely party-based campaigns in these countries (H2). The results of the research confirm the hypothesis.

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