

Human Security Challenges in Nepal

Govinda Prasad Guragain, Ph.D¹

¹Associate Professor, Tribhuvan University, Padmakanya Multiple Campus, Department of Political Science, Bagbazar, Kathmandu, Nepal

guragaingovinda@gmail.com/ ORCID ID:0009-0004-6642-6618

Saroj Pokharel²

²Lecturer, Tribhuvan University, Active Academy College, Department of Sociology, Basundhara, Kathmandu, Nepal

pokharelsaroj44@gmail.com/ ORCID ID: 0009-0004-9336-423X

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Abstract

The idea of security has changed notably since the Cold War, with a notable shift towards human security as detailed in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report. Human security emphasizes protecting individual freedoms and dignity, prioritizing a people-centered perspective. Globalization, especially post-Cold War, had a profound impact on less developed countries like Nepal, affecting conditions related to human security. Nepal's human security has been further jeopardized by internal conflicts and natural disasters such as the devastating earthquake in 2015. Regional organizations like SAARC have historically focused more on arms control rather than prioritizing human security. The 21st century has brought heightened global risks such as terrorism, poverty, internal conflicts, and natural disasters, posing significant challenges to human security globally. Nepal, classified by the UNDP as highly vulnerable to climate change with limited capacities to cope with disasters due to economic constraints, faces heightened insecurity among its population. Despite these global challenges and threats from various sources, international efforts to promote human security have been limited. Enhancing human security requires placing individuals at the center of coordinated efforts involving both state and non-governmental actors, particularly under the leadership of the United Nations through collective measures. Amid ongoing disputes in the extent of effectiveness of the protection of human, it has got a growing recognition has turned out as the conventional focus on state sovereignty and independence is insufficient in addressing modern global risks. The international community is grappling with the need to develop new strategies to protect people from transnational dangers in an increasingly interconnected world. This shift towards promoting human security acknowledges that contemporary threats, which impact lives more profoundly than traditional military challenges between states, extend beyond national boundaries and military concerns.

Keywords: Dignity, freedom, globalization, peace, security

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Introduction

Human security has become a significant and contested concept in both academic and policy discussions, seeking to expand and redefine traditional notions of security. Traditionally, security primarily concentrated on safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity from external military threats, a framework referred to as national security. This perspective dominated security analysis and policymaking, particularly during periods of conflict. However, from the 1970s and 1980s onward, there was a noticeable shift in scholarly discussions on security, prompted by global events such as conflicts in the Middle East and growing recognition of environmental degradation worldwide (OECD, 1994). Despite these changes, the state remained the central focus of security efforts, viewed as the entity requiring protection. The idea of human security shifts the focus from state-centered views to emphasize the individual as the main priority in addressing security issues.

The concept of human security has broadened the definition of what constitutes security. Historically, security policies were centered on defending borders and deterring external threats. However, shifts in the global landscape and a decrease in interstate conflicts have led to the emergence of new challenges and threats.

These changes have led countries to work together and share resources through joint policy frameworks to tackle problems that single states struggle to handle on their own. The shortcomings of traditional national security methods have contributed to the rise of the human security concept (UNDP, 1994). While national security during the Cold War primarily focused on safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity from military threats, proponents of human security have called for a more inclusive perspective. This approach addresses non-military risks, including poverty, disease, and political violence. They underscored the significance of factors such as human development, economic progress, and democratic governance in ensuring stability and prosperity. They argued that the welfare of communities and nations depends not only on the acquisition of weapons, as seen in the nuclear arms debate, but also on broader socio-economic and political considerations (Acharya, 2004).

The concept of human security, much like other ideas, lacks a universally agreed-upon definition. Academic debates have framed it in several ways: as a novel theoretical idea, a basis for analysis, a perspective on the world, a political agenda, or a policymaking framework (Edwards, 2016). Despite this diversity in interpretation, proponents of human security generally concur on the need to shift the focus away from a state-centered approach to security, emphasizing the importance of individuals. It's essential to note that human security does not aim to supplant state security but rather seeks to comprehensively assess all aspects of human life, considering potential threats at regional, local, and national levels. Human security adopts a holistic perspective by incorporating aspects of security, governance, solidarity, and development. It tackles security issues within an extensive framework that encompasses political, economic, social, and environmental risks (Aduloju & Prall, 2014). The idea gained prominence following the 1994 Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Program. This report, led by former Pakistani Finance Minister Mahbubul Haq and strongly supported by economist Amartya Sen, marked a significant milestone in defining human security. The report delineated human security to encompass seven core areas.

Various Kinds of Securities

Economic Security - This involves ensuring that individuals have a stable basic income, typically through secure and well-paying jobs, or, if necessary, through publicly funded safety nets.

Food Security - This ensures that everyone has reliable physical and economic access to essential food supplies at all times.

Health Security - This guarantees a basic level of security via various kinds of diseases and unhealthy lifestyles of the people.

Environmental Protection - This focuses on protecting individuals from both immediate and long-lasting impacts of natural disasters, human-induced environmental threats, and environmental degradation.

Personal Security - This aims to conserve individuals from physical violence, including threats from state actors, external forces, violent individuals, sub-state entities, domestic abuse, or predatory behavior.

Community Security - This entails protecting individuals from the breakdown of traditional relationships and values, as well as from sectarian and ethnic conflicts.

Political Protection - This guarantees that individuals reside in a society that upholds their basic human rights and safeguards them from government efforts to regulate ideas and information.

The concept of human security represents a shift from traditional national security, which focuses primarily on protecting state sovereignty and territorial integrity from external military threats. Human security is broadly characterized by three main aspects: first, it centers on individuals or communities as the primary focus of security; second, it acknowledges security as multidimensional, covering various aspects of human well-being; and third, it is universally applicable across different states and societies (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2017). The concept gained significant international attention in 1994 with its inclusion in the UNDP's Annual Human Development Report. The report highlighted four core aspects of human security: it is a global issue affecting everyone universally; its components are interrelated and dependent on each other; proactive measures are more effective than reactive ones; and it prioritizes the needs and well-being of individuals. In May 2004, the Human Security Unit was established to oversee the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) and to collaborate with various stakeholders in creating practical tools for the application of human security principles. The UNTFHS has supported numerous projects aimed at advancing human security and protecting vulnerable populations worldwide (Yousaf, 2017). These are the core concepts and challenges of human security as discussed by researchers and critics. It has become one of the most complicated tasks in controlling crime as Adhikari, (Academia. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25058/179400x.1709>) has discussed the difficulties of transforming from one religion to another one in his "Fear in Religion." But it has become essential to control it by exploring the facts of the security that has to be maintained.

Research Questions

Human security has become a global threat and it has got various kinds of threats in Nepal. The aforementioned researchers and the scholars have not discussed about the process of addressing the issues of human security in Nepal. So, the research has attempted to fill the gaps by answering the research questions.

A) What are the challenges of human security in Nepal?

B) How can it be addressed for the solution of human security?

Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are to explore the various issues of human security in Nepal and its challenges. The specific objectives of the research are:

A) To identify the challenges to human security in Nepal.

B) To trace the ways of how can it be addressed for the solution of human security.

Methodology

The researchers have employed document analysis, as a qualitative research method noted for its effectiveness in collecting secondary data, to investigate the human security of Nepal's internal security. Documents spanning from 1936 to 2018 were systematically reviewed and explained to guide the research's direction. These documents—comprising public records, personal papers, and physical evidence—have been obtained from a range of sources, including books, libraries, government offices, digital libraries, and online search engines. They have offered comprehensive information and extensive coverage of data, aiding in contextualizing the research within its subject area. The study also has raised critical questions about how human security influences Nepal's security landscape.

The researchers have sourced data from diverse outlets, including newspapers, official reports from Nepal and media sources, the reports, the journals, the research papers, and books focusing on cross-border crime and concerned security problems along the country's borders with India and China. Additionally, papers presented at seminars and unpublished manuscripts, along with reports from newspapers, have been accessed. The study has identified the gaps in prior research, particularly in the availability of government and non-governmental data, and has analyzed factors contributing to human security between India and Nepal, highlighting the complexities involved.

The research offers a thorough examination of human security and its implications for security issues. It explores various facets related to its subject matter, encompassing the geographical features of the Nepal-India border and the activities of relevant interest groups in the region. The study emphasizes credibility through the application of methodological strategies and ethical considerations, particularly in handling confidential documents responsibly.

Analysis of various Concepts of Human Security

Human Security and its challenges in Nepal have been investigated and analyzed under various headings based on geography, wars, conflicts, poverty, hunger, climate change and the like at the local as well as global levels. It has become one of the burning issues in the global and it has attempted the ways of its solution by pointing out the various threats and insecurity.

The Contested Definition of the Security of Humanity

Human security encompasses two primary dimensions. Firstly, it involves protection from enduring threats such as hunger, disease, and oppression. Secondly, it entails safeguarding individuals from sudden and damaging disruptions in their everyday lives, whether these occur at home, at work, or within their communities. These threats can endure across different levels of national income and stages of development (UNDP, 1994). Mahmudullah, the former Finance Minister of Pakistan who played a key role in drafting the 1994 Human Development Report, emphasized that human security is not about weaponry but about preserving human dignity. Similarly, Kofi Annan has argued that human security should not be viewed solely in military terms. Instead, it should encompass areas such as economic growth, social equity,

environmental sustainability, democratization, disarmament, and the safeguarding of human rights and the rule of law. These aspects are interrelated, with improvements in one area frequently contributing to progress in others (Baylis et al., 2017). The UN Commission on Human Security aims to safeguard the fundamental aspects of human life in ways that promote individual freedom and personal development.

Human security emphasizes the protection of individuals over states or governments, leading to significant discussion and debate. Critics question whether this approach overly broadens the scope of security studies and whether prioritizing individual security effectively addresses the global challenges posed by globalization. On the other hand, proponents of human security view it as a significant advancement in recognizing the threats to human well-being and survival, including poverty, disease, environmental degradation, human rights violations, and armed conflicts. However, human security goes beyond addressing only human rights violations; it also emphasizes the importance of environmental security as a critical component (Buzan, 2007). It has revealed the position of the insecurity of Nepalese and it has to be addressed the issues jointly with the various strategies.

Human Security Paradigm: Shifting Focus from States to Individuals

Human security is primarily concerned with freedom from fear. It is often viewed as encompassing a broad range of needs and desires, though there is debate about whether linking security exclusively to development yields clear benefits (Krause & Juterson, 2005). The traditional concept of security underwent a major shift after the Cold War, transitioning from a focus on territorial defense to the protection of individuals. As the limitations of a purely military approach became evident, security concepts evolved to address non-military aspects such as health, economic stability, and gender issues, aiming to enhance individual well-being and safety (Bourne, 2014). The focus on freedom from fear in human security highlights the importance of protecting individuals from violence, and recognizing the close connections between violence, poverty, and state structures.

The human security approach places individuals at its core, marking a departure from traditional security frameworks focused on military power and defending territory. Instead, it prioritizes fostering development and safeguarding individuals, under the belief that sovereignty and other security aspects stem from the well-being of people (MacFarlane & Khong, 2007). The global understanding of security is shifting towards viewing security not only in terms of protecting land but also in terms of ensuring the safety and welfare of individuals. This approach emphasizes development strategies over military solutions, aiming to secure people's lives in their homes, communities, and environments (Haq, 1995). Advocates of the human security concept prioritize the protection of human life and the promotion of dignity alongside freedom. This approach extends beyond ensuring physical survival in times of conflict or peace, emphasizing the fulfillment of basic human needs while preserving human dignity. Additionally, human security is proactive rather than reactive, which is not only more cost-effective but also involves instituting measures early on to prevent threats from emerging or to mitigate their impact when they do occur. Therefore, human security necessitates establishing institutional frameworks in advance to anticipate and prepare for potential threats such as famines or floods, thereby minimizing disruptions to people's daily lives (Yousaf, 2017). In a vision for the future, human wellbeing will form the central focus of all policies—social, economic, and beyond—in efforts to prevent conflicts. This approach integrates the comprehensive fulfillment of fundamental human rights, including political and security rights, into the concept of human security.

The entitlement to live without the lack of essentials

The entitlement to live without apprehension

Human Security in the South Asian Regions

The South Asian region illustrates a notable gap between human security and state security, as governments in the area often prioritize traditional security concerns over social development. This is reflected in their substantial annual budgets dedicated to military spending. Consequently, South Asia stands out as one of the most heavily militarized regions globally (Karim, 2014). Despite the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) through a charter signed on December 8, 1985, by seven South Asian states, aimed at fostering peace, prosperity, and mutual collaboration, the organization has not significantly contributed to enhancing regional well-being or improving the quality of life for its people, unlike other successful regional entities such as the European Union. This limited impact is largely attributed to the overshadowing of non-conventional issues by conventional security concerns (Yousaf, 2017). It has been realized the challenges of human security in the entire South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Emerging Threats to Human Security in a Globalized World

The United Nations Commission on Human Security describes human security as the collective efforts of states and organizations to safeguard the fundamental aspects of human life. This approach aims to enhance individual freedoms and well-being while empowering people to support and defend themselves. It involves creating systems that provide the fundamental necessities for survival, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods. This broad definition integrates two main strategies of human security: shielding individuals from various widespread threats and enabling them to flourish. Fundamentally, the concept asserts that true security for individuals requires protection from both traditional and emerging threats to their rights and safety. The range of threats includes:

- Risks of economic
- Insecurity of Food
- The hazards of the health
- The dangers of the environment
- The insecurities of the individuals
- The vulnerabilities of the community
- The instabilities of the politics
- The risks based on gender
- The challenges of demography
- Diverse forms of crime, including terrorism
- Natural calamities
- Violent conflicts and warfare
- Genocidal acts
- Anti-personnel mines, Small Arms and Light weapons (Aduloju & Pratt, 2014). In other words, the various threats include:

Economic risks

Food insecurities
Health risks
Environmental dangers
Personal insecurities
Community vulnerabilities
Political instabilities
Gender-related risks

Global Challenges to Human Security: Addressing Complex Threats in the 21st Century

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it became evident that the world had entered a turbulent phase characterized by terrorism and violent local conflicts. Humanitarian efforts and international human rights standards are often disregarded and systematically violated. Social inequalities have widened, exacerbating poverty in the most vulnerable regions. Rising competition for limited resources fuels political instability and can lead to conflicts. Fluctuations in global commodity prices can result in severe deprivation and civil unrest. Many seemingly inexplicable violent conflicts and acts of terrorism worldwide gain clearer context when examining these underlying causes. Based on various analyses and studies, the challenges for the 21st century can be enumerated as follows:

Poverty: Gender inequality and poverty are increasing both within and among countries. Nevertheless, humanity possesses the resources and expertise required to ensure that everyone has sufficient means to support themselves.

Hunger and Thirst: The number of people suffering from hunger and thirst continues to rise, surpassing one billion. Adequate food is produced annually to feed the global population, but fair distribution is crucial. Enhancing sustainable agriculture practices can maintain this balance in the future.

Climate Change: Rapid industrialization and deforestation have accelerated global warming and rising sea levels, altering rainfall patterns and displacing millions of people. Investing in clean technologies can foster sustainable growth and reduce carbon emissions.

Resource Depletion: In underdeveloped countries, unregulated exploitation of land, water, fisheries, and forests poses a severe threat that could worsen with a projected global population increase to nine billion. Redirecting a fraction of global defense spending could significantly bolster efforts to alleviate these threats.

War and Conflict: Global arms production continues to escalate due to entrenched interests, necessitating a renewed commitment to resolving conflicts peacefully.

Reconciliation, Justice, and Forgiveness: Upholding human rights and international humanitarian law is essential for achieving reconciliation, justice, and forgiveness globally (Sommaruga, 2011). Reconciliation is one of the processes of making human security.

Promoting Human Security: Strategies for Ensuring Global Well-being

The international community plays a crucial role in advancing human security due to the expansive and debated nature of the concept. Assessing international policies specifically aimed at human security measures remains challenging (Baylis et al., 2017). Significant multilateral initiatives addressing global security issues include the creation of several War Crimes Tribunals, the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the signing of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty. However, there is criticism that Western nations have

potentially exploited the idea of human security and humanitarian aid. Critics argue that these countries may involve aid organizations and development agencies in these efforts to advance their interests (Johns, 2014).

The growth of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations has played a key role in reducing conflicts and improving human security. Since 1948, the UN has launched 67 peacekeeping missions, with over 117,000 personnel currently involved in sixteen operations across four continents. Specialized UN agencies such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been instrumental in tackling poverty and fighting diseases. Additionally, organizations like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have been essential in promoting and addressing issues related to refugees, children's rights, and women's rights, thereby creating important platforms for advocacy and action (MacFarlane & Không, 2007).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a key role in advancing human security. They provide early conflict warnings, deliver timely relief in conflict zones and disaster areas, and support both governmental and UN-led peace building and reconstruction efforts. NGOs are integral to promoting sustainable development as well. The ICRC, guided by international humanitarian law as outlined in the Geneva Conventions, has a unique mandate to protect the lives and dignity of individuals affected by armed conflicts and internal violence, offering aid to war casualties, prisoners, refugees, civilians, and combatants alike. Other significant NGOs known for their fast-track medical services focus on safeguarding children's rights; and Amnesty International, which advocates for global human rights (Baylis et al., 2017). The United Nations, as a global entity, is dedicated to enhancing human security worldwide by promoting international stability and upholding fundamental values such as:

Upholding the rule of law

Ensuring democratic principles are respected

Defending human rights

Ensuring equality under the law

Promoting good governance

Resolving conflicts peacefully

Protecting the environment, among others.

These values form the foundation of the United Nations' efforts to foster global stability and enhance human security worldwide.

Human Security Challenges and Initiatives in Nepal

Nepal faces significant human security challenges, prominently including poverty, social welfare, food security, healthcare, migration, climate change, environmental concerns, and political instability. As one of the world's economically disadvantaged nations, Nepal grapples with widespread poverty, which contributes to low levels of education and healthcare access among its population (Upreti, Bhattarai, & Wagle, 2013). Consequently, many Nepalese individuals endure daily insecurities, with limited prospects for improving their circumstances. While Nepal has made strides in addressing poverty and related development issues, substantial and sustained efforts are necessary to effect meaningful change. Only through effective and continuous development initiatives can Nepal mitigate the insecurities affecting a significant portion of its population.

Nepal, being highly susceptible to natural disasters like the 2015 earthquake and frequent floods and landslides, needs sound social security of mechanisms encompassing both pre-disaster preparedness and post-event relief efforts. While social security is crucial for any government, Nepal faces heightened urgency due to pervasive poverty and its vulnerability to natural calamities (Upreti et al., 2013). Addressing the geographic, caste, and gender disparities in health security is a priority for the Nepalese government, which has been implementing initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access for marginalized populations. However, significant reforms are needed within Nepal's healthcare system to effectively tackle existing barriers preventing people from accessing essential medical services. Moreover, Nepal must contend with evolving domestic and global health challenges, such as an aging population, emerging drug-resistant diseases, and potential bio-terrorism threats, which further compound the country's protection of human concerns in the health sector of the people.

Nepal is identified as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally (Maplecroft, 2011), making climate change a critical issue for human security. Variations in climate can have significant impacts on human security, particularly through irregular weather patterns that disrupt food and energy production, critical for Nepal's hydro-dependent economy. Additionally,

Nepal's position between the rapidly industrializing countries of India and China intensifies the effects of climate change. Various aspects of environmental security are particularly significant for Nepal, as its varied landscape makes it prone to natural disasters, necessitating effective management of agricultural lands to ensure food security and energy production. Political and economic instability further complicate these challenges, exacerbating environmental degradation and its repercussions on human security (Upreti et al., 2013).

Nepal's geography also contributes to distinct human security challenges across its Tarai, Hills, and Mountain regions. For instance, residents of the Mountain region often face difficulties accessing essential services like education, healthcare, and food reserves due to the rugged terrain. Additionally, Nepal's susceptibility to natural calamities such as floods, landslides, glacial lake outbursts, forest fires, and seismic events further underscores the environmental risks inherent in its topography. These unpredictable conditions heighten the vulnerability of Nepalese communities, emphasizing the urgent need for strategies to enhance human security (Stoett, 1999). Nepal must acknowledge the trans boundary nature of these human security issues and undertake proactive measures to address them effectively. Internal challenges such as poverty, social protection, food security, healthcare, migration, climate change, environmental issues, and political instability pose significant threats to human security within Nepal. Nepal has been actively involved in, and frequently led, global initiatives on climate change, as demonstrated by its participation in COP 24 in Katowice, Poland. Embracing a human-centered approach would improve the well-being of Nepal's citizens by enhancing their human security and also strengthening the nation's overall security. Improved public welfare is likely to lead to greater political stability. The Government of Nepal and its policymakers must embrace and incorporate the principles and impacts of human security. Adhikari et al. (2020) highlight that global insecurity is increasing due to environmental and ecological degradation, which is making Earth increasingly unfit for both humans and other living beings in the future. They have focused that the global citizens have to become conscious of the eco-crisis and they need to work together for the conservation of the ecology and the environment of the world on time and the global citizens must cease to deteriorate the present ecology and environment further than what it has become now. Similarly, Adhikari et al (2022) have even argued that the Autonomous International Organization above the body of UN must be established for the

global protection of the present threats of both kinds like politics and environment. If such an organization does not get established now and start functioning for the security of the earth and the worsening condition of the ecology and environment, then the future earth certainly would become unsuitable for the existence of life anymore. Moreover, Adhikari (2020) has pleaded to the world to become aware of the coronavirus, viruses and even more dangerous riskier viruses yet to come for the destruction of human beings due to their own faults that they have been doing day to day upon the ecology and environment by disfiguring the healthy life of the planet EARTH. If the global citizens do not contemplate about it on time, the dooms of the entire humanity and the other creatures can be no far from the earth within a few years.

Conclusion

The concept of human security has undergone significant evolution, shifting away from the traditional perspective of security as solely defending states from military threats. This change started with a move away from a narrow focus on economic growth toward a more comprehensive emphasis on human development. The shift was further accelerated by emerging security issues, such as the genocides in the Balkans and Africa, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and the increasing threat of global pandemics.

Human protection and security aim to strive for an improved and more ideal society by prioritizing individuals in both national and global security frameworks. It expands our comprehension of the various threats that can endanger personal safety and well-being, emphasizing a more inclusive approach to addressing these challenges.

The ecology and environment seem to have given the warning to the entire world to ponder on it on time. Otherwise, it seems to have occurred the most dangerous human condition from the point of view of security and safety. It seems to have found of encompassing not only armed conflicts but also social, economic, and ecological pressures. Although a universal definition of human security has not been agreed upon, it is clear that threats to human security—whether framed as freedom from fear or freedom from want—continue to exist and demand attention from all levels of society, ranging from world leaders to grassroots communities.

Amid ongoing debates about the scope and utility of human security, there found to be in a process of growing recognition that the traditional emphases on state sovereignty and independence have been realized as inadequate in addressing contemporary global risks. The international community seems to have been facing the challenge of developing new strategies to safeguard people from transnational dangers in an increasingly interconnected world. This necessitates a shift towards promoting human security as a means of addressing complex and destructive threats that impact lives more profoundly than conventional military challenges to states. The challenges of the modern world have been found beyond the military forces and the boundary of the various nations of the world but of the unimaginable and unexpected threats of the viruses are certain to be faced sooner or later due to the blunder of human beings upon the nature.

Consequently, both state and non-state actors must prioritize human security as a cornerstone of sustainable development, ensuring comprehensive responses to the multifaceted risks confronting individuals in today's globalized landscape. Apart from that, the modern world has to be prepared to battle against the unidentified and unknown as well as uncertain opponents of viruses as the entire globe has had to helplessly lose their lives and face the tragedy during the pandemic of the coronavirus.

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