

**FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION AND
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SYNCHRONIZED ELECTIONS FOR
BALANCING COST AND DEVELOPMENT EFFICIENCY IN PUBLIC
EXPENDITURE**

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ABSTRACT

India's democracy, uniting the aspirations of 1.4 billion citizens, stands as the world's largest and most intricate economic and social experiment. The "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal presents a transformative vision for this democracy, advocating synchronized elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Beyond its promise of administrative efficiency and governance continuity, ONOE offers significant potential for cost savings and the reallocation of economic resources. This chapter analyzes ONOE from an economic perspective, focusing on its financial benefits and efficiency in public expenditure. Employing economic principles such as cost-benefit analysis, economies of scale, and opportunity cost, it evaluates ONOE's financial viability. Drawing on Government of India budget documents, NITI Aayog reports, and other economic data sources, the chapter examines ONOE's cost savings, resource reallocation, and impact on economic development. Instead of country-specific comparisons, it emphasizes global economic principles and financial trends, and rather than state-by-state analyses, it focuses on economic sectors—rural economy, urban infrastructure, and social welfare. Aligned with seminar themes of "financial savings" and "administrative efficiency," this paper constructs an economic framework for ONOE, proposing data-driven policy recommendations to empower India's developmental goals and pave the way for a more prosperous future.

India, poised as an emerging economic powerhouse, demands resource efficiency and inclusive growth. The "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal offers a transformative approach to meet this demand, advocating synchronized elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. This chapter analyzes ONOE from an economic perspective, focusing on its impact on synchronized elections and the balance between cost and development. Employing economic theories such as Paul Samuelson's neoclassical economics, Amartya Sen's development economics, and productivity growth, it explores ONOE's effects on economic drivers—productivity, labor efficiency, and capital investment. Drawing on data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and India's Ministry of Statistics, the chapter examines ONOE's impact on GDP growth, human development, and income inequality. It emphasizes global economic models and South Asian trends, focusing on economic drivers and development outcomes. Aligned with seminar themes of "financial savings," "administrative

efficiency," and "economic development," this paper constructs an economic framework for ONOE, proposing data-driven policy recommendations to empower India's developmental aspirations and pave the way for a prosperous future.

KEYWORDS: *Aspirations, Synchronized, Infrastructure, Democracy, Advocating.*

INTRODUCTION

India's democracy is a vast machinery, with each of its 1.4 billion citizens acting as a vital cog, generating the energy of development, unity, and progress. Since independence in 1947, India's electoral system has been the engine driving this machinery, harmonizing diverse languages, cultures, and social structures into a collective democratic will. Yet, the frequent and fragmented election cycles have strained this engine, incurring exorbitant financial costs, disrupting governance, and diverting resources from critical developmental priorities. The "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal emerges as a revolutionary blueprint to enhance this machinery's efficiency, advocating synchronized elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Beyond streamlining administrative processes and ensuring governance stability, ONOE holds the promise of substantial savings in public expenditure and the strategic redirection of resources toward transformative growth.

ONOE through an economic lens, focusing on its financial benefits and its potential to enhance efficiency in public expenditure. ONOE's single electoral cycle could significantly reduce the costs of recurrent elections, freeing up resources for investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure—sectors that fuel India's developmental ambitions. Guided by economic theories such as John Maynard Keynes' demand-driven economics, Joseph Stiglitz's asymmetric information, and the principle of economies of scale, this chapter leverages robust data from Government of India budget documents, NITI Aayog reports, and other economic sources. It analyzes ONOE's cost savings, resource reallocation, and its impact on India's economic sectors: the rural economy, urban infrastructure, and social welfare.

Departing from the pattern of country-specific comparisons and state-by-state analyses used in prior chapters, this study adopts a fresh approach, emphasizing global economic principles and financial trends while focusing on India's economic sectors. Aligned with the seminar themes of "financial savings" and "administrative efficiency," this chapter constructs a comprehensive economic framework for ONOE. With an analytical yet human-centered tone, it invites readers to envision an India where financial efficiency accelerates development, and every voter contributes to a more prosperous, inclusive future.

ONOE through an economist's lens, focusing on the economic impact of synchronized elections and their potential to harmonize cost and development. ONOE's single electoral cycle can reduce the financial burden of frequent elections, redirecting savings to critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Guided by economic theories like Paul Samuelson's neoclassical economics, Amartya Sen's development economics, and productivity growth, this chapter leverages robust data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and India's Ministry of Statistics. It analyzes ONOE's effects on GDP growth, human development, and income inequality, offering a comprehensive view of its transformative potential.

Financial Viability of ONOE: A Cost-Benefit Analysis

ONOE's most immediate financial benefit lies in reducing the costs associated with recurrent elections. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections alone cost approximately ₹55,000 crore, excluding the additional expenses of state assembly elections (Election Commission of India, 2019, p. 22). For instance, the 2020 Bihar assembly elections incurred costs of ₹2,000 crore (Election Commission of India, 2020, p. 15). This cycle of frequent elections not only drains financial resources but also disrupts administrative capacity, diverting personnel and infrastructure from developmental tasks.

The principle of **economies of scale** underpins ONOE's financial viability. By consolidating elections into a single cycle, ONOE can streamline the costs of polling stations, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and security arrangements. A NITI Aayog (2017) report estimates that ONOE could reduce election costs by 40-50%, yielding savings of ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle (p. 30). These savings can be understood through the lens of **opportunity cost**, as the resources saved could be redirected to developmental priorities such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Keynes' demand-driven economics suggests that efficiency in public expenditure can stimulate economic demand. By reallocating ONOE's savings to social welfare programs like MGNREGA or Ayushman Bharat, consumer spending could be boosted, spurring economic growth. For example, in 2019-20, MGNREGA's ₹60,000 crore expenditure increased rural demand by 2% (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 45). ONOE's savings could amplify such programs, driving further economic activity.

Joseph Stiglitz's asymmetric information theory highlights inefficiencies in resource allocation during frequent elections due to incomplete information, which inflates costs. ONOE's centralized system could mitigate these inefficiencies by enhancing transparency and optimizing resource use. For instance, a centralized polling station management system could reduce costs by 20%, as suggested by a World Bank (2018) report on integrated systems (p. 55).

Financial Benefits of ONOE: A Detailed Analysis

ONOE's financial benefits can be analyzed across the following dimensions:

- **Reduction in Electoral Costs:** Compared to recurrent elections, ONOE consolidates resources in a single cycle. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections required 196,000 polling stations, each costing an average of ₹5 lakh (Election Commission of India, 2019, p. 25). ONOE could reduce this number by consolidating stations, potentially cutting costs by 40%. For example, streamlining to 100,000 polling stations could save ₹5,000 crore per cycle. The **economies of scale** principle supports this, as consolidation optimizes resource utilization. Additionally, the cost of EVMs and VVPATs, which amounted to ₹4,000 crore in 2019, could be halved under ONOE, as fewer machines would be required for a single cycle (Election Commission of India, 2019, p. 26).
- **Administrative Efficiency and Policy Continuity:** ONOE minimizes the duration of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which disrupts development projects during frequent elections. In 2019, the MCC halted projects like the Mumbai Metro for two months, incurring an opportunity cost of ₹1,000 crore (Observer Research Foundation, 2019, p. 12). By limiting the MCC to a single period, ONOE ensures policy continuity, enhancing

economic productivity. **Keynes' theory** suggests that policy continuity stabilizes demand, as project delays are minimized. Reducing the MCC duration by 50% could save ₹2,000-3,000 crore annually in opportunity costs.

- **Resource Reallocation and Economic Growth:** ONOE's savings can be invested in developmental sectors. NITI Aayog (2017) estimates savings of ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle (p. 30). Allocating 50% of this (₹10,000 crore) to healthcare could expand programs like Ayushman Bharat by 30%, benefiting 500 million people (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 50). **Keynes' demand-driven economics** posits that such investments boost consumer spending, contributing 1-2% to GDP growth. For instance, in 2019-20, Ayushman Bharat's ₹10,000 crore investment increased healthcare demand by 1.5% (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 51). ONOE's savings could amplify this impact.
- **Economic Stability and Investment:** Frequent elections create economic uncertainty, stalling policy implementation. ONOE reduces this uncertainty, fostering investment and growth. **Stiglitz's asymmetric information theory** suggests that policy stability enhances investor confidence, increasing foreign direct investment (FDI). The World Bank (2018) notes that policy continuity boosts FDI by 10% (p. 65). In India, where FDI reached \$81 billion in 2020-21, ONOE's stability could add \$8-10 billion annually (Ministry of Commerce, 2021, p. 30).

Impact of ONOE on Economic Sectors

ONOE's financial benefits can profoundly impact India's economic sectors, analyzed as follows:

- **Rural Economy:** With 70% of India's population residing in rural areas, where agriculture and allied activities form the economic backbone, ONOE's savings can empower this sector. Allocating ₹10,000 crore of savings to MGNREGA could provide additional employment to 50 million rural households, boosting rural demand by 2-3% (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 46). **Keynes' theory** suggests this demand will stimulate local markets, benefiting small businesses. In 2019-20, MGNREGA's ₹60,000 crore expenditure increased rural demand by 2%, driving a 5% rise in local trade (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 47). ONOE's savings could amplify this, fostering economic stability and prosperity in rural India.
- **Urban Infrastructure:** ONOE's savings can be invested in urban projects like the Smart Cities Mission. In 2019-20, the mission attracted ₹2,000 crore in investments, contributing 1% to urban GDP growth (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 35). Allocating 50% of ONOE's ₹10,000 crore savings could expand the mission by 20%, attracting an additional ₹2,000 crore in investments. **Stiglitz's theory** suggests this will boost urban economic confidence, encouraging private sector participation. The mission generated 500,000 jobs in 2019-20, and ONOE's savings could increase this by 20% (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 36).
- **Social Welfare:** ONOE's savings can be redirected to social welfare sectors like education and healthcare. Investing ₹5,000 crore in school education could provide free education to 10 million children, enhancing long-term human capital development (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 40). **Keynes' theory** posits that education investments drive future demand, as a skilled workforce is more productive. In 2019-20, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's ₹50,000 crore investment increased primary school enrollment by 10% (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 41). ONOE's savings could amplify this impact, supporting India's long-term growth.

Global Economic Trends and ONOE

Rather than country-specific comparisons, this chapter focuses on global economic principles and trends that underscore ONOE's financial potential:

- **Economies of Scale:** Globally, integrated systems reduce costs by 20-30% through optimized resource utilization (World Bank, 2018, p. 55). This principle is highly relevant for ONOE, as a single electoral cycle can consolidate polling stations, EVMs, and security costs. For instance, a World Bank (2018) report notes that integrated systems cut administrative costs by 25%, boosting development investments (p. 56). In India, ONOE could apply this principle, saving ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle (NITI Aayog, 2017, p. 30). **Keynes' theory** suggests these savings will fuel demand-driven growth through welfare investments. ONOE's centralized system will enhance transparency and efficiency, mirroring global integrated systems.
- **Efficiency in Public Expenditure:** Global trends show that integrated systems increase development project investments by 15%, as resources are used more effectively (IMF, 2019, p. 60). This is pertinent for India, where frequent elections disrupt projects. An IMF (2019) report indicates that integrated administrative systems boosted infrastructure investments by 20% globally by streamlining resource allocation (p. 61). ONOE could replicate this in India by reducing the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) duration, minimizing project delays. **Stiglitz's asymmetric information theory** suggests ONOE's centralized system will enhance allocation transparency, increasing development investments by 10-15%. For example, halving MCC duration could save ₹2,000-3,000 crore annually in opportunity costs, redirecting funds to infrastructure and welfare.
- **Economic Stability and Investment:** Policy continuity globally increases foreign direct investment (FDI) by 10%, reducing economic uncertainty (World Bank, 2018, p. 65). This is critical for India, where frequent elections disrupt policies. A World Bank (2018) report notes that policy stability boosted FDI by 8-12% in infrastructure and manufacturing globally (p. 66). In India, with \$81 billion in FDI in 2020-21, ONOE's stability could add \$8-10 billion annually (Ministry of Commerce, 2021, p. 30). **Keynes' theory** suggests this FDI will stimulate demand, as investments drive jobs and consumption. ONOE's policy continuity could make India more attractive to global investors, supporting long-term growth. For instance, a 10% FDI increase could create 500,000 additional jobs in manufacturing, as seen in FDI-driven projects in 2019-20 (Ministry of Commerce, 2021, p. 31).

Data-Driven Policy Recommendations for ONOE

To maximize ONOE's financial benefits, the following data-driven policy recommendations are proposed, addressing India's economic sectors and developmental goals:

- **Cost Management and Centralized Financial System:** ONOE requires a centralized financial system to streamline resource allocation. This system could integrate polling station, EVM, and security costs, reducing expenses by 40-50% (NITI Aayog, 2017, p. 30). The **economies of scale** principle supports this, optimizing resource use. In 2019, 196,000 polling stations cost ₹9,800 crore (Election Commission of India, 2019, p. 25). A centralized system could reduce this to 100,000 stations, saving ₹5,000 crore per cycle. **Stiglitz's asymmetric information theory** suggests a transparent system will minimize inefficiencies. The recommendation includes a centralized database with digital tracking and real-time

monitoring, as suggested by a World Bank (2018) report that noted 20% cost savings from such systems (p. 55). This database should monitor polling station and EVM requirements, ensuring cost transparency.

- **Resource Reallocation and Developmental Investment:** ONOE's savings should be redirected to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. NITI Aayog (2017) estimates savings of ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle (p. 30). Allocating 50% (₹10,000 crore) to healthcare could expand Ayushman Bharat by 30%, benefiting 500 million people (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 50). **Keynes' demand-driven economics** posits this will boost consumer spending, adding 1-2% to GDP growth. Investing ₹5,000 crore in school education could provide free education to 10 million children, enhancing human capital (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 40). The recommendation includes a reallocation plan with specific targets: ₹5,000 crore annually for education, ₹5,000 crore for healthcare, and ₹5,000 crore for infrastructure. This plan should be data-driven, using NES and NSSO data to set priorities.
- **Economic Policy Integration and National Plans:** ONOE should be integrated with national development plans like the Smart Cities Mission, MGNREGA, and Ayushman Bharat. **Keynes' theory** suggests policy integration stabilizes demand through effective resource use. The Smart Cities Mission attracted ₹2,000 crore in 2019-20, contributing 1% to urban GDP (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 35). Allocating 50% of ONOE's savings could expand it by 20%, attracting ₹2,000 crore more. The recommendation includes an integrated policy framework with a coordination committee using NITI Aayog and Ministry of Finance data to set priorities. **Stiglitz's theory** suggests this will enhance policy transparency, boosting investor and citizen confidence.

Economic Impact of ONOE: Balancing Cost and Development

ONOE's primary economic impact lies in its ability to reduce the costs of recurrent elections and reallocate saved resources to developmental priorities. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections cost approximately ₹55,000 crore, with the 2020 Bihar assembly elections adding 2,000 crore (Election Commission of India, 2019, p. 22; 2020, p. 15). This repetitive process not only strains financial resources but also disrupts productivity, labor efficiency, and capital investment.

Paul Samuelson's neoclassical economics posits that efficient resource allocation drives economic growth. ONOE, through a single electoral cycle, can consolidate resources, boosting **productivity growth**. NITI Aayog (2017) estimates that ONOE could reduce election costs by 40-50%, yielding savings of ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle (p. 30). These savings can be understood through the lens of **opportunity cost**, as resources can be redirected to education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Amartya Sen's development economics suggests that economic growth should not be limited to GDP but should also advance human development (education, health, income equality). ONOE's savings can empower investments in these areas, potentially improving India's Human Development Index (HDI). For instance, in 2019, India's HDI was 0.645, with education investments increasing it by 2% (UNDP, 2019, p. 25). ONOE's savings could accelerate this progress.

Impact of ONOE on Economic Drivers

ONOE's economic impact can be analyzed through the following drivers:

- **Productivity Growth:** Frequent elections disrupt productivity, diverting administrative resources and labor to electoral processes. A 2019 Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report notes that election cycles reduced administrative productivity by 10%, impacting GDP growth by 0.5% (RBI, 2019, p. 40). ONOE's single cycle can mitigate this loss. The **productivity growth theory** suggests that resource consolidation can increase productivity by 5-10%. If ONOE enhances administrative efficiency by 10%, it could contribute 0.3-0.5% to GDP growth (RBI, 2019, p. 41). By reallocating administrative staff to development projects, ONOE can accelerate infrastructure and welfare initiatives. For example, redirecting staff to the Smart Cities Mission, which created 500,000 jobs in 2019-20, could amplify its impact (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 36).
- **Labor Efficiency:** Recurrent elections disrupt labor resources, as government employees and security forces are deployed for polling. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that the 2019 elections engaged 10 million workers, reducing labor productivity by 5% (ILO, 2019, p. 50). ONOE could halve this loss. **Samuelson's theory** suggests that improved labor efficiency enhances capital accumulation. A 5% increase in labor efficiency could create 200,000 additional jobs annually, particularly in infrastructure and services (ILO, 2019, p. 51). This reallocation will boost India's productivity, supporting long-term growth.
- **Capital Investment:** Frequent elections create policy uncertainty, deterring capital investment. The RBI (2019) notes that the 2019 elections reduced FDI by 3%, as investors awaited stability (p. 42). ONOE, by ensuring policy continuity, can boost investment. **Sen's theory** posits that capital investment strengthens human development through education and health funding. A 5% FDI increase could attract \$4 billion, creating 100,000 infrastructure jobs (RBI, 2019, p. 43). This will enhance India's global competitiveness, particularly in manufacturing and technology.

Impact of ONOE on Development Outcomes

ONOE's economic impact can be assessed through the following outcomes:

- **GDP Growth:** ONOE's cost savings and productivity gains can boost GDP. The RBI (2019) estimates that a 10% improvement in administrative efficiency could add 0.3-0.5% to GDP growth (p. 41). Investing ₹20,000 crore in infrastructure could increase GDP by 1%, as seen with the Smart Cities Mission in 2019-20 (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 35). This will strengthen India's global economic standing among emerging economies.
- **Human Development:** ONOE's savings can improve HDI through education and health investments. UNDP (2019) reports India's HDI at 0.645, with education boosting it by 2% (p. 25). Investing ₹5,000 crore in education could provide free schooling to 10 million children, increasing HDI by 1% (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 40). This human capital development will drive long-term economic progress.
- **Income Inequality:** ONOE's savings can reduce income inequality through social welfare investments. India's Gini coefficient is 0.35, with welfare programs reducing it by 5% (Ministry of Statistics, 2020, p. 60). Expanding MGNREGA by 20% could lower the Gini by 2-3%, fostering inclusive growth (Ministry of Finance, 2020, p. 46).

Global Economic Models and ONOE

This chapter focuses on global economic models and regional trends:

- **Neoclassical Growth Model: Samuelson's model** suggests that resource efficiency and capital investment drive growth. Globally, integrated systems boosted productivity by 5-10% in emerging economies (ILO, 2019, p. 52). ONOE could contribute 0.5% to India's GDP growth. South Asia's 15% infrastructure investment increase demonstrates this potential (World Bank, 2020, p. 71).
- **Human Development Model: Sen's model** emphasizes human development as central to progress. South Asia's education and health investments raised HDI by 3%, contributing 2% to GDP growth (UNDP, 2019, p. 26). ONOE's savings could increase India's HDI by 1-2%.
- **Regional Trends:** South Asian economies saw an 8% FDI rise due to policy stability (World Bank, 2020, p. 70). ONOE could attract \$4 billion in FDI, creating 100,000 jobs (RBI, 2019, p. 43).

Data-Driven Policy Recommendations for ONOE

To maximize ONOE's economic impact, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Centralized System for Productivity Growth:** Establish a centralized administrative system for ONOE, consolidating polling stations, EVMs, and security. **Samuelson's theory** suggests a 5-10% productivity increase. A digital monitoring system, as recommended by the ILO (2019), could save ₹20,000 crore per cycle (NITI Aayog, 2017, p. 30).
- **Resource Reallocation for Labor Efficiency:** Reallocate labor resources during ONOE to development projects. **Samuelson's theory** indicates a 5% efficiency gain, creating 200,000 jobs (ILO, 2019, p. 51).
- **Development Investments:** Allocate ONOE's savings to education and health. **Sen's theory** predicts a 1-2% HDI rise. Investing ₹5,000 crore in education could educate 10 million children (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 40).

CONCLUSION

ONOE is a transformative opportunity to reshape India's economic future, uniting financial efficiency with developmental progress. Through data, economic theory, and policy analysis, this chapter unveils ONOE's potential to drive cost savings, reallocate resources, and foster growth. Cost management, resource reallocation, and policy integration can make ONOE a catalyst for change, propelling India toward a prosperous, inclusive future where every citizen contributes to a thriving nation.

ONOE is a transformative force poised to reshape India's economic landscape, harmonizing cost efficiency with developmental progress to create a prosperous, inclusive society. This chapter has meticulously analyzed ONOE's economic impact, highlighting its effects on economic drivers—productivity, labor efficiency, and capital investment. **Paul Samuelson's neoclassical economics** underscores that ONOE's resource efficiency can contribute 0.3-0.5% to GDP growth, accelerating infrastructure and welfare projects. Data indicates that ONOE could save ₹20,000-25,000 crore per cycle, boosting infrastructure investment by 15%, as demonstrated by the Smart Cities Mission (Ministry of Urban Development, 2020, p. 36). **Amartya Sen's**

development economics emphasizes that ONOE's savings can enhance India's Human Development Index (HDI) by 1-2% through education and health investments. For instance, ₹5,000 crore could provide free education to 10 million children, strengthening human capital (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 40). The **productivity growth theory** highlights that ONOE's single cycle can increase productivity by 5-10%, generating 200,000 jobs in infrastructure and services (ILO, 2019, p. 51).

In terms of development outcomes, ONOE not only fuels economic growth but also promotes inclusive development by reducing income inequality and empowering social welfare. Data suggests that ONOE's savings could expand MGNREGA by 20%, lowering the Gini coefficient by 2-3% and fostering equitable growth (Ministry of Statistics, 2020, p. 60). Global economic models and South Asian trends reinforce ONOE's relevance. **Samuelson's model** indicates a potential 0.5% GDP growth contribution, while **Sen's model** highlights human development, potentially raising HDI by 1-2% (UNDP, 2019, p. 26). South Asia's 8% FDI increase due to policy stability suggests ONOE could attract \$4 billion, creating 100,000 jobs (World Bank, 2020, p. 70).

The policy recommendations—centralized systems, labor reallocation, and development investments—pave the way for ONOE to become a game-changer in India's economic landscape. Their implementation will not only reduce costs but also propel India toward an inclusive, productive, and prosperous economy. ONOE is more than an electoral reform; it is an economic promise to India's citizens—a promise that transforms every vote into a stroke on the canvas of prosperity and social well-being. This chapter inspires readers to envision an India where ONOE empowers every citizen to contribute to a vibrant, inclusive, and globally leading economy, balancing cost and development to craft a future that is both prosperous and equitable.

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