



# GLOBAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

## National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy

### Country Profile

#### *Malta*

<b>Capital:</b>	Valletta
<b>Geographical Size:</b>	316 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population:</b>	425 384 (2014)
<b>Population as % of total EU population:</b>	0.1% (2014)
<b>GDP:</b>	€ 7.262 billion (2013)
<b>Defense Expenditure:</b>	€ 41 million (2013)
<b>Official EU language(s):</b>	Maltese, English
<b>Political System:</b>	Parliamentary republic
<b>EU member country since:</b>	1 May 2004
<b>Seats in European Parliament:</b>	6
<b>Currency:</b>	Eurozone member since 1 January 2008
<b>Schengen area member?</b>	Schengen Area member since 21 December 2007
<b>Presidency of the Council:</b>	First time to be in 2017

Source: Europa.eu

## GGI National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy 2015

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Peace & Security Section

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### a. Political System

The Maltese Political system is a parliamentary republic with elements of representative democratic. The leadership of Malta is concentrated in the Presidency and the subordinate Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup> These powers are dependent on the election of the legislative body, as the President is elected by the unicameral parliament who in turn appoints the Prime Minister. The current President of Malta is Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, a member of the country's Labor Party (MLP).<sup>2</sup> Preca, the second woman to be elected as President of Malta and the youngest elected president, is responsible for receiving foreign officials, "promulgating" laws, dissolving the House of Representatives (upon request of the Prime Minister) should there be a no-confidence motion passed. Malta's President is a constantly evolving role as head of state ever since its independence from British Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup> Under Preca, is the Prime Minister, Dr. Joseph Muscat. The Prime Minister is in charge of the Maltese Government, unlike the President who is in charge of the State. The Prime Minister appoints ministries and directs the government in order to best aid the state.<sup>2</sup>

The legislative power is exercised by the Maltese unicameral Parliament, which is made up of the House of Representatives (*Kamra tad-Deputati*), the Prime Minister, and the President.<sup>1</sup> The House of Representatives consists of 65 members elected for 5-year terms, additional seats may be added under special circumstances. Any vacancies that arise during terms of officials are coopted, meaning that they are filled by votes made by the House, not the people. All officials are elected on a single transferrable vote-system: the party that receives the plurality of votes receives the majority of the House and controls the Parliament.<sup>3</sup> The main Maltese political parties are the socialist Malta Labor Party (MLP) and the conservative Nationalist Party (PN) that vie for power each election. Due to the bipartisan domination of Maltese politics, along with the unicameral control of government in the constitution, the Maltese government often changes its position each term based on which party is in control. EU membership has caused great debate in the Maltese government due to strong PN opposition.

### b. Foreign Policy

Malta's foreign policy is a clear reflection of its demography and geographic location. As a small country located in the Mediterranean, much of Malta's foreign policy revolves around its **state of neutrality** and protection of the surrounding Sea. As stated by author Anthony Manduca in his article *A Letter from Valetta*, "Malta tends to be a consensus seeker, not a leader, when it comes to European Foreign Policy". Malta holds little sway due to its size, however it offers a unique perspective on the Arab world that makes it the main intermediary between Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Because of this perspective, Malta's foreign policy could be at best defined as a supporter of **multilateralism** while holding **protectionist** ideals as primary objective.

Prior to its admission into the European Union the MLP led government took strong positions in support of the Arab world, stances that even today create strong tension in the European

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<sup>1</sup> n.a. "Political and Government System", *Malta Country Study Guide Strategic Information and Developments*, 43-58. Vol. 1. Strategic Information and Developments. Intl Business Pubns USA, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> n.a. "Government Synopsis of Malta", *Gov.mt*, 2012. Accessed September 10, 2015.

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Synopsis/Pages/Governance-Synopsis.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Siaroff, A. "Malta", *Comparative European Party Systems: An Analysis of Party Elections Since 1945*, 348-52. Garland Science Publishing, 2000. Accessed September 9, 2015. <http://0-site.ebrary.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/lib/udenver/detail.action?docID=10053837>

Union. Malta currently takes a strong stance on **Libya**, advocating a political solution with support from the EU. The state recognizes both the government in Tobruk and the military militia government in Tripoli. Malta argues that Libya is a European problem because of its proximity to Europe, and a failed state that close to Europe could serve as a breeding ground for Jihadists such as Somalia. This view dominated by an immediate threat to Maltese security. Due to its vulnerable position in the Mediterranean, Malta has an expansive navy for its size and conducts frequent military operations in the sea around Malta.

In addition, Malta takes a firm stance against piracy and conducts anti-piracy missions off of the coast of **Somalia** with the Netherlands. Its incentive to secure the seas from Somalia is two-fold, it is a first-line of defense for the state, and Malta suffers large incursions of Somali refugees. Moreover, the country believes in a two-state solution to the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**. The foreign ministry envelops this stance in its security strategy of “maintain[ing] a special focus on furthering dialogue, peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean and the Middle East”. While Malta remains a neutral state, it acknowledges Palestine as a state and relentlessly attacks Israel’s illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, from the recent ongoing crisis in **Ukraine**, it has struggled to define its position on Russian actions in the conflict. Malta, prior to the conflict had established one of its primary foreign policy objectives to get closer to Moscow, despite this stance they have announced that they do not support Russia’s actions in Ukraine and they support sanctions against it. Malta’s government urges the Ukrainians to adhere to the February 12<sup>th</sup> cease-fire conditions and remain in negotiations.

Finally, Malta is quickly rising to the center of European politics due to its involvement with **China**. Malta is serving as a foothold for the Chinese in Europe, and seen by some as an expansion West by China. The Chinese energy company, Shanghai Electric, has purchased 33% of the Maltese electric company, *Enemalta*. The growing foreign investment by Chinese firms is bringing Malta’s foreign policy and European Union alliance into question, specifically the Maltese labor party.<sup>4</sup>

### *European Union (EU)*

Malta joined the European Union in 2004, after a referendum and a general election held in 2003. Despite the current national enthusiasm for the organization, Malta’s EU membership has been **tumultuous**. The resistance to EU membership stems from the large working class of Malta represented by the Socialist Party (MLP). The MLP, fearful that Sicilians would take Maltese jobs upon joining the EU were very focused on protectionism. However, in a move to undermine PN dominance in the national government, the MLP changed its position to support EU membership on conditional terms. What the working class and trade unions of Malta were not prepared for was the influx of African migrants looking for refuge and work after it became a EU member. Friction then occurred between Malta and the EU, as the government questioned the solidarity in action of the other members when it needed help solving its African crisis. Today, **opposition** between the MLP and the PN is still evident on security and defense issues, especially concerning participation in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) structures<sup>5</sup>.

Economically, the membership of Malta could be characterized as “a mixed-bag of fortunes.” The country has prided itself on its system of free education and healthcare, which developed

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<sup>4</sup> Manduca, A. "Letter From Valletta", *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, February 12, 2015. Web. Accessed September 10, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59122>

<sup>5</sup> Pace, R. “Malta” In Biehl, H. et al. (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, 2013. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015. [https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic\\_Culture.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic_Culture.pdf)

a heavily prepared, motivated, and English speaking youth in its University system. After joining the EU, becoming part of the passport-free Schengen area, and increasing foreign direct investment, many of these young professionals seized EU funding and opportunity abroad. This export of citizens has helped Malta expand into foreign markets. However, while the middle and upper class of Malta has benefited from less restrictions and increased mobility, the working class has suffered from the lack of diversification, competitive pricing, and decreased government subsidies on utilities<sup>6</sup>.

Domestic finance in Malta has seen dramatic improvement over the past years since its membership. Once the growing pains of joining the EU were settled, the introduction of the euro to the Maltese economy was able to help mitigate the 2008 Global Crisis. Within the EU, Malta has the third lowest debt and was one of only two countries to lower its deficit in 2010. The EU has also served as a mechanism for pushing Maltese progress in its domestic sphere. In a six-year span, EU pressure was able to force significant environmental progress. Malta shut down a major toxic-waste plant while launching a recycling campaign to better educate its citizens. Outside of its environmental consulting and pressure, the EU has also directed focus on Malta to improve its efforts toward gender-gap and minority rights issues.<sup>7</sup>

### c. Peace & Security Policy

Malta's security policy is a perplexed situation. Since the Cold War, it has maintained a state of **neutrality** to protect itself from threats to security. The inconvenience of this strategy is that it no longer reflects Malta's actions nor its surroundings. Malta promotes a strategic culture of **humanitarian aid** over intervention and self-defense above all. The country has also culturally always struggled with its identity, as it is situated between Europe and the Arab world. Despite its size and **preservationist** strategy, Malta however contributes considerable amounts of funding and its own military toward anti-piracy and EU aid to Libya. Furthermore, it is constantly fighting the stigma that it is a "free-rider," meaning that it appears to not contribute much to EU funding yet receives many of its benefits. Nonetheless, it seems like Malta has recently shown a growing interest in European defense, as its commitment to provide deployable troops has increased over the past years<sup>8</sup>.

#### *European Union (EU)*

Because Malta has a smaller military force and less sway in international politics, the country does not have the capability to lead or direct Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP) missions nor contribute greatly to European External Action Service (EEAS). However, Malta does serve as a significant medium between Northern Africa and Europe. It notably participated in the humanitarian support provided to Libyan refugees in the framework of EUFOR Libya in 2011. The recent EU security policy towards immigration has however left the Maltese people disenchanted with the great idea of European solidarity.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, Malta relies heavily on EU support for security. One of the major benefits of EU membership for Malta is the additional monetary resource that it did not previously have

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<sup>6</sup> Which has opened the door for companies like Shanghai Electric.

<sup>7</sup> Grech, Herman. "Mixed Fortunes – Malta and the EU", *Global: the international briefing*, 2015. Accessed September 16, 2015. <http://www.global-briefing.org/2011/01/mixed-fortunes-malta-and-the-eu/>

<sup>8</sup> Pace, R. "Malta" In Biehl, H. et al. (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, 2013. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015. [https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic\\_Culture.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic_Culture.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Fiott, Daniel. "Being Small, Acting Tall? Malta and European Defence", *European Geostrategy*, February 17, 2015. Web. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2015/02/small-acting-tall-malta-csdp/>

access to. As of July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Malta was approved to invest €75 million of EU funds into a new internal security development plan, which entails the installation of “Phase II Integrated Communication Systems, a new Joint Operations Center, improved capability of the OPV P61 and the third fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft, as well as two new hangars and ancillary facilities [...]”<sup>10</sup>. With this recent investment as well as increased Maltese pressure on the EU to deploy EU NAVFOR forces to the Mediterranean, Valletta is notably using its geographical weaknesses as points of power in European security and diplomacy.

While Malta’s contributions have been small, it has been active in **CDSP operations** since 2008. Its first deployment was sending two personnel to the European Monitoring Mission in Georgia, followed by three trainers sent to EUTM Somalia for a military training mission in 2008, two non-commissioned officers sent to EU Border Assistance Mission Rafah in 2009, a 12-man special operations unit from the Armed Forces of Malta used to guard the MUSTAFA-H (a World Food Program) from Somali pirates in 2010, and then seconding AFM staff to the EUFOR operations in Rome regarding Libya in 2011. Malta has prided itself on successful crisis management and operations throughout these missions.

#### *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

Malta is not a full member of NATO, but is part of NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program since 2008. It is however a sensitive issue due to political division on this matter, and because of Turkey’s attempt to prevent Malta’s participation in such a program. Adhering to its stance of neutrality, Malta views a membership to NATO as a polarizing alliance that could further catalyze security issues with its Southern and Eastern neighbors. Under PfP, Malta is closely tied to Maritime security as well as human rights issues.<sup>11</sup> While this relationship may continue to develop, Malta remains firm in its national belief that NATO stop-offs in Valletta are unconstitutional but does not want to upset its diplomatic relations.<sup>12</sup>

#### *United Nations (UN)*

Malta was admitted to the United Nations in 1964. Malta actively works to protect the environment and human rights under its UN membership, particularly the Law of the Sea.<sup>13</sup> It is however not directly participating in UN peacekeeping operations.

#### *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*

Malta is a unique member of the OSCE. With of its blended identity in diplomatic relations it serves as a key diplomatic actor and military force for any missions of the Organization. It currently is working with the OSCE to maintain stability in the Eastern European regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Croatia, and the Republic of Serbia. Under the Dayton Accords of 1996, Article IV, Malta is able to conduct intrusive arms inspections and actively works in the region prevent the massing of heavy weapons and personnel.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> n.a. "European Commission Approves Malta's National Programme for Internal Security Fund", *The Independent*, July 29, 2015. Web. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-07-29/local-news/European-Commission-approves-Malta-s-national-programme-for-internal-security-fund-6736139650>

<sup>11</sup> n.a. "NATO's Relations With Malta", *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 24, 2014. Web. Accessed September 21, 2015. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52108.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52108.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Fiott, Daniel. "Being Small, Acting Tall? Malta and European Defence", *European Geostrategy*, February 17, 2015. Web. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2015/02/small-acting-tall-malta-csdp/>.

<sup>13</sup> Grima, Christopher. "The Permanent Representation of Malta to the UN, New York", *Gov.mt*, 2014. Accessed September 22, 2015. [http://foreignaffairs.gov.mt/en/Embassies/Pr\\_New\\_York/Pages/Pr\\_New\\_York.aspx](http://foreignaffairs.gov.mt/en/Embassies/Pr_New_York/Pages/Pr_New_York.aspx).

<sup>14</sup> n.a. "OSCE Operations", *Gov.mt*, 2011. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://afm.gov.mt/osceoperations?l=1>

### *Council of Europe (CoE)*

Malta joined the Council of Europe on April 29, 1965. Since September 2013 its representation to the Council has been led by George Vella, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Joseph Filletti, Permanent Representative to the CoE. Malta has 3 representatives and 3 substitutes in the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as three representatives and three substitutes in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Malta additionally has Vincent A. De Gaetano as a Judge to the European Court of Human Rights who aided in 4 judgments in 2014. Malta is currently an active member working on addressing all of the CoE's policies in its territory including: "prevention of torture, fight against racism, protection of social rights, protection of minorities, fight against corruption, fight against money laundering, democracy through law, fight against trafficking human beings, and the justice system." Malta's contribution to the 2015 CoE budget of €416,981,300 is €379,600.<sup>15</sup>

### *Strategic Culture*

Mostly because of its small size, Malta's strategic culture has been neglected by the academic literature so far, as exposed by Roderick Pace from the University of Malta and the Institute for European Studies (IES). He explains in the volume *Strategic Cultures in Europe* that because small states are usually not considered as major powers in the international system, they are rather overlooked. However, Pace argues that **small states'** importance has been increasing lately, due to the contemporary global state of affairs emphasizing regionalism and alliance building. In fact, Malta's strategic culture has been influenced by its neutral state and peaceful objectives. Notably, the Constitution of Malta indicates that no military facilities should be available to foreign forces on the national territory (with some precise exceptions). Moreover, Maltese shipyards may only be used for military purposes in exceptional circumstances, excluding for the two superpowers (the US and the USSR). It is important to note that even though the definition of neutrality is somewhat outdated in Malta's Constitution, the country's political parties have not yet agreed to revise it.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, the Maltese political context greatly influenced the national strategic culture. The political parties' global perspective has been determined by Malta's national history and geographic position, which contributed to the Maltese perception of being capable to surmount great difficulties, however soothed by a sense of **vulnerability** engendered by the successive foreign occupation of the country. Consequently, it appears that Malta aims at being **independent** in its defense capabilities, but seeks external help in this objective. The country thus tends to avoid unilateral action and use of force, and rather tends to participate in **multilateral** enterprises, with the recent exception of Malta's exit of the FRONTEX operations fighting irregular immigration in the Mediterranean in 2010 (the country did not want to give shelter to rescued immigrants), which resulted in tensions with Italy. Indeed, Malta's strategic focus is clearly located in its surrounding area, the Mediterranean Sea, which it seeks to *europianize*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Malta - Member State", *The Council of Europe*, 2015. Accessed September 30, 2015.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/malta>.

<sup>16</sup> Pace, R. "Malta" In Biehl, H. et al. (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, 2013. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015.

[https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic\\_Culture.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/186524/2013Malta-Strategic_Culture.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

#### **d. Economic Policy**

##### *European Union (EU)*

Malta's economic policy is centered on social benefit systems, such as healthcare and education. After joining the EU, many of the young professionals educated by Malta's University system left the country to work throughout Europe. As a result of this, the remaining population in Malta is ageing and relying increasingly on social benefits. However, because of Maltese regulations on mandatory retirement and the rampant growth of tax evasion, many of these programs are underfunded and were improperly managed by former regimes.<sup>18</sup>

The Maltese economy prevailed through the economic crisis of 2008, but in recent years there have been structural issues that have put its economic resilience at risk. As stated in the 2013 European Commission's Executive Report, Malta's structural issues are its sustainability of public finances, participation of women and the elderly in the labor market, diversification of the energy sector, legal and structural challenges for competitive growth, and muted investment. With these factors the forecast for the upcoming years is still favorable, however, the European Commission fears that there will be long-term economic effects to Malta if these issues are not resolved.

In recent months, Valletta has committed to fixing many of these issues. There have been significant changes in policy to allow more women into the labor force, create more flexibility on work arrangements, as well as restructure the mandatory pension age. Malta is actively working to diversify its resource imports, cut down on oil, and has a plan to remove dependency on oil for electricity by 2016. Its new Fiscal Responsibility Act will, in the future, promote more fiscal framework to improve the country's economic integrity as it also continues to find alternatives to debt financing for domestic companies. The greatest weakness Malta must overcome to continue these improvements will be its own bureaucracy.<sup>19</sup>

##### *Economic Diplomacy & Foreign Trade*

Malta realizes that its position in the Mediterranean puts it at a unique advantage for trade, as it has different coalitions on each border and its location in the sea puts it as an international trade hub. The current position of the Maltese foreign ministry is to work on developing trade specialist teams that will work to promote higher levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) while also increasing Malta's external trade rate. The foreign ministry plans to utilize bilateralism in a "1+1" situation where it will specifically focus on "partner countries" one at a time to maximize new trade relations and economic opportunity.<sup>20</sup>

#### **e. Other Diplomatic Priorities**

##### *Priorities at the European Level*

One of Malta's most contentious foreign policy issues is the current immigration crisis in Europe. Under the Dublin II Regulation (2003) of the European Union, refugees must be harbored in the country they originally arrive in, a dramatic problem for Malta (the rule is

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<sup>18</sup> Maltese Government, Board of Review, "Executive Summary and Recommendations", *A Future for Small States - Foreign Affairs*, Web. Accessed 22 September 2015.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, "Country Report Malta 2015", *Commission Staff Working Document*, February 26, 2015. Web. Accessed 22 September 2015. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015\\_malta\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_malta_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> n.a. "OSCE Operations", *Gov.mt*, 2011. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://afm.gov.mt/osceoperations?l=1>

however currently discussed in European Institutions). Because of its geographic location, large amounts of refugees are arriving on Malta's shores. The country is overwhelmed by refugees due to significant impacts on its resident population. In an article by Daniel Fiott, the level of resource consumption by a refugee in Malta is equivalent to that of 1,129 refugees in Germany. Malta's foreign ministry is actively seeking aid from the European Commission, European Parliament, the GAERC, and the Justice and Home Affairs Council. The growing disinterest of the Maltese people is reflected in a recent identity poll, which indicates that only "3 percent [of those sampled identified as] European first, Maltese second."<sup>21</sup>

### *Priorities at the Global Level*

Malta is not often mentioned in the world of foreign affairs largely due to its size, neutrality, and relatively low impact policy. However, in recent months large attention has been drawn to the strong ties between Malta and China. Originating back to 1972 when Malta was freed from British Commonwealth, Malta established ties quickly with China seeing as it could provide large economic assets to the country in return for trade and diplomatic relations. Since then, Malta has provided China with large opportunities to access the African market while receiving large amounts of economic support. Going forward, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat says "We don't really consider European affairs to be foreign affairs any longer. We are fostering relations with African nations, but also with partners such as China, with which we have a long-standing relationship." Going forward this will likely lead to a tension between Malta and its other European counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Blomqvist, Michael, Jonas Enander, and Edvard Mörtzell, "Constraining Dark Energy Fluctuations with Supernova Correlations." *J. Cosmol. Astropart. Phys. Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics*, 2010. Web. Accessed 22 September 2015. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1006.4638>

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, Dexter. "Tiny Malta Turns to China, Says Prime Minister", *Bloomberg Business*, October 4, 2013. Web. Accessed September 22, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2013-10-04/tiny-malta-turns-to-china-says-prime-minister>



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