

Combating Corruption: An Ethical Challenge to Good Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria under President Muhammad Buhari is been seen as Africa proponent of war against corruption which has become an endemic and an ugly facet of every societal and political life. It has been identified as one of the banes of the country's economic growth, good governance and administrative advancement of the country. Corruption undermines the fulfilment of the great potentials of the people of Nigeria who are the victims of mal-administration, poor quality of good public service and societal fabrics unquestioned and unassailable.

The paper is based on the hypothesis that there is a strong link between endemic corruptions in Nigeria which is hitherto hindering the ability of the country to enjoy good governance at all arms of government. It is the main responsibility for inability of the government to provide good services and infrastructural development leading to lack of deficiency in good governance and performance of the Nigerian political talents.

This work delves into the factors promulgating corruption as well as obstructing economic growth, administrative lapses and frustrating attainment of good governance. Lastly, the paper addresses some public sector and government initiatives that have been taken to induce ethical government and contest the endemic corruption in governance, socio-economic fabrics of the society and finally restoring hope in Governance and the administrative processes.

Keywords: Corruption, development, governance, public services, and Societal fabrics

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is endangering the giant of Africa; debarring the country to rape her immense potentials from the huge human and natural resources for development, creating huge inequalities in income, lacking economic development, dishonest gain, exploitation, denying of good useful potentials to grow, and squandering of the common wealth of the country or possession of the common wealth by the few who were once in government of in government. Joining politics and been appointed as political office holder is now entangle as a mean of securing wealth and becoming rich over a period of time.

Despite Nigeria huge oil wealth, the masses are largely poor because previous regimes have milked the resources of the state, corruptly extracted the countries' resources, and apportioned themselves with oil blocks thereby making public services delivery and infrastructural growth a nightmare.

Chinua Achebe, was even more emphatic in his excoriation of Nigerian leaders for the troubles in the country. In his words, "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leader ship" (Achebe 1983, p. 22).

2. METHODOLOGY OF THIS PAPER

Corruption no doubt encompasses a range of behaviours such as embezzlement, bribery, and nepotism, but in general refers to the type of behaviours that officials use public offices for private gains. To realize these objectives and for easy analysis of this paper, it adopted qualitative research method to gain an insight into the nature and character of corruption and governance in Nigeria and the categorical data collection involves interview, observation, and interpretational analysis of archival documented corruption cases and newspaper reports.

The researchers used descriptive analysis to examine the issues of corruption as an ethical challenges to good governance in Nigeria. The theoretical paper draws its argument and roots basically from primary and secondary data sources which include relevant literature reviews, seminar papers, observations, surveys and focus groups discussions. It's also focuses on journal publications, cases studies and internet sources.

To improve on the reliability and validity of the paper, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize risk of error. The paper is structured into eight sections. Section one serves as the introduction. Section two examines the methodology of the paper, Section three looks at the definition and literature review. Section four discusses the conceptual framework while section five explains the manifestation of corruption. Section six look into the anticorruption campaigns as if it is a rhetoric. Section seven describes the concept of good governance and finally section eight is the conclusion and recommendations.

3. DEFINITION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic world are concerned and interested in addressing the issues of corruption, this is because corruption is now a public affairs issues which calls for the attention of individual governments and regional governmental organizations to address this issue. There is further evidence that international governmental bodies and non-governmental agencies are concerned about corruption and are adopting action programs.

Corruption is not a new phenomenon. Former U.S. Trade Representative Michael (Mickey) Kantor observed that “corruption has existed as long as there have been people in power and money to influence them.” Corruption is characterized by widespread bribery.

The Holy Qur’an kareem point out that; “Allah says: “And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as a bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people’s property”. (Al-Baqarah: 188).

Abu Umamah Al-Bahli said that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, “Whoever intercedes on behalf of his brother and therefore he offers him a gift, it would be nothing other than a grievous usury.” (Abu Dawud). Islam prohibits taking, giving bribery and warns all of those involved of hell fire. However, the Muslim scholars affirm that bribery is prohibited when it is aimed at consuming other’s property or rights unfairly. Thus, if someone finds himself in a situation in which all avenues of redressing a wrong done him, or recovering a right which has been forfeited, are blocked except through the payment of a bribe, the sin of it will not be on him but on the recipient of the bribe. “The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) cursed the one who offers the bribe and the one who receives it.” (Tirmidhi)

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: I said to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): O Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me to a public office? He stroked my shoulder with his hand and said: "Abu Dharr, you are weak and authority is a trust. And on the Day of Judgment it is a cause of humiliation and regret except for one who fulfils its obligations and (properly) discharges the duties." (Muslim)

The Christian holy book reveals in Old Testament that God tells Moses "Neither shalt thou take bribes which blind the wise and prevent the words of the just" (Isaiah 1:23). Other Old Testament admonitions should remind the reader that the effect of bribery is to "make sinners" (Psalms 26:10), that it "corrupts conscience" (Exodus 23:8), "brings chaos" (Amos 5:12), and "merits punishment.

Are there universal values that can be agreed upon across country borders and cultures that will serve to minimize corruption despite the religious condemnation of it? Can the 21st century be of global ethics?

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher review some relevant theories that converge on the idea that some societal inputs gives explanatory power to this discourse. The technical (effectiveness) theory posited that governance is technically efficient and effective only if its meets the adequate demand f the majority masses. Technically, evidence from literature reviews and primary data variables for consideration by the researcher are saying that efficiency of the public administrators should be measured by how well they have performed in meeting the demands of the governed or the citizens.

That is, to provide and deliver essential developmental and infrastructural services and goods to the public at an affordable price and at the right time. In all cases, if the government failed in the performance of her duties and obligations, there will be great inequality in the distribution of national wealth; the reliance on political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth; the conflict between changing moral codes; the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanism; and the absence of strong sense of national community has been identified by the researcher as major factors other causing unethical behaviours which lead to corruption.

These rationale suggested the working hypotheses (Baun, 2003, Sheilds, 2003) as a conceptual framework for exploratory and empirical research described in system approach (Input- Process- Output system) was used in describing the conceptual framework of this study. As shown in Figure 1 below, the input consist all the collections of human characters, attitudes and conduct or actions found in individual behaviour when interpreted as data, facts combined all together becomes a process leading to corrupt practices (corruption) as the result of the data of individual actor processed together then resulted into the output which are the individual actors performance activities.

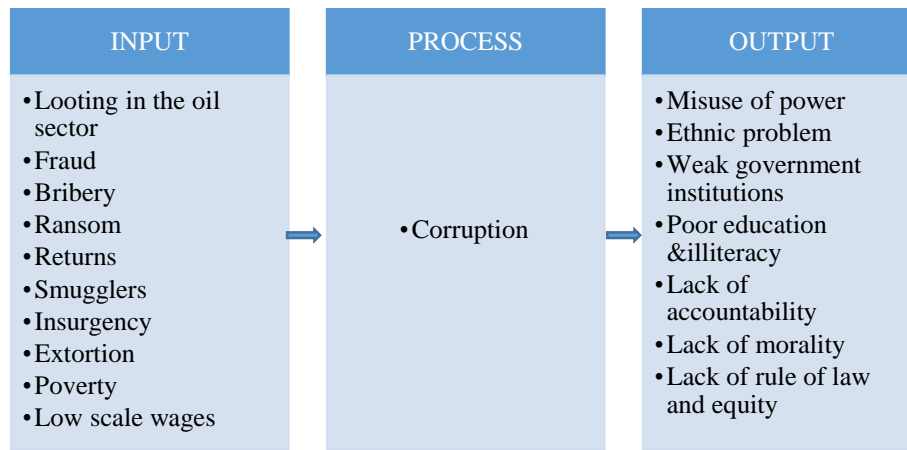


Figure 1;

Sources: Self developed by the researcher from the system approach method.

5. THE INEVITABLE CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

No government has ever been completely devoid of corruption. Rich and poor countries alike suffer from corruption problems. While corruption cases manage to make the headlines in some Africa countries, South Africa President Jacob Zuma left office over corrupt practices. Mauritian President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim resigned over financial scandal of been accused of using a bank card provided by a charity to make personal purchases worth tens of thousands of dollars. (BBC News, March, 2018).

This goes beyond African region, a former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was jailed over corrupt practices while in office and his successor former President Dilma Rousseff was impeached over allegation of corruption as seating President. (BBC News, April, 2018).

According to Transparency International (2006), corruption “affects all sectors of society from construction (France), education (Uganda), police (Malaysia), to parliament (Japan), judiciary (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Israel, and Nep Figure 1 below al) and even church (Greece).

The foregoing depicted corruption as an act by individuals or groups of individual’s complexing social, political, and economic phenomenon that affects all individual input and outputs.

Corruption which undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development, and contributes to governmental instability. Corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law, and creating bureaucratic quagmires whose only reason for existing is the soliciting of bribes economic development is stunted because foreign direct investment is discouraged and small businesses within the country often find it impossible to overcome the “start-up costs” required because of corruption.

From the above scenario, it can be seen that corruption has a long history in the development of human societies. Different societies have tried to explain how corruption arose but there has been no definite explanation (Dr. Cletus, Agenyi, and Oluyote, 2015). However, Dike (2005) points out that the stumbling block to economic development of any nation is majorly caused by the followings:

a) Poverty

Poverty is one of the major causes of corruption. Usually, when a poor person is put in a position of authority according to Dike (2002), the only avenue available to him or her is how to amass wealth. Most of them engage in corrupt practices, while others engage in it out of frustration. Thus, the issue about poverty and corruption is that poverty results to corruption and corruption begets poverty.

b) Unemployment

Unemployment exposes the unemployed to the risk of illegal way of making money out of desperation. In Nigeria today, most internet scammers and dishonest people engage in their businesses because they lack the opportunity of legitimate ways of making money. Unemployment in Nigeria according to Human Right Watch (2007) has resulted in making many people to use their beloved ones especially their mothers or fathers for rituals to amass wealth. Also, many young girls result to prostitution and other criminal activities such as thuggery, theft, kidnapping, abduction, cultism, to mention but a few.

c) Weak Government

Corruption is most prominent in the society or organization where there is weak government. In corrupt societies, governments are unable to stop corruption because they lack strong will to do so. Even if there are anti-corruption agencies to tackle the case of corruption, such agencies can easily be swallowed up into corruption. This is because when such anti- corruption agencies prove to be honest, their effort means nothing to any member of the society.

d) Ostentatious living

One of the major problems of corruption in Nigeria today is ostentatious living. Everybody wants recognition. Nobody wants to be second in command. Competition among peer-groups is the order of the day. Everybody both those in position of authority or otherwise want honour and respect. This is because in most cases, Nigerians like to worship persons with money without asking how such persons acquire such wealth.

e) Favouritism and Nepotism

Favouritism according to Mbaya, et.al (2006) is usually seen as unfair treatment of persons or groups. It is a mechanism of abuse of power or position implying high biases in the allocation of job, positions of authority, and resources to people, kinsmen, family members, society and country. While nepotism is the favourism shown to relatives or friends. Favouritism enables wrong persons to be employed in any establishment without proper qualification. It also offers an appointment to politicians who do not merit such appointment.

f) Praise Singers

Political praise singers according to (Manro, 1995) usually push politicians into corruption and corrupt practice in government. The praise singers often divert the attention of the electorates from negative aspect of governance to positive dominance using sweet mouth. Usually, when such encomiums and praises are poured on them, it makes some of them to be more corrupt about governance. More often than not, praises are poured even to political office holders who cannot pay salaries of the staff under them. People who divert the constituency allowance meant for development into their private pockets are praised.

g) Greed and Selfishness

Most of our leaders in Nigeria are full of greedy and selfish in their act of governance. Most of them want to remain in the mantle of leadership till they die. Greed and selfishness make some leaders to be power drunk and as such can divert their attention into doing things that are worrisome at the expense of the teeming population (Dike, 2005). In most cases, a greedy man may not even remember his close associate. They only know themselves and believe that if not them nobody else can do it.

5. FACTORS MANIFESTING CORRUPTION

The research methodology used in this work through primary data collection from focus group discussions conducted among 21 top civil servants in Lagos State of Nigeria reveals the followings as factors manifesting corruption in the country. It seems the menace of corruption has defied all treatments and the damage national life. The evils of corruption are still shining brightly like star in the sky with its visible symptoms: poor economic, underdevelopment of civil services, and the weak accountability of public institutions. All these translate to what every Nigerian witness each day which includes the followings; they are;

1. Commission for public services
2. Lack of electricity and bad roads
3. Police extortion on the high ways and queues at petrol stations
4. Immigration and customs extortion at the land, sea and airport
5. Slow movement of files through offices
6. Election irregularities

The 21 people examined under focus group discussion confirmed the following excuses;

1. If I don't pay bribe, my work will not get done on time.
2. I have to take bribe as my salary is not enough.
3. I have to bribe the decision maker in order to get the contract.
4. I didn't ask for money, but they offered it in a return of favour.
5. If I don't pay bribe, I will have to go to police station and waste lot of time and money.
6. I received only gifts for my services not money

6. IS ANTICORRUPTION CAMPAIGNS A GOVERNMENT RHETORIC?

Scholars has described the anticorruption campaign as rhetoric which has been a routine feature of politics, invariably less as a precursor to longer-term reform than as a means to diffuse opposition to the incoming regime, placate external agencies, and secure tenure in office (Gillespie and Okruhlik 1991).

As William (1987, p. 125) remarks, "In too many cases... far from attempting to improve the situation, governments, or at least major parts of them, are the problem. Anticorruption campaigns then degenerate into [feckless] political rhetoric designed more to appease foreign donors and international financial institutions than to address the major issues." Olowu (1993, p. 231) rightly observes that in Nigeria, "political actors often talk of accountability and integrity but this by itself does not translate into a genuine commitment to detect and penalise unethical behaviour." Even when anticorruption agencies are created, "they are usually denied the resources needed to achieve their stated purpose. . . In many cases the codes of ethics they are asked to enforce have no broad-based popular understanding or support" (Olowu 1993, p. 231). Also, "the preoccupation with panic measures and the creation of ad hoc panels and tribunals to replace non-functioning legal institutions for ensuring public accountability have not been particularly helpful" (Olowu 1987, p. 230). What is more, anticorruption campaigns have failed to yield the desired results due to perceived lack of seriousness on the part of government until recently when President Muhammadu Buhari took over power. He demonstrated serious political will and commitment to fight corruption but unfortunately corruption is fighting back. Unethical

behaviour is well reckoned with and pronounced in Nigeria where corruption is no longer a stranger but fast and quick service phenomenon; a negative effect on every phase of Nigerian society.

7. Concept of Good Governance

7.1. Definitions

The World Bank (2000: 37), governance refers to how power is exercised in the management of a nation's economic and social resources for developmental purposes. This involves three applications; "the form of the political regime; the process by which governmental power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources; and government capacity to implement public policies".

According to UNDP (1997), good governance encompasses the exercise of political, economic, legal, judicial, social, and administrative authority in a manner that meets the aspirations and needs of the citizens. This includes; the government, the private sector and the civil society. It also includes the formulation of policy initiatives that would strengthen institutions and the civil society organisations with the main objective of making government responsible more democratic responsive and accountable.

Governance on the other hand has been defined as the use of political authority and exercise of control over society and the management of its resources for social and economic development. It encompasses the nature of functioning of a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulation, implementation capacity, information flows, effectiveness of leadership and the nature of the relationship between rulers and the ruled (Doig, 1995:154-155). Governance can also be described as the use of authority and the exercise of control over society and the management of its resources for social and economic development. It is the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the distribution of a country's social and economic resources. The nature and manner of distribution is what makes governance good or bad one. Thus, according to Oguniye (2010:238) when resources must be distributed to promote inequality or to achieve personal or group ambitions, the essence of governance which coincides with the essence of politics and essence of the state is defeated. Therefore, resources must be distributed responsibly, equitably and fairly for the realization of the essence of the state.

Good governance, therefore, refers to government that fulfils the terms of the social contract with the people. Good governance is a fundamental right in a democracy and it implies transparency and accountability. Good governance entails an administration that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people and is effective in coping with emerging challenges in society by framing and implementing appropriate laws and measures. It includes strict rules of accountability. Good governance largely depends on the extent to which the general citizenry perceives a government to be legitimate, i.e., committed to improving the general public welfare – deliver public services and equitable in its conduct – favouring no special interests or groups. It is among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective, equitable and promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (Richardson, 2008).

7.2. Corruption and Good Governance

Corruption undermines the legitimacy of good government and democratic values of trust and tolerance. Corruption increases the cost of business through of illicit payments and generates economic distortions in the public services. The effect of corruption is grave that many organisations have been established to monitor corruption and promote efforts to reduce it in governance globally.

Familoni (2007:7) and Dike (2003:121) agreed that corruption causes a reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public, as some companies could cut corners to increase profit margins. Corruption affects government performance leading to deficiency of good governance in Nigeria thereby causing abject poverty, unemployment and mass illiteracy which has led to ethnicity seeking succession out of the federating unit. It is also the causes of National Assembly to inability to formulate and implement good policies, discharge functions, delivery of services to their constituencies and respect for human rights and rule of law.

Indeed, corruption robbed Nigerians of the benefits of good governance, Babawale (2007) sees good governance as the exercise of political power to promote the public good and the welfare of the people. He argues that good governance is the absence of lack of accountability in government, corruption, and political repression, suffocation of civil society and denial of fundamental human rights. He points out the attribute of good governance in any society to include: accountability, transparency in government procedures, high expectation of rational decisions, predictability in government behaviour, openness in government transactions, free flow of information, respect for the rule of law and protection of civil liberties, and press freedom.

Also, Brinkerhoff (2005) argues that governance extends beyond government action to address the role of citizens and the way groups and communities within society organize to make and implement decisions on matters of general concern. He observes that promoting good governance includes: reforms to increase accountability, transparency and responsiveness. Furthermore, good governance seeks to improve the capacity of the state, encompassing a variety of strategies to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government performance (Omona, 2010). This implies that accountability, transparency and responsiveness on the part of government and its officials are the hallmark of good governance in any society.

Ikotun (2004) argues that the concept of good governance characterize issues of performance in the management of a nation's political, economic and social resources to enhance human capacity, social well-being and sustainable development in the society. In the same vein, Kofi Annan observes that good governance is vital for the protection of rights and the advancement of economic and social development (cited in Kim et al, 2005). Also, Ekpe (2008) argues that the purpose of good governance is to create a conducive climate for political and socioeconomic development and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of

development programmes in a society. He points out that the concept of good governance is used to characterize the interplay of the best practices in the administration of a state or nation for sustainable development.

Every facet of society has been thoroughly corrupted, as such, the highest bidder gets his way, and morality is the worse for it. Self-respect, ideologies, standards, norms, principles, etc. are all easily compromised daily, as nearly everyone in the Nigerian society is out to grab his share of the national cake. He concluded that this situation has created confusion and despair in the Nigerian society and that it requires urgent sanitization.

7.3. Corruption and Good Governance; any correlation

This endemic has damaged the image of the country abroad to the extent that Nigeria is tagged as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Positive transformation and redeeming the image of the country can be possible through addressing the root causes of corruption and efficient governance.

Unethical behaviours have no places in good governance, much holistic approaches are need to curb the menace of corruption in order to bring about good governance to the populace. If truly combated, there will be effective governance and sustainable development to be anchored on a new paradigm that stresses the platform of rule of law, justice, equity, truth, honesty, virtue and integrity. Just a common saying by President Muhammad Burhari, if Nigeria do not kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria.

Nigerian masses need to regenerate and restore high ethical standards and patriotism, institutions should be built on sound ethical values and to create an environment that will give room to the emergence of a strong civil society for the promotion of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in governance. The constriction of all loopholes being explored to perpetrate fraud is strongly advocated. Preventive measures have to be scaled up with more proactive accounting and audit controls in government ministries, departments and parastatals.

If the foregoing are inserted into the public sphere, corruption will be abolished as the war against it should be holistic and transparent. This requires good and virtuous leaders who are men of proven integrity. Leaders who are disciplined, honest and trustworthy to help kill the endemic corruption in Nigeria.

Hence, there is no nexus to grace corruption but ensuring good governance and immediate prosecution of people who are involved in corrupt practices without giving room for sacred cows.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, the researcher assessed the nexus between corruption and good governance in at the public services in Nigeria which has virtually collapsed, causing serious hardship on the people and due to paralyse Nigeria in every sharp relief. The paper concluded by assessing major factors and initiatives that are likely to affect the trend of corruption in Nigeria and offer possible solutions as recommendation for the government.

Meanwhile, President Muhammadu Buhari's war against corruption in Nigeria should not be a mere rhetoric has been portrayed by the opposition, it should be a war eating deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society. The causes of corruption are from various societal institutional and political factors ravaging the nation's economy from the public services and private sectors. Its effects on the nations socio-political and economic development are numerous and devastating.

As been said, If good governance is conceived to include the capacity of a government to manage resources efficiently in order to improve the well-being of the citizens, then bureaucratic corruption should be regarded as one of the main obstacles to good governance and economic development in Nigeria. Corruption has assumed a normal pattern of life in Nigeria. Consequently, the situation has rendered the Nigerian state a non-delivery state, hence, the fight against corruption in Nigeria by the President Buhari administration should be encourage and supported by all the masses if the country, it should be holistic and transparent, not targeting only a section of the country and the opposition, a particular political party members and or his passive enemies if he wants Nigerians to believe and have faith in his war against corruption. The focus group discussion used in this work gathered that;

1. The immunity granted public office holders should be removed in order to discourage corrupt practices and other related vices.
2. The police and immigration departments should be overhauled, and any corrupt officials caught relieved of their duties.
3. The Government should collaborate with by multinational corporations and government to trace the looted fund kept in banks abroad.
4. That any candidate for the seat of power in Nigeria should be properly investigate for unethical practices before been approved for public offices.
5. Government should ensure legislative frame work for transparency, accountability and adequate protection for whistle blowers and resisters to corrupt practices.
6. National orientation through electronic, print and social medias should be put in place to strengthen good conduct
7. Faith based organizations should be encourage to preach wisdom against unethical behaviours and grant freedom of the press to investigate and report any traces of corruption in all its ramification to the public prosecutor.
8. The Government should provide adequate remuneration and necessary equipment for workers to reflect the responsibilities of their post and living wage.
9. Code of ethics bounding all government and private employees at all levels should be well-publicized and hang at all public places with bounty rewards for acts of honesty.
10. The government should fund anti-corruption agencies adequately and ensure their independence so that they can carry out the processes of prosecuting culprits without hindrances and government intervention.
11. There should be a special court for prosecuting people involved in corruption charges. This will reduce the cumbersome and delayed processes of the conventional court while capital punishment should be clearly spelt out for offenders as it is

obtained in other developed countries; possibly death or life imprisonment should be meted as in the case of China and most Asian countries.

12. The anti-graft staffs and the Nigerian police officers should be well trained and equipped to carry out investigations without fear and compromise with motivated with improved staff welfare packages for their satisfactions.
13. The Federal Government should endeavour to create employment opportunities to reduce the rate of unemployment and crime in the society.

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