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The Officer as Viceroy: Examining the Role of Hegemony in the Militarization of Diplomacy

Abstract: *The increasing role of the military in American foreign policy execution since the late 1980s has brought with it a renewed debate on civil-military relations. Particularly in the wake of American engagements in the Middle East and Southeast Asia scholars have turned their attention towards the growing role of the military in both creation and execution of foreign policy. Though there are many questions related to the current state of civil-military relations, the increasing role of military officers acting as de facto diplomats and negotiators raises a particularly interesting question. Both civilian diplomats and military officers are broadly understood to be agents of foreign policy (with some exceptions) and are both ultimately tasked with executing orders from the principal.[[1]](#footnote-1) In terms of bureaucratic theory, both groups find themselves fighting for the same turf in terms of tasks and roles within foreign policy. Recently journalists and scholars have noted that the American military is beginning to take over functions traditionally given by the civilian state department, particularly in the areas of social and economic development, nation-building, and diplomacy, altogether dubbed the “militarization of foreign policy.”[[2]](#footnote-2) While each of these sectors are important – and interrelated – I limit my analysis to diplomacy for a paper of this scale. The basic question to be approached is: what causes and allows states’ military personnel to take over diplomatic duties and functions from a civilian foreign service?*

Following US military engagements in the Middle East, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, debates over Civil-Military relations have been thrust into prominence in the academic community. The rising influence of military officers in American foreign policy has been a point of much study in recent years. The rising influence of the Combatant Commanders has been a major point of research following US engagements in the Balkan Peninsula. Most recently, concerns have been raised as military officers have been appointed to several significant advisory roles in the US government, most recently James Mattis as Secretary of Defense, and H.R. McMaster as National Security Advisor. The increasing presence of the uniformed services is generally referred to both in academia and policy writing as “the militarization of foreign policy.”[[3]](#footnote-3) In this research I examine a component of militarized foreign policy, what I refer to as the militarization of diplomacy, when military personnel take over diplomatic functions from a civilian foreign service, though not absorbing the formal titles of diplomats. Put more simply, military personnel become *de facto* diplomats.

A major issue with study of civil-military relations is the underlying disconnect between civilians and military personnel. That divide carries over into the world of theory and study of both military and civilian foreign policy matters. That having been said, a basic question faced by scholarship on both military science and diplomacy considers what extent the agents of foreign policy are permitted to influence the policy they are tasked with executing.[[4]](#footnote-4) In terms of diplomacy, the questions center around what authority the diplomat has to adjust negotiating positions.[[5]](#footnote-5) In military study, scholars and practitioners have asked what role the military should have in the political elements of policy.[[6]](#footnote-6) For the purpose of this paper, I assume the role of both the military and diplomats to be purely as agents of foreign policy and not shapers of policy along the lines of what Samuel Huntington asserts as the ideal civil-military relationship. That assumption is reasonable when looking at western states as Huntington’s work has been the most influential work on the practice of civil-military relations.

It does however, remain to be seen if the current wave of debates over civil-military relations have historical parallels. There is a tendency amongst scholars and observes of foreign policy issues – particularly military science – to regard new phenomena as historically unique and without parallels. As an example, recently military scientists have touted the rise of the AirSea Battle, Third Offset, and A2/AD strategies as new developments in military tactics.[[7]](#footnote-7) It has been pointed out, however that these strategies are not necessarily new concepts or innovations, but simply repurposed and rephrased versions of age old strategies.[[8]](#footnote-8) A similar situation may apply to the militarization of foreign policy, and the militarization of diplomacy in particular. To investigate, I examine potential historical cases of militarized diplomacy to look not just for the presence of the phenomenon, but underlying causes that explain its presence.

By approaching the problem with a small-n neopositivist case study methodology, my analysis is focused on what factors, across various contexts cause or allow the military to take on the roles and duties of diplomats. I begin my research by examining a number of potential causes identified by the literature (regional military commands, bureaucratic competition, and political administrative bias), I then introduce my own variable, unipolar global hegemony. My research centers on several cases of international diplomatic negotiations, covering a broad range of historical and geopolitical contexts from 19th century British-Indian relations to 21st Century American engagements in the Middle East. My analysis primarily involves examination of primary source documents and records from the cases selected to determine if there was militarized diplomacy and what factors caused the militarization of diplomacy.

In conducting my analysis of militarized diplomacy, I do not assume that there is an inherent sin in military personnel acting as diplomats. Many scholars and analysts have asserted that the military has had an effective role in peacetime defense policy, dubbed “defense diplomacy,”[[9]](#footnote-9) that military personnel have acted as very effective agents of public diplomacy in both friendly nations and theatres of operations,[[10]](#footnote-10) as well as crucial peacekeepers and negotiators in areas of operation.[[11]](#footnote-11) With that in mind, it is entirely possible military personnel can undertake diplomacy in the traditional sense very effectively. It will however, be necessary for policymakers who must make decisions on whether to permit the militarization of foreign policy to move forward to have a proper understanding of the factors that cause the phenomenon.

Literature Review

Key to any study of civil-military relations is the basic debates over the fundamental nature of military and civilian foreign policy agents. The seminal pieces of literature from Huntington and Janowitz disagree on whether the military should exist purely under civilian control or if it should have a more active role in policy making and the broader society of the country.[[12]](#footnote-12) Their debate centers on the concept military professionalism and the place of the military in a broader society. Beyond that basic debate, questions have also been asked about the place of both civilians and military personnel in foreign policy execution. In the United States, Huntington’s military professionalism has historically been the influential model for practice, though the general view is that the military’s role has expanded into the world of policymaking beginning in the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century.[[13]](#footnote-13) The “militarization of foreign policy,” has become an area of study only relatively recently and some early theoretical explanations have begun to emerge. Scholarship on the militarization of diplomacy has taken three major lines of explanation: one has emphasized the role of recent American presidential administrations’ tendencies to favor military options over civilian efforts in times of crisis, another puts weight on the rise of the combatant commander position within the American military, while a third approach looks at the nature of bureaucracy and competition between agencies.

 One initial approach to the issue is to look at the tendencies of political administrations to favor military solutions over diplomatic options. This scholarship has emphasized the role of the American President in influencing whether the military or civilian foreign service act as the primary agents of diplomacy. The Bush administration following 9/11 has been a key case study of an administration that relied on military solutions for foreign crises.[[14]](#footnote-14) Under the Bush administration, the military became the primary agent of foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.[[15]](#footnote-15) The military role in diplomacy was also present in Indonesia and the Balkan Peninsula during the Clinton administration,[[16]](#footnote-16) and has remained present during the Obama administration. The fact that the trend continued across three very different presidential administrations suggests there are other factors at play beyond just the biases of the individual administrations, however this school of thought is significant in that it introduces the considerably large role of the American presidential administration in the militarization of diplomacy. Even if the influence of presidential administrations is not a complete explanation, it initially appears that it can have an influence in creating the militarization of diplomacy.

A second theoretical explanation of the militarization of diplomacy centers around the Combatant Commander as a sort of regional governor general representative of the United States. The Unified Combatant Command (previously referred to as Commanders in Chief) system was created as an effort to increase coordination between elements of American forces comprises nine commands (six regional commands, and three functional commands).[[17]](#footnote-17) The position of combatant commander, particularly CENTCOM (regional commander for the Middle East) and SOCOM (special operations functional command) have become critical parts of the American foreign policy system.[[18]](#footnote-18) That role, which was increased greatly during and after the Clinton administration, has prompted considerable study of whether the combatant commanders are edging out civilian ambassadors for roles in foreign policy execution.[[19]](#footnote-19) Analysists have noted that the commanders are beginning to take on roles traditionally reserved for civilian diplomats including negotiating and interacting with foreign leadership.[[20]](#footnote-20) The immediate concern here would be that the combatant commanders have usurped the role of civilian diplomats, and there has been arguments made about whether this has truly happened. Some have examined the relative power and influence of the commanders in relation to the state department officials working alongside them.[[21]](#footnote-21) Others though have argued that the disconnect is not as bad as might be feared.[[22]](#footnote-22) Interviews with various US ambassadors have suggested that in most cases the combatant commanders have very effectively side by side with civilian ambassadors within their area of operations, though with some notable exceptions.[[23]](#footnote-23) Notably the SOCOM command has gained a significant distrust from the State Department, and there have been cases of commanders overruling ambassadors in cases of mission planning and execution.[[24]](#footnote-24) In either case, to simply focus on the combatant commanders misses the significant role of lower members of the general staff and field officers who often find themselves in negotiations and interactions with local authorities.[[25]](#footnote-25) The Combatant Commander is a significant position, and the scholarship suggests that it may help lead to the militarization of diplomacy, but the question remains as to whether there is an underlying cause for the rise of the combatant commander.

 Other theorists have chosen to examine militarizing foreign policy from the perspective of bureaucratic competition. At the core of such an argument is theories on how the nature of bureaucracies may lead to competition and violence.[[26]](#footnote-26) One of the major points of these theories is that individual bureaucratic organizations will attempt to expand their capabilities and take over the roles of other organizations to ensure their own survival.[[27]](#footnote-27) By making itself indispensable and invaluable to the higher administration, the agency in question is assured in its position.[[28]](#footnote-28) Those arguments can then be applied to the relationship in Washington, DC between the State Department and Department of Defense.[[29]](#footnote-29) In particular attention has been given to competition between the two agencies for budget size and operational capacity. One case studied was the efforts of then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to increase the diplomatic presence in Iraq in 2004-5 as part of an effort by both the DOD and State Department to avoid blame for the failing political situation in the country.[[30]](#footnote-30) Both agencies have attempted to increase their duties and capabilities relative to each other to remain relevant. What scholarship on bureaucracy has lacked is a succinct explanation for why the Department of Defense is winning its bureaucratic battle with the State Department?

 Each of the approaches taken to the topic does have some value and clearly is a factor and each of the variables studies influence the militarization of diplomacy, but a key gap in the literature exists. None of the previous scholarship has identified the underlying causes that result in the militarization of diplomacy. The question remains as to why Presidential administrations would favor the military in foreign policy, why the combatant commands have become so important in American foreign policy, and why the department of defense is winning the bureaucratic battle against the state department. That is where the focus of my research will lie: in finding the underlying causes that result in the militarization of diplomacy across historical contexts.

Some historical analyses of diplomatic practice do provide some insight into the militarization of diplomacy outside of the 21st century United States. Scholarship on the history of diplomatic practice is immense but one area of interest is the study of diplomacy (though it is not always called “diplomacy”) in colonialism. Studies of the representatives of the British and French empires in colonies, and later the relations between colonial powers and their former colonies do give some insight into the historical role of the military in diplomacy.[[31]](#footnote-31) While the conclusions drawn by individual scholars have varied greatly depending on the context studied, many scholars noted that many of the high ranking colonial officials in the British and French empires were either current or former military officials.[[32]](#footnote-32) A particularly interesting case is that Lord Mountbatten, who was Admiral of the Fleet in the British Royal Navy as well as Supreme Allied Commander for South-East Asia, became the last Viceroy of India immediately following World War Two, and became the First Governor General of the Indian Dominion, he then followed this foreign posting by becoming the British Sea Lord (equivalent to the Secretary of the Navy) and Chief of the Defense Staff. These scholars, though in many cases studying issues apart from the militarization of diplomacy, approached diplomacy from a historical standpoint and made note of the significant role of the military in colonial diplomatic relations.

Methodology

I have chosen to approach the question of the militarization of diplomacy with a small-n neo-positivist case comparison approach to best suit the types of conclusions I want to draw from this research as well as suiting the available data and evidence in the topic. As Abbott notes, small-n balances the position and role of context in the research so that contexts are acknowledged and understood, but the goal of the research is knowledge that is applicable across multiple contexts.[[33]](#footnote-33) To that end, my methods of data collection rely primarily on source documents such as journals and memos. This is particularly suitable to the militarization of diplomacy as there are next to no satisfactory numerical representations of the variables involved, and any that might exist would be highly subjective. Additionally, with small-n research there is an opportunity to explore a relationship between a couple variables in depth, which suits my attempt to understand the role of hegemony as a key factor in creating militarized diplomacy. With small-n research there is an element of subjectivity that is inherent in the assigning of values to variables, however the choices made over the values of variables are defended.

 The basic concept under study at is the militarization of diplomacy, which becomes the dependent variable. It is a relatively difficult concept to put into numerical terms, but the presence of militarized diplomacy is reasonably easily identified using the defining characteristic of the term. This defining characteristic is indicated most clearly by direct interaction between military personnel and foreign officials. While the case can be made that there are varying extents to which diplomacy may be militarized, rather than just existing or not existing, by approaching the militarization of diplomacy purely by looking for that interaction between military personnel and foreign officials in my analysis, these arguments can largely be avoided. In terms of relevant literature to explain the militarization of diplomacy, most of the sources I list in my existing literature review and introduction are appropriate, particularly the books *Mission Creep*, and *The Mission*.

 I bring in three independent variables from the literature: regional military commands, bureaucratic competition between the foreign service and military, and political administrative bias. Each of these variables is treated as a binary condition, either it was present or it was not. I also bring in one additional independent variable: unipolar global hegemony. To define this clearly, I use a definition adapted from Ian Clark: unipolar global hegemony is a condition in which one single state has unchallenged military dominance over all other states.[[34]](#footnote-34) Much of the existing scholarship has not recognized the role that unipolar global hegemony plays in creating militarized diplomacy, instead focusing on the domestic factors in the state sending military diplomats.

 My hypothesis is as follows: Provided a unipolar system in which one state holds hegemonic power, particularly when backed by military hegemony, a globally dominant state will favor military solutions in foreign policy, will give its military more resources than its civilian foreign service, and will create high level regional command positions for military representation, which results in the military overtaking traditionally civilian diplomatic duties.

My case selection is focused on different historical periods, along the lines of studies of the democratic peace.[[35]](#footnote-35) The cases cover a broad range of historical and geopolitical contexts, including instances where militarized diplomacy was present and not present.[[36]](#footnote-36) I include five cases: Soviet-American diplomacy during the 1960s and 70s, and French relations with sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period. I use these cases because they allow me to establish relationships between my independent and dependent variables by providing examples of the presence of hegemony (US in Middle East, and UK in Southeast Asia) as well as examples of the non-presence of hegemony (US and USSR Cold War, and France in Sub-Saharan Africa). Looking at variables, my primary independent variable is the polarity of the international system, or more accurately the presence or non-presence of hegemony by one state. In my Hypothesis, this factor is the necessary condition that ultimately determines whether the militarization of diplomacy exists.[[37]](#footnote-37) The other variables I look at are all potential causal links which I have taken from the major schools of thought on the militarization of diplomacy, in my hypothesis I propose that these variables are not the causes of militarized diplomacy, and such I structure my cases to potentially allow results where these factors are present but there is not militarized diplomacy and vice-versa.

Data for this study will come primarily from historical records, journals, and, in more modern cases, declassified documents and memos. The sources I use in each case study are predominantly primary source materials from the actors and important individual figures directly involved in the case whenever possible. Initially in the case of the Gurkha War, I primarily rely on the journal of Francis Rawdon-Hastings, then governor-general of India.[[38]](#footnote-38) During the case of Lord Mountbatten during the Jammu-Kashmir Crisis, I use government documents and memos from Britain as well as the US.[[39]](#footnote-39) In the case of The United States negotiations with the Iraqi government following 9/11, I will use primarily documents from a number of government sources, as well as newspaper articles from the time, that detail the roles that military personnel (particularly Gen. Anthony Zinni) had in diplomacy.[[40]](#footnote-40) The major sources for the case of the SALT treaties will come from declassified documents from summits between American and Soviet officials, particularly the Vladivostok summit that lead to the SALT treaty.[[41]](#footnote-41) In the case of French involvement in sub-Saharan Africa the major sources are government documents and journals involving the various *Commisioners Général*, across French territories in Africa.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Ultimately the logic behind all my methodological choices is to compliment my case selection and methods of analysis. By doing case studies I allow analysis of primary source documents and can attempt to establish the connections between my variables through several permutations of the values of variables. Through my variables I seek to establish a relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables where hegemony is the primary cause of the militarization of diplomacy, as opposed to the factors identified by existing scholars.

Analysis

The first case in question is that of the Gurkha war between the British East India Company and the Kingdom of Nepal. The East India Company was acting on behalf of the British government, and its eventual victory resulted in much of Nepal’s territory being given to Britain. Additionally, the East India Company’s forces were commanded by Lord Francis Rawdon-Hastings, the then British Governor-General of India. Rawdon’s role in the war, and his tenure as Governor-General as a whole provides a chance to examine how British diplomacy during the hegemonic *Pax Britannica* was conducted.[[43]](#footnote-43) It is wort noting that in this period a large number of British politicians, diplomats, crown representatives, and other important figures were former military officers. As a result, the fact that Lord Rawdon-Hastings had served with the British army during the American War of Independence is not necessarily significant. Indeed, Lord Cornwallis, one of Rawdon’s successors in the governorship was also a former military officer as well as countless other crown representatives in the British Empire. What was reasonably significant was that Rawdon-Hastings took command of a military force (of the East India Company) during his tenure as Governor General and proceeded to simultaneously conduct military command and diplomatic operations withthe Kingdom of Nepal as well as other groups in India. Lord Rawdon-Hasting’s diary provides a strong account of the events of the Gurkha War. At various points during the Gurkha war campaign, Rawdon-Hasting’s diary notes days where both diplomatic and military functions and duties are carried out. For example, on October 11th, 1814, Rawdon-Hastings notes his reception of a local state ruler that Rawdon-Hastings refers to as the “Nawab Vizeer,” and the discussions with him, as well as a later discussion with another military officer over the means of transport of field artillery pieces.[[44]](#footnote-44) Much of Rawdon-Hasting’s entries for the next year or so follow his marches behind the front lines of the British Campaign while managing relations with the heads of local states in India.[[45]](#footnote-45) In the model constructed for the militarization of diplomacy, find that in terms of new positions (other than civilian diplomats) there were not new positions created, the post of governor general had existed for decades before Rawdon-Hastings took over. Bureaucratic competition was not particularly strong at the time, the Foreign Service had not fully developed at the time, and certainly was not competing for resources with the military in India.[[46]](#footnote-46) The political administration of Britain at the time did appear to have some bias towards military solutions to crises, given that a number government ministers had served in the military themselves.

 More than a century later in 1947, Admiral Louis Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India by Clement Attlee. Mountbatten has previously served as the Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Command until the command’s disbanding in 1946. Mountbatten’s experience in the region helped elevate him to the position of viceroy, and while in the position he functioned mainly as a diplomat, not as a military commander, he then continued his service as a NATO Mediterranean Commander following India gaining independence.[[47]](#footnote-47) Looking at the independent variables, The Supreme Allied Commander position was new, however the viceroy of India was a long-established position in the British Empire. In terms of bureaucratic competition, there was some competition between the military and foreign service for budgets and resources in post-war Britain, but not nearly to the extent of 21st century United States.[[48]](#footnote-48) There was a little amount of government bias towards the military given that the country had just emerged from a war, however the Churchill government did not generally seek military solutions to crises. Hegemony is rather subjective in this case, while Britain itself did not have global hegemony, the allies effectively did have global hegemony in the immediate post-war years. Certainly, Britain was the major global power with territory in South Asia.

 Following 9/11, the primary focus of US relations with the Middle East became Iraq. In military terms, the country fell under the prevue of US Central Command (CENTCOM), commanded by Army General Anthony Zinni. As relations with Iraq reached a tense phase of negotiations it became clear from US government proceedings that Zinni was effectively the primary US representatives in the country.[[49]](#footnote-49) Zinni is often pointed out as the prime example of militarized diplomacy. The Combatant Commanders were a new concept in American military structure, and certainly US Central Command was a new position. Additionally, bureaucratic competition was extremely prevalent, as has been noted extensively by other scholars. Furthermore, the Bush Administration at the time did have some military leanings and did favor military solutions to a number of crises. The US also had almost unchallenged global hegemony at this point.[[50]](#footnote-50)

 The French territory of West Africa was one of the more important French territorial holdings during the 19th and 20th centuries and fell under the administration of the French Minister of Colonies as well as the Governor General of French West Africa, which later became the High Commissioner of West Africa. During the period from 1952 to 1956, the High Commissioner was Bernard Conut-Gentille, a civilian colonial administrator and government minister. Almost none of the governors general throughout the history of French West Africa even had any previous military experience, including Conut-Gentille, and most had little contact with the military while in the position. In Conut-Gentille’s communications to the French government while Dahomey (later Benin) attempted to gain independence from France, Conut-Gentille does not consider military force and rather assesses the situation from a civilian political view.[[51]](#footnote-51) The position of governor-general or high commissioner was far from new, and was not military-specific it had existed for a number of years. Bureaucratic competition in 1950s France was not particularly strong, certainly the military was not competing for resources to work abroad.[[52]](#footnote-52) The French political administration was not particularly strongly biased toward military solutions to crises, if anything it favored diplomatic solutions. Additionally, France most certainly did not have global hegemony by the 1950s, not even within the continent of Africa.

One of the most significant diplomatic efforts of the Cold War, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT) provides an opportunity to examine diplomacy in a system on no single hegemonic power, a bipolar international system. Much of the treaty negotiations were carried out by civilian diplomats and politicians, in fact much of the direct communication in the leadup to the treaties was between high level politicians.[[53]](#footnote-53) At the time, the combatant commanders were becoming relevant within US foreign policy, but they were not directly involved in the SALT treaties, thus the negotiators at the Vladivostok summit were not born from new positions. Bureaucratic competition between the Department of Defense and the Department of State was a major part of the Cold War Era United States political system.[[54]](#footnote-54) The political administrations of the time were certainly biased towards military solutions, the Reagan administration sought to increase defense spending by large amounts. In terms of hegemony, the

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| **Case** | Position  | New Positions | Bureaucratic Competition | Political Administration | Hegemony | **Militarized Diplomacy** |
| Gurkha War | British Governor General of India (1813-1823) | Not Specific to military | No | Yes | Yes – Unipolar | **YES** |
| Kashmir Crisis | British Viceroy in India | Yes | No | No  | Partial | **Partial** |
| Post 9/11 Iraq | Commander, US CENTCOM  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes – Unipolar | **Yes** |
| French Control of West Africa | High Commissioner, Minister for Colonies | No | No | No | No | **No** |
| SALT Treaty | US Negotiators | No | Yes | Yes | No | **No** |

United States did not hold global hegemony, rather the opposite. It was very much

challenged by the power of the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

From this data, we see one major trend, hegemony appears to be a major factor in the militarization of diplomacy. In the cases studied, hegemony appears to be the determinant variable in the presence of militarized diplomacy. The other factors identified by the literature do not necessarily cause or prevent the militarization of diplomacy, but it appears that cases in which those factors were present have a “stronger” presence of militarized diplomacy. It is entirely possible that a hegemony has a similar effect when studied over a larger number of cases. There could potentially be cases in which hegemony present, but there was not militarized diplomacy, which would suggest that other factors are involved in the militarization of diplomacy. In relation to the research question then, it appears that a major cause of the militarization of diplomacy is hegemony, perhaps more-so than the factors suggested by the literature.

One might be inclined to question conclusions drawn from these cases by asking whether the relations between colonial powers and their colonies are fundamentally different from typical diplomacy. While this is a potentially fair point, it appears that the relations between colonies and imperial powers had similar dynamics and practices to modern diplomacy. It may be that early colonial relations, such as the Gurkha War case are more militarized than later colonial relations such as the Jammu-Kashmir crisis and the end of French control in West Africa. This potential relationship is interesting, and deserves more attention in further research. That having been said, the same patterns and variable relationships seen between hegemony and militarized diplomacy carry over into cases of colonial relations.

While these cases appear to show a trend, and may reveal the beginnings of a relationship between hegemony and militarized diplomacy, more research into more cases ought to be done. Particularly, it would be important to study cases of diplomacy from non-western countries to see if the relationship holds. Building off this research, questions may be raised about how states who are the receivers of militarized diplomacy behave in contrast to states that do not receive militarized diplomacy. Additionally, a question for policymakers or other scholars remains whether the results of militarized diplomacy are more favorable than traditional civilian diplomacy. It is unclear whether the skillsets of civilian diplomats or military officers are fundamentally different in such a way that they are unable to carry out the same duties.

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