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Religion Norms in Foreign Policy Analysis: Dispensationalism As US Foreign Policy's Determinant During Trump's Reign

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Abstract. During Trump Administration, he introduced and used "America First" as his guidance in conducting US Foreign Policy. The "America First" emphasizes pursuing national interests and using force to achieve security and prosperity. However, Trump's decision to relocate the US Embassy and recognition Jerusalem as Israel's capital city was contradictory with his "America First" strategy. The author's main question is that What sort of norm shaped US embassy relocation policy? It seems dispensationalism played pivotal role in influencing US embassy relocation policy. Dispensationalism believe that the restoration of Israel is a necessary precondition for the Lord's return and that the Jews must return to their homeland to be regathered as a nation. Trump's motive to adopt Dispensationalism as part of conducting US foreign policy was driven by the urgency to maintain his voting bloc after 2016 US Election.

Keywords. Religion, Christian Evangelical, Dispensationalism, Foreign Policy Analysis, US, Donald Trump

1. Introduction

Donald Trump underlined "America First" as a standard for his approach to conducting foreign policy during his inauguration speech. The "America First" foreign policy stance emphasizes pursuing national interests and using force to achieve security and prosperity (Toma, 2018). "America First" rejected two major cornerstones of America's grand strategy of internationalism, namely multilateralism and globalism, and replaced them with economic nationalism and protectionism. According to Trump, American internationalism, as a foreign policy grand plan focused on supporting free trade in order to encourage prosperity, is really damaging the US economy by reducing job opportunities and welfare for People (Macdonald, 2018). As a result, Trump chose the "America First" policy, which prioritizes US interests, to address the issue.

However, this approach did not always emerge during Donald Trump's tenure. For example, President Trump's December 2017 decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem sparked international controversy. The decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the US Embassy there was not without precedent. In 1995, the U.S. Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and stipulating that the U.S. Embassy be moved to Jerusalem by May 31, 1999 (Landler, 2017). Nevertheless, subsequent US presidents, including Bill

Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, elected to defer the transfer of the embassy through the use of a waiver clause in the act since this move may imperil Middle East stability (Waxman, 2017).

The international community quickly reacted, condemning Trump's announcement. The majority of countries, including many US allies, argued that Jerusalem's status should be determined through peace talks between Israel and Palestine (Dwyer 2017). The Palestinian leadership rejected the US decision as a blatant disregard for their right and desire to have East Jerusalem serve as the capital of a future Palestinian state. Several countries also opposed the decision through diplomatic channels. For example, Turkey recalled its ambassador to the United States and said the United States had "lost its mediator in the peace process" (Yildirim, 2017). Other countries, such as Jordan and Egypt, have expressed concerns about the possible destabilizing effects of the decision on the region. The UN General Assembly held an emergency meeting in December 2017 and passed a non-binding resolution condemning the US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The resolution, with the support of 128 countries, states: "All decisions and actions that claim to have altered the character, status or demographics of the Holy City of Jerusalem shall have no legal effect, void and must be withdrawn" (UN General Assembly, 2017).

Trump's decision to relocate the US Embassy was contradictory with his "America First" concept in conducting American foreign policy. "America First" emphasizes advancing US interests for the benefit of Americans (Toma, 2018). Trump's decision to relocate the embassy and declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital, on the other hand, has aroused major worries about the impact on American interests. This is due to Trump's decision, which runs counter to Muslim-majority states in the area (Harb, 2017). Furthermore, the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the embassy relocation is also likely to harm US efforts to build bridges and foster cooperation with Muslim-majority countries in the region, which is essential for a range of US interests, including counterterrorism efforts, economic engagement, and regional stability (Sarhan, 2017).

2. Norms and Foreign Policy

Norms became part of International Relations study especially in the realm of Constructivism. According to Constructivism, norms defined as intersubjectivity, institutionalized, and shaped appropriate behavior for actors (Katzenstein, 1996). Norms can be defined as group beliefs, such as customs and regulations, as well as shared morals, shared interests, and agreed-upon behaviors. (Hopf, 2010) A pattern of "unintended, unconscious, spontaneous, and frictionless" behavior that is generally accepted without the need of "control mechanisms" is another example of a norm (Hopf, 2010). The idea of norms is frequently applied in IR in a very diverse manner. As a result, the idea has received several criticisms for being unclear.

On three key aspects of norms, however, social constructivist scholars agree. First, norms are intersubjective and communal in nature, which sets them apart from personal idealist conceptions like thoughts or beliefs. They offer guidelines for conduct for a group of actors who are united by a similar identity (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Actors follow rules because they strive to fit in with a certain social group. They must follow certain behavioral patterns in order to be accepted (Klotz, 1995; Nadelman, 1990). Global norms define which conduct is acceptable and required for member of the international society. Second, norms establish consistent patterns of conduct for the reference group they belong to. The actors can then build shared expectations as a result. The "cement of society," as Jon Elster put it, is conventions

(Elster, 1989). By defining what an actor in a given circumstance should be and what is reasonable to expect of them, they really influence the scopes of action of the actors (Wunderlich, 2020). Thirdly, norms create "'oughtness' claims" in the form of behavioral guidelines and directives (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). They do this to make a distinction between what is allowed or acceptable and what is prohibited. They can also (de)legitimize specific behaviors and practices. As a result, actors adhere to standards because they think they are acting appropriately (March & Olsen, 1998; Raymond, 1997).

In recent years, the study of norms has become a central topic in international relations literature, with various schools of thought offering different perspectives on their nature and influence. The constructivist approach, for instance, views norms as a significant determinant of state behavior, beyond material interests and power (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). According to this perspective, norms are not only a reflection of state interests, but are constructed and maintained through repeated practices and interactions among actors in the international system. The norm of sovereignty, for example, established through the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, has been instrumental in stabilizing the international system by providing a shared understanding of acceptable behavior and fostering a sense of identity and common purpose among states. In contrast, the neorealist approach highlights the role of material interests and power in shaping state behavior (Waltz, 1979). From this viewpoint, norms are seen as secondary to material interests, serving only to advance those interests. For instance, states may engage in norm-creating behavior to enhance their reputation or signal support for a particular issue. Despite these differing views, the significance of norms in international relations is widely recognized. For example, norms of non-proliferation have been crucial in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, while norms of human rights have played a critical role in addressing violations of human dignity and freedom (Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999).

Norms are frequently shown as controlling, forming, or enabling actors in their arena (Björkdahl, 2010). Scholarly interest has grown in regulatory norms that prescribe, proscribe, and order behavior. These norms function as standards, defining the correct implementation of an already established identity and establishing rights and duties (Björkdahl, 2010). This is to argue that norms influence policy because they can act as road maps—a function that "derives from the necessity of individuals to discern their own preferences or to grasp the causal link between their aims and various political approaches for achieving those goals." New agents, interests, or categories of activity are produced by constitutive rules. Constitutive norms provide meaning to action, whereas enabling norms allow specific activities to take place, and these two stand in stark contrast to regulative norms. In some circumstances, norms "define" the identity of an actor, having "constitutive consequences" that outline what behaviors would lead relevant individuals to recognize a specific identity (Björkdahl, 2010).

Norms could play pivotal role in shaping foreign policymaking. Since norms could defining the goals and purposes of states. While they may not provide specific policy options, they offer a broad perspective and direction, serving as a roadmap for a state's foreign policy actions (Björkdahl, 2010). This is especially relevant because traditional international law does not provide governments with meaningful guidelines. Norms not only influence the interests of actors, but also impact the way in which they link their preferences to policy decisions. This means that legitimizing certain goals and methods can limit the options available, even if it can only envisage a range of possible options (Björkdahl, 2010). Norms help build possibilities and establish legitimate policy options that otherwise might not have been obvious. Moreover, norms set limits on foreign policy discussion and action. Foreign policymaking agents typically feel constrained by principles, norms, and rules that prescribe or prohibit certain behaviors.

Norms thus provide a moral and ethical basis for evaluating a state's foreign policy behavior. It is important to note that norms do not necessarily reflect actual behavior, but rather provide ideas about what constitutes appropriate behavior (Björkdahl, 2010).

Dispensationalism considered as norms played a crucial role in shaping US Foreign Policy especially in relocating the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017. Dispensationalism believe that the restoration of Israel is a necessary precondition for the Lord's return and that the Jews must return to their homeland to be regathered as a nation. They also believe that the modern state of Israel has a divine right to exist and must be defended, as it is a key player in God's end-times plan. This notion has translated into political action, with dispensationalism being a powerful force in US foreign policy, particularly with regards to US policy towards Israel (Miller, 2014).

3. Method

This article is using qualitative research with an inductive approach. Qualitative research refers to collecting and analyzing non-numeric data. Qualitative research conducts a novel hypothesis and explains causal mechanisms (Lamont, 2015). Qualitative research also uses logic in practice and non-linear research flow. Therefore, qualitative research could construct a new theoretical framework. This research uses an inductive approach and this approach aims to generate theoretical proposals from empirical research (Lamont, 2015). This article focuses on researching a dynamic norm contestation between America First and dispensationalism as US foreign policy guidance during the Donald Trump Administration. During this research, author utilized internet-based research to find literature related to US Foreign Policy, America First, and dispensationalism. Author also utilized discourse analysis and narrative analytical methods for analyzing data. Discourse analysis is used to interpret data from media communication. Media communication is not limited to language, but it's also constructing ideas that could create perception on social reality. Narrative analytical method aims to translate text and data visual into narration.

4. America First Norm as Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Strategy

"America First" was introduced by Trump who used it as a campaign slogan during his 2016 presidential campaign and implemented it as a foreign policy approach during his presidency (Macdonald, 2018). This approach was exerted by Trump as a solution to the issues that emanated from American internationalism. Post-World War 2, American internationalism became a major US foreign policy approach that emphasizes on promoting free trade for welfare and manifested through General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), later evolved into Bretton Woods institutions and World Trade Organization (WTO) (Heywood, 2011: 2013). However, Trump argued this approach had a negative impact on the US economy since it shrinker jobs and welfare for American people.

The "America First" as Trump's guidance in conducting US foreign policy based on traditional America perceived on international arena (Toma, 2018). The manifestation of "America First" in international affairs entails a return to a foreign policy focused on US national interests, in which America would be second to none in terms of defense but would only utilize its military strength to safeguard clearly defined national interests (Toma, 2018). The United States would reserve its resources for the preservation of the lives and welfare of its own citizens rather than advancing abstract ideologies. Trump appears to understand what our predecessors knew: nations are at their best when they strive to serve their citizens and at their worst when attempting to dictate to others what to do (Toma, 2018). In that sense, "America

First” emphasized on nationalist tradition that prioritize US interest first over a globalizing world that has long benefited from American generosity (Nau, 2021). Thus, independence and strength of the nations are the core principle for conducting US foreign policy. The “America First” foreign policy approach prioritizes the resurgence and viability of the American economy (Nau, 2021).

The American economy became a focal point of Trump’s “American First” since an open and interdependent global economy only harmed it. Trump argued several multilaterals trade agreement namely Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the US – South Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) as “a bad deal” (Macdonald, 2018). He criticized high trade imbalances as “a really unjust scenario” and lamented that “our jobs (are) being stolen from us” with nations like China, Japan, and Mexico (Macdonald, 2018). Trump's statement solidified his mercantilist beliefs that trade surpluses are desirable and trade deficits are negative. As a result, the primary aim is to lower the trade imbalance in order to stimulate economic development and generate employment for Americans. The America First approach on US trade strategy is built on strong negotiation to achieve this aim (Janusch & Mucha, 2017). The Trump administration has shown its intent to employ all current US trade laws and vigorously enforce all existing trade agreements. It also prefers bilateral over multilateral discussions to improve its bargaining power with economic partners (Janusch & Mucha, 2017).

Another component of the “America First” is its commitment to military strength. President Trump has increased military spending, emphasizing the need for a strong military to protect American interests abroad (Cohen, 2019). This has been reflected in the U.S. approach to foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, where the Trump administration has taken a more aggressive stance against Iran and other state sponsors of terrorism (Mossalanejad, 2018; Beck, 2019). The “America First” has also been applied to NATO, with President Trump calling on NATO allies to increase their defense spending to alleviate the burden on the United States (Trump, 2018). The Trump administration's approach to these alliances was marked by a transactional approach, where the US would only continue to support these partnerships if it received tangible benefits in return.

Despite its focus on national self-interest, the “America First” has also had significant implications for the international order. One of the most notable examples of this is the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change, which was seen as a rejection of the international consensus on the need to address the issue (Eichenwald, 2017). Additionally, President Trump's approach to North Korea has been criticized for disregarding the principles of deterrence and arms control (Nau, 2021). This has raised concerns about the stability of the international system and the ability of the United States to maintain its leadership role in the world.

In summary, “America First” approach focuses on material interest and rational options in conducting US foreign policy during Trump’s reign. This strategy could be considered a departure from the American internationalism approach that prioritized the promotion of democracy and human rights, free trade, and alliances with other countries and became the previous administration approach as guidance in conducting foreign policy. There are two pillars from this strategy, namely economic nationalism, and military strength. Even Though, this approach got criticized for threatening international stability and the US role as hegemon in the international arena, Trump insisted to utilize “America First ” for revitalizing the US economy that deteriorated as a result of American internationalism.

Dispensationalism as a Norm

Whitelisted America First based on material and rational choice, dispensationalism quite contrary with leaning in non-material values that were based on religion teaching. Dispensationalism is a system of biblical interpretation that views the history of God's dealings with humanity as divided into distinct dispensations or periods of time, each with its own distinct characteristics, laws, and responsibilities for humanity (Ryrie, 1965). This perspective has been influential in the development of modern Christian fundamentalism and has been the subject of much debate and discussion in academic and theological circles. The origins of dispensationalism can be traced back to the late 19th century, when a group of British and American theologians, including John Nelson Darby and C.I. Scofield began to develop and promote this system of interpretation (Walvoord, 2001). According to dispensationalism, the Bible is seen as a progressive revelation of God's plan for humanity, and each dispensation is seen as a distinct phase in that plan. The dispensations are typically characterized by changes in God's relationship with humanity, the administration of His laws, and the nature of His dealings with humanity.

One of the key features of dispensationalism is its emphasis on a literal interpretation of the Bible (Ryrie, 1965). Dispensationalists believe that the Bible should be interpreted literally whenever possible, and that its literal meaning should be the starting point for all biblical interpretation. This approach is in contrast to other forms of biblical interpretation, such as allegory or typology, which see deeper spiritual or symbolic meanings in the text. Dispensationalists also believe that the distinct dispensations described in the Bible are organized chronologically, and that each dispensation builds upon the previous one (Walvoord, 2001). They see God's dealings with humanity as a progression from innocence, through human sin and corruption, to the ultimate redemption of humanity through the work of Jesus Christ.

In dispensationalism, the Jewish people and Israel play a significant role in God's plan for humanity. According to dispensationalist theology, the Jewish people are God's chosen people, and their restoration to the land of Israel is seen as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy. This restoration is believed to be a precursor to the second coming of Christ, which is considered the climax of God's plan for humanity (Ryrie, 1965). Dispensationalism teaches that God has made distinct covenants with the Jewish people, including the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant. These covenants, which were made with the Jewish people alone, are considered unconditional and eternal (Scofield, 1909). As a result, the dispensationalist view of the Jewish people and Israel is often characterized by strong support for the nation of Israel and the belief that the Jewish people have a unique and ongoing role in God's plan.

In dispensationalism, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 is seen as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy and a significant event in God's plan for humanity. Dispensationalists believe that the regathering of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, after centuries of dispersion, is a clear sign that the end times are near (Shapiro, 2010). Furthermore, dispensationalism teaches that the future of the Jewish people and Israel is directly linked to the return of Jesus Christ. According to dispensationalist theology, at the end of this age, Jesus will return to the earth and establish his millennial kingdom. During this 1000-year reign, the Jewish people will be restored to a position of prominence, and Israel will be the center of the world (Scofield, 1909).

This theological framework has been influential in shaping the foreign policy of the United States, particularly with regards to the Middle East and Israel. One of the key beliefs of dispensationalism is the idea that God has a special plan for the nation of Israel, which will

ultimately culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. They view their support for Israel as both a spiritual and practical obligation, and believe that Christians should pray for Israel, advocate for its right to exist, and support it politically and economically (Miller, 2014). Another factor that has influenced US foreign policy through dispensationalism is the belief in a Rapture, or the belief that true Christians will be taken up to heaven in an event that precedes the end times. According to this belief, the US has a unique role to play in these end-times events and should work towards fulfilling the divine plan for Israel and the Middle East (Ozcelik & Okur, 2021).

5. Dispensationalism influenced on The relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem and The Recognition of Jerusalem as The Capital City of Israel

Dispensationalism mandate to support Israel, this support has translated into political action, with dispensationalist Christians being a powerful force in US foreign policy, particularly with regards to US policy towards Israel (Ozcelik & Okur, 2021). For example, dispensationalist Christians have been key supporters of the US policy of providing military aid to Israel, which they see as crucial for the survival and security of the state of Israel. This support has also been evident in the political arena, with dispensationalist Christians playing a significant role in the passage of pro-Israel legislation in the US Congress. In addition, dispensationalist Christians have also been key supporters of the US policy of providing military aid to Israel, which they see as crucial for the survival and security of the state of Israel (Miller, 2014). Dispensationalist theology also holds that the end times, or the events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ, will be marked by great wars, conflict, and tribulations. Dispensationalists believe Israel playing pivotal role in that events are fulfilment of these end-times prophecies. In order to stay on God's good side and secure national blessing, the US needs to assist and safeguard Israel (Miller, 2004).

The relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem and the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel also based on dispensationalism. This action had been seen as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy by some Christians, particularly those who adhere to the doctrine of dispensationalism (Ozcelik & Okur, 2021). This policy's motive was obedience with dispensationalism. This action had been seen as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy by some Christians, particularly those who adhere to the doctrine of dispensationalism. According to this perspective, the reestablishment of the state of Israel and the recognition of Jerusalem as its capital are seen as significant events that signal the approach of the end times and the return of Jesus Christ (Durbin, 2020). Dispensationalists believe that the restoration of Israel is a necessary precondition for the Lord's return and that the Jews must return to their homeland to be regathered as a nation. They also believe that the modern state of Israel has a divine right to exist and must be defended, as it is a key player in God's end-times plan (Shapiro, 2010). According to dispensationalists, this covenant is an unconditional and eternal promise that God made to the Jewish people and is still in effect today. Even though, from a political perspective, the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has been seen as a move that undermines the peace process in the Middle East. The international community, including the United Nations, has traditionally recognized Tel Aviv as the capital of Israel, and the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital city has been seen as a direct challenge to the international consensus on the issue (Pertile & Faccio, 2020). Furthermore, the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem has been seen as a move that legitimizes Israel's control over the city and its policies of settlement expansion, which has been widely criticized by the international community as a violation of international law and as an obstacle to peace in the region (Dumper, 2019).

Besides sparked condemnation from the international community, this decision also had an implication on harming US's interest. This implication could be interpreted as contradiction between this decision with "America First" as Trump's guidance in conducting US foreign policy. "America First" has a strong stance on prioritizing the US's interest over all above else. In accordance with "America First", Trump ought to take a cautious approach similar to successive US President Trump to preserve the US's interest. However, Trump's decision didn't prioritize US interest and even jeopardized US's interest. Recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the US could be seen as taking a side in this conflict, which could make it more difficult for the US to serve as a mediator between the two sides (Dumper, 2019). This could harm US interests in the region by making it more difficult to resolve the conflict and maintain stability in the region. Another potential implication of this decision is that it could harm US relationships with Arab allies in the region. Many Arab countries have historically been critical of Israel, and the US has sought to maintain good relationships with these countries in order to advance its interests in the region (Byman & Moller, 2016). For instance, the US's close relationship with Saudi Arabia has been impacted, with the kingdom expressing its opposition to the embassy relocation. This has in turn complicated US efforts to counter Iranian influence in the region and to maintain stability in the Gulf (Harb, 2017). This also could have significant implications for US interests in the region, as it could make it more difficult for the US to work with these countries on issues such as counterterrorism and regional stability.

Trump's motive to adopt Dispensationalism as part of conducting US foreign policy was driven by the urgency to maintain his voting bloc after 2016 US Election. In the 2016 election, the Christian Evangelical vote was a decisive factor in several key states that ultimately determined the outcome of the election (Trangerud, 2021). According to data from the Pew Research Center, nearly 8 in 10 white Evangelical Protestant voters (79%) voted for Trump in 2016, compared to just 16% who voted for Hillary Clinton (Pew Research Center, 2016). Furthermore, exit polls showed that Trump won a higher share of the white Evangelical vote than any other Republican candidate in the past 20 years (Trangerud, 2021). The Christian Evangelical community has long been a significant voting bloc in American politics, with a well-organized network of churches, advocacy groups, and media outlets. However, Trump was not a favourable figure in the 2016 Republican primaries due to his personality that tarnished the family values which were upheld by White Evangelicals. During 2016 Republican primaries, Ben Carson and Ted Carson were more favourable candidates than Trump. Realizing this position, Trump as a goal-driven person tried to align himself with the evangelical's voting bloc.

In order to intertwine with evangelicals' voting bloc, Trump leveraged his relations with Evangelicals pastor, Paula White Cain. Their connection in the realm of politics started when White-cain advised Trump not to run as a presidential candidate in the 2012 US Presidential Election (Strang, 2017). She also played a key role in rallying votes from his Christian Evangelical constituency base by serving on Trump's Evangelical Advisory Board and assembling Evangelicals leaders to campaign for Trump in the 2016 US Election campaign. The alliance of Evangelicals leaders created a campaign narrative that hitched Trump with biblical prophecy to draw votes among Evangelicals voting bloc (Stang, 2017). That narrative campaign based on resemblance between Trump and Cyrus the Great that came from biblical stories. They share the same behaviour, which is shown by their disbelief in the Bible, but they have a crucial role as saviour for Jewish that is God's chosen people. Besides that, Trump's personality could accommodate Christian Evangelical adherents' concerns about the need for a

“strong man” character as United States’s leader and conduct decisions that are aligned with Christian Evangelical values (Kim, 2019).

6. Conclusion

America First introduced by Trump during his campaign for the 2016 US Election and it became his grand strategy to conduct US Foreign Policy. The key elements of America First is to prioritize the US's interest on economic nationalism and military strength above all else in foreign affairs. However, Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was contrary to “America First”. This move opposed “America First” due to having an implication harming US’s interest in the Middle East. Trump’s decision is motivated by dispensationalism norms that emphasize on supporting Israel’s existence as a matter of faith. However, dispensationalism norm as US foreign policy determinant wasn’t without precedent. Trump's intention to adopt those norms was driven by the urgency to maintain his voting bloc in the 2016 US Election. In the 2016 election, the Christian Evangelicals voters that adhered to dispensationalism, was a decisive factor in several key states that ultimately determined the outcome of the election. Through this article, further research is needed regarding internalization dispensationalism by Evangelicals actor or organization as determinant US Foreign Policy during Donald Trump reign.

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