The Methodological and Epistemological Developments in Conflict and Peace Studies

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Abstract: Conflict and peace studies is a field of knowledge and a contemporary academic discipline whose theories and concepts were formed in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the phenomenon of conflict is considered one of the oldest human phenomena. This article seeks to study and analyze the emergence and development of conflict and peace studies as a new scientific field, from its beginnings in post-World War II to the present time. In other words, this article deals with the progress of this scientific field through a review of all the basic stages that this field of knowledge has gone through. In its approach, this study resorted to the method of surveying many Western political references in the field of conflict and peace studies. Next, the study broke down the process of starting up and growing in this scientific field into specific periods that have basic elements. These include figuring out how important each stage is, how long it takes for this scientific specialization to become established, and what the most important ideas are at each stage. Finally, we compared these stages to discover the nature of the change and development in this scientific field.

Keywords: Conflict, peace, studies, methodological, epistemological developments.

Introduction

Just as conflict is an ancient phenomenon linked to human existence, studies of conflict have historical roots extending back to ancient times, such as the studies of the Greek historian Thucydides in his book "The History of the Peloponnesian War" (431 BC), and the Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his book "The Art of War". However, the actual development of this field occurred in the contemporary period. Most specialists consider that this field has its own

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characteristics and theoretical foundations and was based on methodological studies in the twentieth century, with its most important scientific results emerging during the second half of the twentieth century.

In the modern era, the First and Second World Wars (fascism and Nazism) undermined people's belief that democracy and economic development would lead to peaceful co-existence. Therefore, researchers began to study revolutions, socio-class conflicts, and organizational conflicts such as the conflict between workers and employers, and to analyze the causes of specific wars. Some of the first social and psychological analyses of the conflict were conducted, as well as research into methods for developing human relations and social equality models as theoretical approaches to resolving conflicts. A set of analytical theories has emerged that explain the stages of conflict, its level of intensity, and ways to limit and resolve it, such as Friedrich Glasl's model of conflict escalation, the Johan Galtung Triangle, the Michael Lund Curve, the Wheel of Conflict, the Conflict Tree, and other analytical models.

After the Cold War, the field of conflict and peace studies expanded its focus to include conflict prevention and post-settlement reconciliation. The nature of international conflicts has changed in the post-Cold War world, and researchers have begun to study and analyze the dynamics of the new world and understand the causes of non-traditional conflicts. Preventive diplomacy has also been designed and used to prevent the outbreak of conflict, early warning systems to detect conflict, analysis of the nature of identity conflicts, institutional conflicts, individual conflict within society and the family, and ways to address the psychological aspects of conflict. Conflict resolution practices have extended to new environments and become increasingly institutionalized, especially in the United States of America. At the international level, researchers working in the fields of peace and conflict studies have made significant contributions to policies used by non-governmental organizations, development agencies, international financial institutions, and the United Nations system, in the specific areas of conflict resolution, citizen diplomacy, development, politics, social and economic reform, peacekeeping, mediation, and early warning, prevention, Peacebuilding, and state building. The interest of researchers and specialists was not limited to the conflict aspect only, but rather they were directed towards dealing with the underlying reasons behind people fighting among themselves in the first place, in addition to supporting societies to manage their differences and conflicts without resorting to violence (Peacebuilding).

This subject represented a shift in interest from the approach of Conflict management oriented towards "negative peace" to conflict resolution and Peacebuilding approaches aimed at "positive peace". These developments have been summarized in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, entitled "An Agenda for Peace" in 1992. Indeed, it can be said that much of the mechanics of what several scholars have called "liberal Peacebuilding" and "state-building" depends largely on

the work that has been carried out in this field. Many scholars have called for a more "liberal" form of Peacebuilding, based on "responsibility to protect" (R2P), human security, local ownership, and participation in such processes, especially after the limited success of liberal Peacebuilding.

Studying the beginnings of the emergence and development of this field of knowledge (conflict and peace studies) is considered a scientific necessity to understand the history of this science on one side, how it originated and developed on the other side, and to know the nature of the change and development that occurred in this field of knowledge on the third side.

Such studies will undoubtedly help us understand the factors influencing the development of this field of knowledge, as well as the challenges and problems it faced. By doing so, we can then benefit from this knowledge in studying the future of this field and how to guide its future direction to avoid repeating many of the problems and challenges of the past. Additionally, understanding the development process of this field greatly aids in shaping its future and maximizing the benefit of this science in its applied aspects. This includes developing the ability to use scientific methodological methods in analyzing and resolving conflicts and promoting positive peace in general, and in our Arab society in particular.

Therefore, this study attempts to observe and monitor the most important developments and stages that conflict and peace studies have gone through, and to identify the most important cognitive and methodological transformations in this field of knowledge, given its importance, spread, and interest in studying it. In addition to mention the most important contributions made by this field of knowledge to resolve conflicts and Peacebuilding around the world, and clarifying the most important criticisms directed at this specialty.

The Emergence of Conflict and Peace Studies

Conflict studies have historical roots in antiquity, such as the studies of the Greek historian Thucydides, in his book "The History of the Peloponnesian War" (431 BC). Also, Aristotle's studies on revolution in Greek civilization, and Sun Tzu on the art of war. However, the actual development of this field occurred in the contemporary period. Most of the specialists in this field consider that this field has its characteristics and characteristics, and is based on methodological studies that were in the twentieth century and that its most important scientific results were in the second half of the twentieth century (Schellenberg, 1996).

One of the most important scholars of conflict and peace studies, Johan Galtung, points out in his latest scientific book published in 2009 in this scientific field, that the developments and progress of conflict and peace studies during the past fifty years have

been astonishing. Among these indications is the use of the term peace, which since the fifties has been associated with communist claims and propaganda and the acceptance of submission to the red threat, and the use of the term in those periods from the Western point of view was embarrassing. While the reality has completely changed today (Kaldor, 2005; Galtung & Webel, 2009; Campbell, MacKinnon & Stevens, 2010).

Conflict and peace studies have gone through four phases of time, as follows:

The Preliminary Stage (1918–1945)

This stage is considered a preliminary phase, rather than a foundational stage, for the field of conflict and peace studies. The scientific contributions and efforts of researchers during this era served as a preliminary introduction to the establishment of the field. These efforts constituted precursors to the pre-establishment stage and originated from studies and specialization in international relations. Additionally, the emergence of certain international changes and developments acted as harbingers and prompted an interest in establishing this academic field and conducting scientific research within it. These international developments created a strong sense of necessity to establish this scientific field. Among the most important of these international developments are:

- The occurrence of the First and Second World Wars resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people and massive economic and social devastation. The occurrence of the First and Second World Wars, resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people, and massive economic and social devastation.
- The emergence of Nazi and fascist ideologies, and their association with nationalist and racist feelings, expansion, and hegemony, each at the expense of the other (Lederach, 2005).

These international developments have prompted movement and efforts in terms of research and study of wars and conflicts, and collective international efforts in practice to find institutional frameworks and mechanisms to achieve peace and prevent the recurrence of such two world wars. Among these mechanisms is the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920, which later collapsed, and then the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 to achieve international peace and security and resolve disputes by peaceful means. The global humanitarian catastrophe caused by these wars also created strong motivations at the academic and research level to study wars to prevent the recurrence of these world wars and any future wars, "Peace Science" and interest in peace as a general science. One of the scholars of conflict and peace studies, Kenneth Boulding, refers in 1957 to the reasons or motives for establishing this field of knowledge, summarizing them in two elements, as Wiberg (1990), Hassan (2017), Gutsul and Khrul (2017) or Alwan, Qati and Ali (2021) did on their turn:

- The practical problem facing international relations (at that time) in particular was the prevention of a world war.

- To achieve intellectual progress in this field, international relations must be studied, as a project and derive its discourse from all social sciences (interdisciplinary) or as an interdisciplinary scientific field.

The Foundation Stage (1945–1960)

It is possible to consider the period of the fifties and sixties of the last century as the stage in which the foundations, theories, concepts, and methods of the field of conflict and peace studies were laid, and thus this period constituted the foundational stage for this scientific field (Dungen, 1996).

In the preliminary stage, we mentioned some of the international and regional developments that played an important role in creating basic motives for interest and revitalizing of conflict and peace studies. The most important of these developments were the Second World War and the disasters it caused to the human community, as well as the spread of resistance, liberation, and national independence movements against colonialism during the Foundation stage (1945–1960). In addition, the emergence of the Cold War, the arms race, and the dangers of nuclear weapons. Conflict and peace studies in this era are a reactive response to risks, human disasters, and wars directly affected by the West, and not a proactive process (Rogers, 2007; Dar, 2017).

These developments prompted a growing interest in conflict and peace studies, and the establishment of institutions, research centers, and scientific programs in the field of conflict and peace studies, taking advantage of other scientific fields previously mentioned, such as political science, sociology, international relations, and others.

The Consolidation and Development Stage (1970–1989)

This stage constituted an expansive extension and consolidation of the sixties. This expansion was primarily characterized by horizontal growth, signifying the quantitative expansion of the scientific field. It was evident in the increased number of researchers and specialists in conflict and peace studies, as seen in the expanded membership of scientific associations and unions dedicated to this field, such as the International Peace Research Consortium (IPRC) and IPRA, for example.

Furthermore, this expansion manifested in the proliferation of research institutions and scientific programs specializing in conflict and peace studies, with a notable increase in presence across many European countries and particularly in Japan. Additionally, there was a growth in scientific societies at national and regional levels focusing on conflict, security, and peace studies. Later in this discussion, we will present some numerical indicators in this field.

This horizontal expansion of researchers, scientific institutions, and research centers specialized in peace studies was accompanied by an accumulation of knowledge, both

vertically and horizontally. This was reflected in the substantial intellectual output of research and scientific literature, including a large number of specialized scientific publications in the form of books, encyclopedias, research papers in specialized scientific journals, and presentations at scientific conferences.

It is worth noting that during this stage, scientific contributions in this field were primarily made by research institutions and collaborative teamwork, leading to a decline in the individual role of researchers and scientists in building knowledge within this scientific field, as was the case during its founding phase in the fifties and sixties. However, the importance of individual scientific production and publication for researchers remained significant in driving scientific research and publishing in the field of conflict and peace studies (Wiberg, 1988; Lasica, 2009).

The Global Expansion and Spread (1990–2010)

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the end of the Cold War and the arms race, which formed one of the most important motives for the emergence of conflict and peace studies and the development of this scientific field, it is difficult to separate the beginnings of this stage from the second half of the eighties (in which fundamental changes began in The Soviet Union under President Gorbachev ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union) (Askerov, 2021; Ndeche & Iroye, 2022).

The significance of this stage lies in the completion of the development of conflict and peace studies, which was evident through the rapid and substantial proliferation of this field across most parts of the world. This expansion was observed in various aspects, including the increase in the number of scientific institutions and research centers, the establishment of academic programs specializing in this field, and the growth in the number of scientific periodicals. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in specialists, academics, and practitioners in this scientific domain. Finally, the expansion resulted in a significant increase in scientific production, research agendas, and subfields within this discipline. This surge in activity encompassed conferences, seminars, research projects, publications, and other scholarly endeavors (Matyók, 2011; Udegbunam, 2017).

Conflict and Peace Studies: Ideas and Institutions

The different periods that conflict and peace studies have gone through have produced a variety of new ideas related to the concepts of conflict and peace and their stages, as well as many scientific institutions specialized in this field of knowledge, which would have developed this new science, and laid its theoretical and methodological foundations, which later became the basis for this science. Therefore, we find it necessary, shortly and quickly, to research the most important basic ideas produced by this science, and its most prominent specialized intellectual and cognitive institutions.

The Ideas

The period from 1950 to 1970 is considered the stage of the actual establishment of this scientific field, as work has been done to lay the foundations and theoretical and cognitive frameworks for its scientific system, the basic scientific theories have been developed in addition to building and developing curricula and basic models for this scientific field (Eldrige, 1994; Crosby & Soest, 1997; Assafi & Aziz, 2022).

At this stage, the features of conflict and peace studies began to emerge as a science. At this stage, attention was paid to the development and use of the quantitative method, especially in America, which was very active in the study of international relations in general, which had a clear reflection on the conflict studies approach, where the academic group began to use the quantitative approach in analyzing conflicts, especially at the University of Michigan, and this quantitative trend in conflict studies had a clear impact on the first scientific periodical specialized in conflict studies, which is "The Journal of Conflict Resolution", which was previously referred to it (Pruitt, & Rubin, 1986; Weiss, 1993).

At this stage, the controversy between the realist school and the idealist school in international relations was reflected in the academic community of conflict and peace studies. On one hand, the idealist school promoted conflict and peace studies, emphasizing the need to settle conflicts by peaceful means, and showed interest in conflict prevention and achieving positive peace. On the other hand, supporters of the realist school in international relations stressed the importance of paying attention to force and using it when necessary to settle conflicts or prevent their occurrence. Consequently, this school focused on the need to build strength, leading to the generation of pessimistic trends towards peace and conflict research among academic groups in this field (Curle, 1971).

The studies and literature presented by the scholars and founders, whom we refer to as the most important ones based on the nature of their publications and scientific interests, indicate that their efforts were primarily focused on studying the causes of wars and conflicts rather than on studying peace. However, this focus is considered a natural part of the development process of this field. The concept of peace involves justice and cooperation and is more comprehensive than merely the absence of violence and conflict, known as negative peace (Paul, 2007; Al-Khazandar, 2014).

During the seventies and eighties of the last century, studies and research in the field of conflict and peace studies aimed for deeper exploration of conflict and peace theories and the practical application of these theories. Efforts were made to develop curricula and scientific approaches for this field, focusing on practical applications of theoretical frameworks and attempting to emphasize the scientific aspects of dimensions with practical application possibilities. Consequently, studies dealing with dispute resolution methods such as negotiations and mediation, along with scientific techniques

and methods concerned with these aspects, experienced significant growth (Lipsitz & Kritzer, 1975; Katz, 1989; Abu-Nimer, 2013).

Although negotiation and mediation are ancient processes associated with human life and have evolved over time in connection with diplomatic activities of nation-states and international organizations such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, a significant number of scholars in the field of conflict studies, especially in the 1980s, believed that there was a deficiency in critical studies of mediation and that it still lacked systematic analysis (Hoffman, 1992; Jeong, 1995; Mughamis & Kadhim, 2023).

Several studies have appeared in this era that focus on the subject of negotiations and mediation, in theory and practice. Among them were special contributions that sought to institutionalize the mediation process and the role of mediators in the conflict (Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009; Levine, 1996; Coleman, 2007). Also, at this stage, scientific approaches and schools for conflict resolution appeared, such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a school that relies on legal mechanisms and frameworks for settling disputes and conflicts, as well as developing the Harvard School curriculum for solving problems (Levine, 1996; Coleman, 2007; Schirch, 2005; Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009).

With the onset of the 1990s, significant events unfolded, perhaps the most notable being the end of the Cold War and the subsequent disarmament, which had profound implications for conflict and peace studies. This was evident in the emergence of new conflicts and shifts in their nature, as well as changes in the research agenda.

In terms of the evolving nature of conflicts and their participants, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave rise to new conflicts, including those in Russia (Chechnya), Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, the Gulf War, the occupation of Iraq, and Timor/Indonesia. Additionally, the international war on terrorism initiated by the United States in 2001 emerged as a significant global concern. Studies conducted by the Norwegian PRIO and the Uppsala Conflict Institute database indicate a decline in interstate armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era, with a rise in civil wars and intrastate conflicts. During this period, conflicts primarily revolved around power struggles and territorial disputes, particularly ethnic conflicts and movements for independence or autonomy (Wallensteen, 2011).

Regarding the research agenda and conflict issues in the post-Cold War era, there was a shift away from issues related to the arms race towards more specialized and diversified directions. Various specialized fields emerged within conflict and peace studies, with the United States taking a leading role in both official and academic domains. The focus of conflict and peace studies expanded to encompass non-traditional areas such as human security, conflicts involving religious and ethnic minorities, clash of civilizations, environmental and water issues, human rights, peace processes, state and economic

issues, international terrorism, peace culture, and education. Additionally, research interests in peace studies extended to areas such as early warning systems, conflict prevention strategies, and peacebuilding efforts (Kumar, Cousens, & Wermester, 2001; Tshigiri, 2004; Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009).

Scientific Research Institutions

In the preliminary period, there were no independent research or university institutions dedicated to conflict and peace studies. The only exception was the emergence of an American association called the Massachusetts Peace Association, founded between 1817 and 1819 by Noah Worcester. It was the sole organization of its kind globally and conducted a study on the human toll of wars since Adam and Eve, as well as delving into military expenditures and their connections to civilian objectives. Worcester also established the first quarterly journal in the field of peace studies, titled "Friends of Peace," in 1815. However, the initial studies in this scientific field did not originate from this association; rather, they emerged from the realm of international relations studies and institutions, which had its foundational beginnings during the same period.

During that era, scientific studies of international relations and affairs began to take a scientific turn with the emergence of research or academic institutions focused on international issues and problems. In the 1930s, the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, commonly known as Chatham House, was among the first of these institutions, established in 1923. Additionally, organizations such as The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) were established, along with similar institutions in Germany and other European countries. The first university chair dedicated to teaching international politics was established in Wales in 1919 at Aberystwyth College (Lund, 1996; Abd, 2016; Inass, 2023).

In Europe, the first research center specialized in peace studies was established in Norway, known as the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), in 1959. It stands as one of the oldest research institutes in peace and conflict studies and has been associated with one of the oldest and most significant journals dedicated to this scientific field since 1964—the "Journal of Peace Research." It was the inaugural periodical of its kind to be published in Europe (Dungen, 1996; De Reuck, 2001; Hikmat, 2020).

Furthermore, research and academic institutes focusing on this scientific field emerged in several European countries. For instance, the Pomological Institute at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands was established in 1962. In France, the Institute for War Studies was founded in 1970, and in Britain, the Lancaster Center for Peace Studies, also known as The Richardson Institute, was established at Lancaster University in 1959. Other notable institutions include the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), founded in 1966, and the Tampere Institute in Finland in 1969 (Kenneth, 1996). It is noteworthy that the Scandinavian countries exhibited greater interest in the field of

conflict and peace studies during this era compared to other European nations (Ali & Tatar, 2018).

On the other hand, it may be appropriate to refer to a special international movement in the field of security and peace after World War II, which resulted in an institutional mechanism that works to achieve international peace and security based on resolving disputes by peaceful means. This institutional mechanism was represented by the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, as well as at the Arab regional level, the League of Arab States was established several months before the United Nations; To contribute to achieving a set of goals, including settling Arab conflicts by peaceful means, and contributing in maintaining Arab national security (Ryan, 2003).

In the stage of growth and expansion (the 1980s), the proliferation of scientific institutions focused on conflict and peace studies experienced a horizontal expansion, encompassing not only America but also all European countries, along with many Asian and some African nations. For instance, the UNESCO IPRA Directory indicates the establishment of nearly 500 institutes, research centers, unions, or associations during this period, extending until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Academic programs specializing in conflict and peace studies became widespread across universities worldwide.

For example, the Department of Conflict and Peace Studies at Uppsala University was founded in 1971, offering various scientific degrees and training programs. In Northern Ireland, the University of Belfast was established, and in South Africa, the Center for Conflict Resolution was founded at the University of Cape Town in 1968. The Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom was established in 1973. In the United States of America, numerous scientific institutions and research centers emerged, including the United States Institute of Peace in 1984, which is affiliated with Congress and dedicated to issues of peace and conflict (Inass, 2023).

In the stage of spread and consolidation (1990–2010), this scientific field expanded widely across various countries worldwide. This expansion manifested at multiple levels, including the establishment of institutions, research centers, and scientific periodicals, as well as the exploration of diverse fields, issues, and research agendas. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in study programs specializing in this field, along with a significant rise in the number of specialized researchers, academics, and practitioners/activists.

Despite the end of the Cold War and the arms race, which served as significant catalysts for the development of ideas and research agendas in conflict and peace studies, this period saw an increase in issues related to minorities and human rights. Additionally, civil wars and ethnic conflicts proliferated, accompanied by a shift in the parties involved in conflicts, with a growing role observed among non-state actors in armed conflicts (Thomas, 2001; Heikki, 2001; Ryan, 2003).

During this period, research centers and academic departments were established in universities all over the world, and they took various specialized forms and directions in this field, whether under security in its broad and comprehensive concept (Security) or methods of conflict management and conflict resolution, including issues of minority protection and peace education and conflict prevention, and others. Many universities now offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in the field of conflict studies, or a short-term training diploma in this scientific field (Ryan, 2003; Harris & Shuster, 2006).

Conclusions

According to the aforementioned, we can say that conflict and peace studies, although it is a modern science, its practice is old with the age and existence of man and human civilizations, and this field is part of a process of human knowledge accumulation in which the efforts of multiple civilizations and cultures contributed, although Western efforts in general and American efforts in particular contributed to its emergence as a field or scientific specialization within the context of the contemporary scientific development experienced by the Western world in the various fields of social, human and applied sciences.

Most academics in the Arab region argue that peace studies approach and theories are not objective, drawn primarily from leftist or non-expert sources, are not practical, support violence rather than reject it, or have not led to political developments. Moreover, they noted that the development of policies of the United Nations and major donors (including the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries including Japan, Canada, Norway, etc.) towards conflict and post-conflict countries, has been Severe negative impact.

However, these accusations and criticisms are not true, because these institutions and governments have developed and adopted a set of major policies and responses during the past decades to deal with conflicts and establish peace. In the work of the United Nations, we find that there are several serious steps adopted in this regard, such as the "peace agenda," "development agenda," and "transformation agenda" Democratization and the Millennium Development Goals, the Responsibility to Protect, and the Report of the High-Level Panel.

Conflict and peace studies have significantly influenced the operational procedures of international and regional organizations, particularly in terms of addressing and resolving conflicts and initiating multiple peace-building processes across various regions globally. In today's world, prominent international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the International Committee of the Red Cross play pivotal roles in maintaining, creating, and fostering peace. They achieve this by enhancing communication between opposing factions, facilitating humanitarian cooperation, and fostering dialogue. Additionally,

these organizations engage in civilian-military coordination, provide essential services, cater to the needs of civilian populations, and advocate for the adherence to and implementation of international humanitarian law principles. With their regional or global perspectives, international organizations are also adept at identifying issues and trends that may signal escalating tensions or conflicts before hostilities erupt. They serve as early warning mechanisms and offer conflict resolution and quiet diplomacy services.

Currently, the field is characterized by both areas of broad consensus and sharp disagreement. Scholars concur that different strategies are appropriate for varying types and stages of conflicts. They emphasize the influence of adversarial parties on conflict escalation and de-escalation. There is also increasing recognition that social conflicts involve multiple parties and issues, often interlocked. However, scholars still widely differ in their emphasis on conflict resolution or dispute settlement. Their approaches to power and force vary; some perceive coercion as an inevitable element of any resolution, while others regard force as antithetical to genuine conflict resolution. Moreover, there is disagreement over which strategies are suitable for different types and stages of conflict.

Although the fields of conflict resolution and international relations are converging in some areas, they should remain distinct (yet complementary) in others. Both fields share an emphasis on seeking win/win outcomes. International case studies have enhanced both fields' understanding of mediation, while institutional studies have improved their understanding of achieving a durable conflict outcome. The rise of non-state actors on the international scene has also brought the fields closer together. In practice, the fields of conflict resolution and international relations often complement each other. Unofficial Track Two diplomacy provides a valuable supplement to official diplomacy.

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