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Restructuration of Partisan Politics and the Emergence of a New Cleavage Based on Values

HANSPETER KRIESI

The cleavage concept is a very demanding concept that limits the possibilities of finding any new examples of cleavages. And, indeed, many authors, some of whom contributing to the present volume, mainly perceive a decline of cleavages, or at best a stabilization of old cleavages, but hardly anything new. However, new cleavages may be hard to find, because we look in the wrong places for their structural basis: it might just be that their value/normative element is contributing crucially to the structural closure of the groups involved – as it did in the case of religion previously. If we take such a possibility into account, several of the contributions to the present volume provide evidence for the emergence of a new value-based cleavage, which has mainly, albeit not exclusively, been driven by the challengers of the New Left and the new populist right.

Conceptual Clarifications

Let me start out with some conceptual clarifications. Bartolini (2005) warns us that ‘cleavage’ needs to be defined differently from conflict or opposition, and that it should not be used in conjunction with an adjective qualifying it, such as ‘political’, ‘social’ or ‘cultural’. In his view, it should be distinguished from the generic notion of ‘division’, and he reminds us that the specificity of historical cleavages is that they were characterized by a combination (overlap) of social-structural, ideological/normative, and behavioral/organizational divisions: ‘the theoretical connotation of the concept of cleavage refers to the combination of interest orientations rooted in social structure, cultural/ideological orientations rooted in normative systems, and behavioral patterns expressed in organizational membership and action’ (Bartolini 2004: 3). In other words, a structural division is transformed into a cleavage, if a political actor gives coherence and organized political expression to what otherwise are inchoate and fragmentary beliefs, values and experiences among members of some social

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group. Bartolini suggests that divisions that combine only two of the three elements should either be designated as ‘corporate divides’ (divisions that combine interest orientations and an organizational base), ‘political divides’ (divisions combining ideological orientations and an organizational base), or ‘social divides’ (combining interest orientations and cultural/ideological orientations). Conceptualized as overlap of three component elements, the notion of ‘cleavage’ does not imply any kind of psychological or sociological reductionism which treats politics as a mere reflection of underlying social, cultural or psychological processes. It implies that social divisions and their ideological expressions are not translated into politics as a matter of course, but are decisively shaped by their political articulation.

Bartolini also insists that, to understand the notion of ‘cleavage’ as it has been used in the analysis of the historical divisions of Western European politics, it is crucial to understand that the formation of these cleavages heavily depended on the degree of closure of the groups concerned: the more difficult the social exit from group affiliation (the more closed the social structure), the more likely was the political structuring of strong group identities/ideologies/action, and vice versa. Social groups whose members do not perceive individual exit options are likely to interact on the basis of their respective membership role (and not on the basis of individual characteristics), which is conducive to the formation of cleavages. If, for example, a young man does not get a job because his name is ‘Iovanovic’, he is caught in such an inter-group conflict with other groups defined in ethnic terms, which will increase the possibility that he will not look for a personal, but for a group solution to his predicament (or, alternatively, become apathetic). In other words, the cleavage concept links the social reality of the openness/closure of individual life chances to the likelihood of collective and organized action through the mediation of socially shared systems of beliefs. According to this perspective, as individual group members get individual mobility chances, their attachment to the group weakens and they will no longer be mobilizable for collective action to defend the common group interests.

De-structuration/Re-structuration/Stabilization

Under contemporary social conditions, which are characterized by a seemingly increasing number of options for most people, by an increasing heterogeneity of the individual life experiences and an increasing fragmentation of the social structure, it is difficult to identify any sense of closure. The impression is one of de-structuring traditional cleavages or, using another terminology, of the de-alignment of traditional links between social groups and political actors representing their interests. This has been the message of earlier analyses by authors such as Dalton *et al.* (1984) or Franklin *et al.* (1992), and this is the message of the contribution by Wouter van der Brug

(2010). He finds a decline of structural and ideological voting, i.e. a loosening of the links between specific social groups, their ideological orientations, and electoral behavior in Western and Central Europe. Building on the work of many others, he finds that the key mechanism responsible, at least in part, for this decline is generational replacement. More specifically, he finds the strongest traces of structural voting among the oldest generations (those born before 1950), who were still politically socialized in the era of cleavage politics, and the strongest traces of ideological (i.e. left/right) voting among those born in the 'golden age' of the post-war period (between 1950 and 1970) and politically socialized before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This confirmation of the de-structuration or de-alignment thesis, i.e. of the phasing out of traditional cleavages, suffers, however, from the fact that, for pragmatic reasons of data availability, the author had to choose a very weak operationalization of class: a subjective measure with five categories (working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class and upper class). This is a major limitation of his contribution, since those who have maintained that the current trends are not only characterized by de-structuration and de-alignment, but have also found evidence of re-structuration and re-alignment, i.e. traces of the formation of new cleavages, have done so on the basis of re-conceptualizations of the objective measures which have traditionally been used to measure class. These 'revisionists' argued that the confirmation of the de-structuration thesis heavily depended on the use of objective class categories which no longer were adequate for the characterization of contemporary social structures (Evans 1999; Manza and Brooks 1999; Müller 1998, 1999; Oesch 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Subjective measures of class have always been considered to be inadequate by political sociologists. As I suggested more than ten years ago in my Stein Rokkan lecture (Kriesi 1998: 181f.): 'The crux is to identify theoretically and empirically the relevant social divisions in a world in flux, and to study their political formation'.

For the specific case of the regional cleavage, Oddbjørn Knutsen (2010) finds a lot of structuration in the regional differences in vote choices. Moreover, the largest share of the regional cleavage can be explained by the different social-structural characteristics of the regions, with class being somewhat more important than religion or urban-rural residence. In addition, 'old politics' values are most important among the various value orientations, which leads Knutsen to conclude that his findings clearly support the 'old regionalism' and 'old politics' notions of how we can explain the regional cleavage. However, this conclusion hinges, among other things, on the author's attribution of the structural effect of 'class' to 'old regionalism' and 'old politics'. To his credit, Knutsen uses three variables – social class (a version of the Erikson/Goldthorpe class schema), education, and household income – to measure class, and it is likely that the strong effects he finds are a result of his differentiated operationalization. As

Knutsen acknowledges himself, his way of operationalizing class may also have picked up some effects of the transformation of the social structure. Thus, effects linked to the educational component of class may be indicative of ‘new regionalism’ and ‘new politics’ (see Stubager 2010 and my discussion below). By treating ‘class’ as an indicator of ‘old regionalism’ and ‘old politics’, the author decides by fiat in favor of a given interpretation of the results. It would have taken a more detailed analysis of the structural component in order to be able to distinguish between ‘old’ and ‘new’.

In their contribution to the present volume, Gábor Tóka and Tania Gosselin (2010) point to a mechanism that constrains the political impact of the de-structuration of traditional cleavages. They do not only study political choices (volatility or party loyalty to a given party across elections), as analysts of cleavages conventionally do, but also electoral participation. Based on the 2004 European election study, they are able to show that citizens with social and attitudinal characteristics that consistently pull them in a given political direction not only are politically more involved, but also more loyal to their party. This is the old idea of Lazarsfeld *et al.*’s (1944) ‘index of political predispositions’ and of Campbell *et al.*’s (1964) ‘cross-pressures’. We would, of course, say that the more consistently voters are pulled in opposing directions, the stronger a given cleavage is likely to be. But this is not the message conveyed by Toka and Gosselin. They insist on the possibility that electoral alignments are stabilized in spite of cleavage decline. This possibility may arise from the fact, documented by their highly sophisticated analysis, that the voters who are subject to consistent pressure have higher levels of participation and party loyalty than the cross-pressured. The voters with coherent predispositions vote and do so in a predictable manner, but they may constitute a decreasing share of the population. Accordingly, the overall effect would be a freezing of the party system, in spite of an increasing irrelevance of the established parties for contemporary conflict structures. This idea is intriguing, but empirical evidence for the crucial link in their argumentation chain – i.e. evidence for declining shares of the consistently pressured – is, unfortunately, missing from their cross-sectional analysis. Finally, I find the authors’ idea very promising to consider social-structural and attitudinal characteristics not only as resources for participation at the individual level, but also as products of how parties mobilize and demobilize societal segments. It suggests that existing cleavages might survive as a result of the deliberate partisan strategies to selectively mobilize their core constituencies and to demobilize the social groups more peripheral to their interests.

A New Cleavage Based on Values?

Ever since I found that the participation in Dutch new social movements was dominated by ‘social-cultural professionals’ (Kriesi 1989, 1993), I have been impressed by the structuring capacity of the new challengers of the

established political parties. This observation first led me to propose a new cleavage cutting across the new middle class and opposing the social-cultural professionals to the managers and technocrats. This was, in my view, the conflict that was politically articulated by the New Left. In the 1990s, the impressive mobilization by the new populist right again suggested to me that a new structural conflict was being expressed by these highly successful challengers. In my earlier analysis of this new challenge, I linked it to education and suggested that the modernization losers mobilized by the populist right were mainly to be found among the unskilled (Kriesi 1999). In our more recent work, we suggest that the new challenge may have broader roots and be more intimately linked to globalization, denationalization or the opening up of the national borders (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008). Accordingly, we distinguished between winners and losers of the denationalization processes. Given that there are different ways one can benefit or lose from the opening up of the national borders, we spoke of rather heterogeneous structural potentials and came to the conclusion that the losers were mainly mobilized in cultural terms. In other words, given their structural heterogeneity, we suggested that the value dimension provides the common denominator for linking the globalization losers to the behavioral dimension.

In my Stein Rokkan lecture (Kriesi 1998), I was unable to establish more than a tentative link between the three components of the new cleavage within the new middle class. Generational replacement and a re-structuration of class were two structural elements linked to the tremendous value change that has swept across Western Europe, but these two structural roots were not sufficient to account for the profound impact which political values had on political behavior. The normative element and the structural element seemed only partially connected and, in the terminology of Bartolini, what I was able to substantiate empirically resembled more a new 'political division' than a new cleavage.

At the time, instead of concluding that structure and values have, to some extent, come to be disconnected, I tentatively suggested that we have not yet been able to identify the structural correlates of the new cleavage with sufficient precision, and that we should further pursue the conceptualization of the transformation of contemporary Western European societies. Faced with the problem, confirmed by our most recent analyses of the globalization losers, that the link between changing values and political behavior is easier to establish than the link between changing values and changing social structures, we might, however, draw a different conclusion altogether. Following Zsolt Enyedi (2008: 288), who suggests that the definitional requirement of socio-structural origins and well-defined socio-structural bases has narrowed down radically, and in his mind unnecessarily, the applicability of the cleavage concept, we might acknowledge that 'institutions and values, instead of social categories, may also dominate the identity of deep-seated, enduring, and comprehensive (that is cleavage-like)

political conflicts'. In Enyedi's view, political conflicts may be mainly rooted in political-cultural differences, and the mechanisms that sustain the politicized collective identities may have little to do with social categories measured by censuses. His point is, in other words, that the social groups in question may be defined more by the values individuals adhere to than by social-structural categories, and that 'values and attitudes should be regarded not simply as integral elements of cleavages but also as their potential base' (p. 293).

This is an argument worth considering. It may be possible that in our contemporary society, the politically relevant social groups are no longer so much defined by social-structural categories, as by opposing value orientations. In general, people interact with people who are similar to them (Homans 1972). Individuals adjust their interactions in order to reduce conflict and maximize exposure to actors more similar to themselves. In a society, where interactions between individuals are less determined by spatially or social-structurally ascribed (gender, age, family) or achieved (job, profession) proximity and more by individual value orientations and personal interests, it seems natural that the social groups are less defined in social-structural terms than in terms of value orientations. Many decades ago, sociologists noticed that the effect of the modern urban way of life has been the 'unbundling' of relationships in the city. People in the city have multiple and functionally specific sets of relationships (Craven and Wellman 1974). Moreover, the city has had a liberating effect, as increased social and physical mobility enabled individuals to form relationships on the basis of their preferences/value orientations/interests to a greater extent than had formerly been possible. In the same vein, contemporary personal relationships are less and less territorially based. The rise of the internet and of the web has accentuated these older trends to a considerable extent. Pessimistic observers have pointed out the fragmenting, balkanizing effect of these new technologies, where, as a result of the available choices, people tend to end up being exclusively linked to the like-minded and are no longer exposed to alternative points of view (Sunstein 2001). A similar fragmenting trend has been observed for the media more generally: a trend toward highly specialized rather than mass channels, a centrifugal diversification of political communication which is tailored to specific identities, conditions and tastes: the electronic equivalents of gated communities (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). To the extent that it is, indeed, taking place, the fragmentation of the public sphere into more or less closed segments constitutes a key mechanism underpinning the independent structuring effect of value orientations: based on their value orientations, individuals selectively choose their information channels, which reinforce their value orientations and the links between these orientations and political choices on a diverse set of issues. According to this line of reasoning, citizens are increasingly segmented into social groups divided by value orientations/ideologies with increasingly coherent sets of political preferences and

political identities. If this were the case, we could speak of more than a simple political divide. We would approach something like a value-based new cleavage.

However, it may also be the case that the reinforcement is highly selective, issue-specific, and does not lead to a coherent political polarization based on value orientations/ideologies. As is currently discussed in the United States, the polarization may be confined to the elites. The elite polarization, in turn, may make it easier for ordinary citizens to see the differences between parties and they may now be better at sorting themselves out between Republicans and Democrats. In the absence of a value-/ideology-based alignment of the citizens with the two parties, polarization at the level of the citizens may, however, remain confined to specific issues and may not impose any further constraints among issues and between issue domains. In this case, we would speak of an issue-specific political divide at best.

Baldassari and Gelman (2008) have tested the opposing models for the United States, and arrived at the conclusion that the actual situation resembles the issue-specific political divide rather than the one of a full-fledged value-based cleavage: Americans have become more polarized on individual issues, but there is only a minimal increase in issue alignment. However, their findings suggest that something quite unexpected is emerging in the United States – something like a one-sided, or partially muted cleavage: substantial partisan and issue alignment has occurred within the resourceful and powerful group of rich Americans: ‘The wealthier part of the political constituency knows well what it wants, and it is likely, now more than in the past, to affect the political process. This potentially increases inequality in interest representation, not only through lobbying activity and campaign financing, but also in the ballot’ (Baldassari and Gelman 2008: 441f.). What seems to be happening in the US is, however, not necessarily what is happening in Europe. The remaining contributions to this volume speak to the European situation with respect to a new value cleavage.

The Empirical Evidence for a New Value Cleavage in this Volume

Heather Stoll (2010) analyzes the party-defined political agenda on the basis of party manifesto data in order to assess the relative salience of six, potentially salient ideological conflicts’ – the socio-economic, religious, ethnic, urban–rural, foreign policy and post-materialist conflicts – as well as the dimensionality of the partisan space in 18 West European countries from 1950 through 2005. Her analysis provides little support for de-alignment, not to speak of re-alignment in the West European party systems. Her most striking finding certainly is the extent to which the socio-economic conflict has dominated the party-defined political agenda in Western Europe throughout the post-World War II period, contrary to the predictions of de-alignment. As far as the dimensionality of the space is concerned, her best

judgment is that three dimensions should be retained for the 1950s, one for the 1990s and two for the remaining three (1960s–1980s) and a half (2000s) decades. She finds no evidence of an increase in dimensionality around the 1970s, as her interpretation of the de-alignment thesis would have predicted. The first dimension always is a socio-economic dimension, while the second one has both ethnic and post-materialist (i.e. essentially environment-related) overtones in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s. In the 1950s and 2000s, the second dimension seems to be foreign policy related.

The continuing dominance of the socio-economic dimension is certainly impressive, but for authors who argue that a new cleavage may be emerging, the shifting weights among the remaining conflicts is of crucial importance. For our own work, which links the new challenge of the populist right to the processes of denationalization and its consequences, it is, for example, highly significant that Stoll (2010) finds an increase both in ‘ethnic’ and ‘EC/EU’-related conflicts. Both of these conflicts are linked to processes of denationalization (except for ‘centralization’-related issues, which have more to do with the classic centre–periphery conflict). Combining the two conflicts (but excluding ‘centralization’) as reported in her Table 1 (Stoll 2010: 455), we can see that their overall share more than doubled between the 1950s and the 2000s (from 7.6 per cent to 15.5 per cent), and that it increased particularly rapidly since the 1990s. This finding (which is not discussed by Stoll, because she has a more eclectic set of conflicts in mind) confirms our own results (which are based on a different set of data), and suggests not only that conflicts between winners and losers of denationalization are increasing, but also that, as we have argued, they are mainly fought out in cultural terms.

Simon Bornschier (2010) undertakes a similar exercise as Heather Stoll. He establishes a link between the two new conflicts driven by the New Left and the new populist right mentioned previously by providing an account of how the programmatic innovations of the New Left and the New Right have been driving the emergence of a new cultural line of conflict that fundamentally transforms the traditional cultural/religious dimension of conflict in West European party systems. At the heart of this transformation, he suggests, is a conflict over the role of community, in which the New Left and the New Right take opposite polar positions. The cultural issues put on the agenda by the New Left in the 1970s and 1980s have resulted in a first reinterpretation of the cultural dimension, leading to a divide between libertarian and authoritarian/traditionalist values. The New Right, as a counter-movement to the New Left, has then opposed a communitarian conception of the community to the universalistic one of the New Left, and has given rise to a second reinterpretation of the cultural dimension. As a consequence, Bornschier expects the cultural dimension to be transformed into the opposition between libertarian-universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian values. His empirical analysis of the partisan space in six West European countries indicates that the issues put on the political agenda by the New Left and the new populist right, indeed, constitute the

key normative ideas on the cultural dimension of the two-dimensional partisan space. Moreover, the parties of the New Left tend to occupy the libertarian-universalistic pole of the new divide, while those of the new populist right (or transformed parties of the established right) occupy the opposite traditionalist-communitarian pole.

The analysis of the social and attitudinal bases of Green voters by Martin Dolezal (2010) provides some support for the existence of a structural basis of this new value-based cleavage: Dolezal demonstrates that 'Green parties are supported by voters who are young, highly educated, work as social-cultural specialists or are students, are predominantly urban, and less attached to Christian churches. These structural components are connected with environmental, libertarian, and pro-immigration attitudes.' It is the cultural issues that primarily define this group of voters, while they are neither clear supporters nor clear opponents of economic liberalism. Dolezal suspects that the Green voters may lack a sense of common group identity. This may very well be the case: these voters are the product of modern individualism, their political involvement is less continuous and more task-specific than traditional role models would suggest. The Greens have built on the organizational model of the new social movements, their voters adopt what Rothstein (2001: 220), for the case of Sweden, has called an 'individualistic pattern of participation' or a 'solidaristic individualism'. The members of this group fail to formalize their common characteristics, and behave similarly in more informal ways. However, even if they are not aware of their 'group consciousness', they are more alike than they would care to admit, and their individualistic behavior is highly patterned by their common normative commitments and social-structural backgrounds. They mutually recognize each other in the art museums, concert halls, cinemas, restaurants and cafés that structure their past time.

Rune Stubager's (2010) analysis of the Danish situation provides additional support for the existence of a structural basis of this new divide, which he calls 'new politics or authoritarian-libertarian values', and which is in actual fact the same phenomenon as the one which has been analyzed by Bornschieer (2010) and Dolezal (2010). In Stubager's view, this new cultural divide is basically concerned with hierarchy and tolerance. Authoritarians favor social hierarchy, while libertarians prefer the free and equal interaction of individuals without regard to social position of any kind. Implied in the libertarian position is respect and tolerance for other people, while authoritarians insist on compliance with the dominant norms. He suggests that the political manifestations of this value divide may vary from one country to the other, but his examples for the European cases refer to the same issues as the ones discussed by Bornschieer and Dolezal. Stubager finds the structural roots of this new normative contrast in education. In line with his previous analysis (Stubager 2009), he finds that the three parties most clearly identified with the New Left tend to be chosen on the basis of education and authoritarian-libertarian values, while class (unfortunately,

we do not know how he operationalized class) and economic values tend to be more important for the choice of the three other parties in his study.

The contribution of Andrija Henjak (2010) takes the transformation of the cleavage structure for granted, but makes an attempt to identify systematic variations between the countries in this respect. He builds on Knutsen and Scarbrough's (1995) study. This analysis distinguished between, on the one hand, the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, which are characterized by a social democratic or liberal welfare regime and lack deep cultural (religious or ethnic) cleavages, and, on the other hand, the continental European countries, which are characterized by a Christian democratic welfare regime and historically important cultural cleavages. His analysis confirms Knutsen's (2010) results by showing that the link between economic value orientations (left–right materialism) and vote choices is closer in the former countries, while the link between cultural value orientations (libertarian–authoritarian moral values and attitudes about immigration and the environment) and vote choices is closer in the continental European countries. These results suggest a particular sort of path dependency: the new cultural line of conflict seems to be stronger in countries that have traditionally been divided by cultural conflicts, while it appears to be less prominent in countries that have been less divided by such conflicts in the past. In other words, there seems to be a lot of stability in the partisan space of competition, the only transformation we might witness is a reinterpretation of the cultural dimension in the countries where it has been prominent in the past.

But then, take a country like Denmark – i.e. the country analyzed by Rune Stubager (2010) and which belongs to the group of countries where the economic value orientations tend to prevail over the cultural ones – and take a closer look at the details of Henjak's results. In this particular case, we find that the cultural value orientations have a strong effect on choosing the 'New Left' over the Social Democrats, and on choosing the radical right over the mainstream parties on the right. In other words, the details of his analysis entirely confirm the main thrust of the contributions of the three previous papers. As ever, the results we find depend heavily on the lens we use for looking at the data. Rune Stubager called Denmark a critical case, because its political system is open for new developments and because, in Denmark, New Politics issues have given rise to intense political polarization. Had he not been able to find indications of a new cleavage in Denmark, where else would we be able to find them? But, from the point of view of Henjak's results, Denmark constitutes a critical case for an entirely different, but much more convincing reason: according to Henjak's reasoning, Denmark provides a rather unfavorable setting for the emergence of the new cleavage, because of the absence of historical cultural cleavages and because of its social democratic welfare state. From this perspective, the case of Denmark suggests that we find strong signs of the new value cleavage even in a country, where we would least expect them.

Conclusion

Taken together, these results provide considerable support for the emergence of a new value-based cleavage. Following Flanagan's (1987), Flanagan and Lee's (2003) or Kitschelt's (1994, 1995) terminology, we might refer to this new cleavage as the libertarian–authoritarian cleavage. Adopting Inglehart's terminology we might refer to it alternatively as 'post-materialist/materialist' (Inglehart 1977) or 'self-expression/survival' (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Inglehart and Welzel 2005) cleavage. Following Hooghe *et al.* (2002), we might call it GAL/TAN (Green-alternative-libertarian vs. traditional-authoritarian-nationalist). Or, if we adopt the terminology suggested by Simon Bornschieer (2010), we might call it the libertarian-universalistic/traditionalist-communitarian cleavage. Bornschieer's and Hooghe *et al.*'s labels may be cumbersome, but they both have the advantage of including the two components of the new cultural dimension of (West) European politics – those linked to the New Left and to the New Right. This value-based cleavage has some structural roots in terms of the social-structural categories of class, education, generation, and nation. These roots are, however, partial and do not provide for closure in the sense required by the full-fledged cleavage concept. As discussed previously, I would like to suggest, however, that closure is ever more provided on the basis of the normative element of the cleavage triad, given the present-day conditions of interpersonal communication in general, and political communication in particular.

Finally, it is, in my sense, very important that we do not link this new possible cleavage exclusively to the challenging movements/parties of the New Left and the New Right. The challenge by these outside actors has led to a transformation of the political space and the repositioning of mainstream parties in the transformed space. In some countries, mainstream Social Democratic parties have largely adopted the program of the New Left in the 1970s/1980s, and in some countries, mainstream Liberal-Conservative, Christian-Democratic or Conservative parties have done the same with respect to the program of the New Right. While the left and the right are still predominantly divided by socio-economic issues (which is the reason for the key result of Stoll 2010), in most West European countries there have been and there currently are two (or more) components of the right, which have traditionally been divided by cultural (mainly religious) considerations and which, today, have come to be mainly divided by the transformed cultural dimension (as can be seen from our own results (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008) and from a closer inspection of the tables provided by Henjak 2010).

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