UNDERSTANDING THE IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC SPEECH INTO

THE RŪḤĀNĪ ERA

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Abstract: The objective of this article lies in the analysis of how Iranian leadership reinvents the discourse techniques, by disposing of unproductive discursive practices of the last 35 years.

The concern for the diplomatic discourse of Iranian Administration is justified by the fact that relations between the Iranian leadership and the West are marked by tensions, fears and virulent verbal interventions, most often due to misapprehension and gaps in knowledge of how complex the Iranian people is.

On the other hand, the election as president of Ḥasan Rūḥānī[1], a moderate backed by young people and reformist factions, has established a new breath of Iranian political discourse, being visible the trend of multiplication of phrases that urges to openness to the West and nuclear dispute settlement. However, from this perspective, a thorough analysis of those lexical structures with symbols load may reveal the wishes of a nation and also can outline how to make Tehran diplomacy, while the Islamic Revolution imposed a unique diplomatic code in terms discourse and attitude.

Regarding the methodological device, the research will opt in favour of discourse analysis treated in multidisciplinary perspective, because discourse is, ultimately, an act of language itself, an amount of contexts that offers multiple perspectives of articulation of some immediate realities.

Keywords: strategic narratives, nuclear dispute, discourse, analysis, diplomacy

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[1] *In writing the terms / concepts and Persian or Arabic names, I have chosen their transliteration. In this regard, I used to equivalent phonemes from Persian into Roman alphabet the system used by* **The German Oriental Society** *(http://transliteration.eki.ee) and from Arabic into Roman alphabet the system used by Grigore, G. (2002). Limba arabă – pronunție și scriere. București: Fundația "România de mâine".*

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I. Introduction

To approach the Iranian discursive field involves a thorough knowledge of Persian civilization and culture and Persian linguistic area for access to the original text, translation, most of them not surprising the true meaning of the message.

Thus, subject to effective exacerbated monitoring amid Islamic Revolution and subsequently the controversial nuclear program, Iranian nation has become the favorite topic of point analysis in the Western world, academia and political sectors launching to debate topics related to political and religious actors and unpublished strategies to treat foreign policy topics in an atypical manner, which oscillates between tradition deeply rooted in Shiite philosophy and modernity, understood in the revolutionary paradigm, whose legitimacy is shaped by its cultural, ethical and religious roots.

Discourse analysis will bring clarifications on how the language also marks the mindset of individuals, which has its peculiarities, an important contribution having it in this regard, Sapir who argues that "language, as structure, is in its internal aspect, the matrix of thinking" of the people who speak it (Sapir 1921, p.19), each language has its own meanings, senses, effects and repercussions auditors on how its speakers perceive the world. Therefore, there are languages that can express certain things while others do not. (Sapir 1921, p. 140-142)

Therefore, the study will treat the speech, analyzed at sentence level, the vocabulary, the nature of meaning, but also in terms of the effects it causes on the receiver / s and the scientific method will be a qualitative one, which results itself in an analysis of the text corpus, consisting of oral and written speeches, externally addressable, belonging to Hasan Rūḥānī, the President of Iran, found on websites or "YouTube" platform.

II. Theoretical approaches

The many definitions of discourse analysis, theories and different approaches converge to the fact that this concept should be treated in multi- and interdisciplinary manner, both diachronic, synchronic and, as it has evolved in the cognitive sciences, to which is inextricably linked. In this context, any attempt of discourse analysis cannot be addressed without prior decoding of language.

II.1. Speech as an object of research

Understood as "broad term with various definitions that integrates a wide range of meanings" (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 42), the concept of "speech" involves a comprehensive perspective of language facts in which

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linguistics, communication theories, semiotics, political science and sociology bring a major contribution to the understanding as communication event because it sends messages beyond what is said directly.

Regarding polysemy, the word "speech", is also researched, discourse being predominantly understood as a form of language that makes reference to the notion of "parole" of Saussure, or to the text (Maingueneau, 1987, p. 6-7).

Academic field of research discussed by many disciplines and prolific in terms of definitions and approaches, word "speech", which comes from the Latin "discursus" is rooted in "Rhetoric" of Aristotle (1998), which places human beings in direct relation to their speech, this being the one differentiating them.

If semiotics perceives speech in terms of "system of signs" hermeneutics as a system of interpretation and from the linguistic perspective, the discourse is often synonymous with the Saussurian concept of "parole" from the perspective of Émile Benveniste (1966), it being "any statement that involves a speaker and an auditor, where in the first there is the intention to influence the other in every way" (p. 242).

Ferdinand de Saussure's attention (1998) focuses on the act of speaking, understood as individual act of communication, which carries a psychic side and psycho-physiological side (p. 43). Thus, de Saussure emphasizes the pragmatic function of communication; the message is not understood by all interlocutors in the same way as its understanding requires a code knowledge and linguistic context, and decoding the message entails the meaning that the speaker attributes to the message.

Regarding communication theories, we distinguish Roman Jakobson`s perspective (1964), who insists that language must be analyzed "in all its variety, its functions[2]" (p. 88), given that communication lies in the interaction between the transmitter or the encoder and receiver or decoder, the code being a set of encoder and decoder common signs (Jakobson, 1963, p. 213-220).

On the other hand, Umberto Eco`s semiotic approach (1988) brings to the fore the discourse on metaphor, which requires for analysis that a proper term is substituted by a figurative term, language being "by nature and origin, metaphorical and the mechanism of metaphor (...) defines man as a symbolic animal "(p. 140).

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[2]*Each of the six factors (the message, context, contact, code, transmitter, receiver) determines six essential functions of language, which can be a starting point in analyzing the communication act: emotional or expressive function; conative function; referential function (denotative or cognitive); phatic function; meta-lingual function; poetic function, considered a dominant feature of human language, it is focused on message in all its complexity. (Jakobson 1964, p. 88-94)*

II.2. Speech and exercise of power

Regarding the relationship between language and power, this is inseparable, Pierre Bourdieu (2001), arguing that the political sector that has some social organization "is closely linked to the theme of language and symbolic power." The language "is where (...) agents try to form and transform worldview, (...) thus trying to mobilize the support of those on which, ultimately rests their power" (p. 43 - 44)

Bourdieu (2001) points out that language is the instrument of action and power, deeply involved in social life, and symbolic power is "the invisible power that cannot be exercised without the complicity of those who do not want to know that bear it or even exercise it "(p. 202). Also, Bourdieu observes that the force of the word is immense, it acquires the power of persuasion by the transmitter and the manner in which it is spoken, but those who speak must ensure that they have the right to speak under given circumstances, and the receiver must determine whether the broadcaster deserves attention. The speeches are not intended solely to be understood or deciphered, but these are signs of a violent or obeying authority, the value of discourse depending on the force balance (Bourdieu 2001: 43)

Assuming that the social world works equally as a system of power relations and as a symbolic system, Bourdieu argues that politicians have a symbolic capital, which should keep at any time, whereas without this symbolic power, politicians may lose credibility, may enter a stage of degradation quality as a politician. (Bourdieu 2001: 241-242)

In the sense of Christian le Bart (2003), political discourse itself is defined as that speech of actors invested in the political sector, characterized by predictability and lack of substance, being the product of a discursive activity aesthetically unpretentious, but with a consistency reflecting the political and social world of the speaker.

Regarding the conceptual framework of diplomatic discourse, Constanze Villar (2006) argues that it is the consequence of the same symbolic thinking, being defined as "whole discourse that needs to have its specificity deciphered (...) and placed at the intersection of two disciplines (...) political science (...) and linguistics, semiotics more precisely - at the level of discursive structures and functions ". (p. 10)

The interaction between philosophy, history and sociology gives Michel Foucault (1971) the opportunity to address discourse theory from the perspective of the same exercise of power, launching the idea that not everyone can give a speech or that speech is not accessible to anyone as it imposes "certain requirements" that make it hermetic. Thus, the human being is barred from talking about anything, however and whenever, speech being "controlled, selected, organized and redistributed through some

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specific procedures that have the role of urging the powers and dangers" (p. 13-36), whereas power is afraid of speech that can become threatening.

Foucault's ontological analysis in "The Archaeology of Knowledge" (1999) on the speech, represented a new grid for analyzing the text itself, its contribution in the field of discourse analysis is paramount, since it regroups cognitive principles of analysis and synthesis of utterance. Going beyond the boundaries of vocabulary, morphology and syntax, discursive field analysis will break the statement in order to grasp it isolated, establishing the conditions of its existence, fixating limits and identifying correlations with other statements that may be related and indicating other forms of utterance that it excludes (p. 33). From this perspective, Foucault departs from the pure linguistic practice to analyze discursive practices of a society, going to study not only within the statement and even outside it, correlating it with behaviors and sociolinguistic context.

II.3. Discourse analysis

Theoretical construction of discourse analysis is due to Zellig Harris in 1952, for whom speech is the linguistic unit higher than sentence, while the analysis is understood to mean "decomposition" of the text. From this perspective, the analysis of a speech, taken in isolation, may provide information "on certain correlations between language and other forms of behavior", given that every speech is "produced in an ad hoc basis" (Harris, 1969, p. 11)

Generating a series of definitions, discourse analysis assumes a field with breadth of applicability, which refers to the use of language in context, since it takes into account a number of theoretical and methodological approaches in the field of linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, political sciences and communication, nature of language depending on the demands and functions it has.

Often synonymous with "study", discourse analysis goes beyond text taken in isolation, being rather the study of authentic text and conversations in the social context. Texts must transcode both personal and social processes, in other words, the text must be generated, construed and put in social context (Halliday & Hasan, 1985)

Defined as "the study of actual use of language by real speakers in real situations" (van Dijk, 1985, p. 1), discourse analysis examines the language socially, which is subject to constant social changes. In the support of this idea comes Maingueneau (1996), who argues that discourse analysis aims to "articulate its statement on a particular social place" where it occurs, as any act of communication involving social actors, relations between transmitter, receiver and context of communication (pp. 11).

Discourse analysis involves, above all, a lexical approach, vocabulary constituting itself into an object of study, where semantic concepts such as connotation, denotation are prominently. Thus, they are values of language sign, but in another report, the denotation a-word being given by the original fundamental function of the word, while the connotation is any other function that an object or a term accrues (Marcus, 1970). Syntactic addressing analyzes text coherence through segmentation and classification, while pragmatic approach emphasizes language as a discursive, communicative and social phenomenon. This perspective brings to the fore the notion of encoding and decoding, as the phrase implies a coding and its interpretation is decoding, which means the existence of a common code to the speaker and interlocutor. (Bracops, 2006, p. 13-17) Starting from the idea that talking means, in a certain way, to act on audience, pragmatic approach offers analysis tools on the manner in which the speaker exercises his authority over the other party through speech.

Semiotic addressing emphasizes the manner in which the language sign can achieve the meaning, semiotics being the science of signs, comprised of both syntax, understood as signs combination rule, semantics, understood as a rule of signs correlation with referees or their meanings, and pragmatic, usually defined as the use of signs depending on the specific situation of communication. In this respect, the semiotic approach provides an analysis model specific to narrative text, which looks at the way by which the story is constructed, at the level of form, composition, style, language, and then considers how to build the story, the connections between sequence micro-narrations, ensuring consistency of narrative scenario, the protagonists of the story, temporal indications, enrollment of geographic data in a political scheme, temporality, repetitive sequences. Regarding the narrative voice, the emphasis is focused on the reference narrator, its ideology, its scale of values, the way by which he causes the participation of the audience and the way he uses the versatility or opacity of a desire to place a part of narrative in the shade.

III. Iranian discursive features

Dominated by an authoritarian theocracy, which places the clerical machine on the top of the social pyramid, Tehran discourse analysis represents a natural step in identifying those aggregates trends, while Shiite religious values, beliefs and concepts are loaded with symbol and interpreted in an original way.

On the other hand, to write about Iranian political discourse is to investigate Persian culture and investigate the manner in which Iranian people and its political advocates may or may not adapt to the challenges of this millennium or prefer to remain anchored in the directions of thinking of the past.

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Interpreted in sociological key Shi'ite Islam becomes the mobilizing of revolutionary consciences and instrument of Iranian-Islamic identity reconstruction in which the religious, linguistic and civilizational factors are jointly linked to other elements of society and Iranian nation. Starting from the idea that peoples without history, language and culture are easily exploitable, theorists[3] of the Islamic Revolution argue that the liberation struggle cannot ignore religion and culture, both of which are products of history and geography of Persian area, therefore the speeches of Islamic Revolution exponents refer unambiguously to the trinom Islam - culture - language. (Šarī'atī, 1390/2011).

Doing act of obedience to the imam[4], superior to any power, Iran Shia is facing a reality different from that which characterized much of the Islamic world and the emergence position of "velāyat-e faqīh"[5] in political life upset the analysts, who try to explain the intrusion of religious factor in politics.

Accused repeatedly of timelessness and incompatibility with democracy, Islam raises a number of obstacles in understanding the Islamic world and, in particular, the space of Iran, which after 1979 became an archetypal example of society characterized by a politico-religious complex and ambivalent dynamism, Islamic revolution offering clerical symbolism reactivation of religious tradition in its radical

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[3] *'Alī Šarī'atī, theoretician of Shiite socialist revolution operates with distinction between Safavid corrupted Shi'ism (specific to Pahlavī dynasty) and Alavit Shi'ism of 'Alī, original Shi'ism involving a return to the Prophet Muhammad and Islam genuine revolutionary, that requires social justice, preached by the cousin of the Prophet. The author postulates a typical contesting the Shiite and Iranian ideology, by which Rūhāllāh Ḥomeīnī relies on Shi'ism vocation to trigger revolutions and to strengthen the concept of modern Iran by merging political, ethno-linguistic and cultural dimension. (Šarī'atī, 1377/1998)*

[4] *Coming from ar. Imām (literally, "the one who sits in front, who leads the prayer", this role assuming Muhammad initially), the term "Imām" has particular connotations in Shiite doctrine, imam is direct descendant of 'Alī and Fatima, Prophet's daughter, and recognized as spiritual and temporal leader of the Muslim community. Imām is the bearer of the light of God is infallible because through it one can get truth and salvation. Gaining an eschatological dimension, the Duodeciman Shi'ism invests in Imam the role of intermediary between man and God and the depositary of the real meaning of the Qur'an. (Muṭahharī, 1367/1988, p. 24-35) With the Islamic Revolution, Ḥomeīnī is assigned the title of "Imām", which he does not refuse, although it is reserved theoretically to Awaited Imam.*

[5] *The concept of "velāyat-e faqīh" means politico-religious doctrine founded on the inextricable fusion between religious authority and political power as God's representative on Earth (Firāhī, 1378/1999). Established after the Islamic Revolution to justify such interference of the religious in system of governance, this concept of Khomeneist inspiration provides to the political leadership the right to manage the affairs of the Iranian state in the absence of the hidden and Awaited Imam, understood as the axis of the spiritual world and sovereign legitimacy of the Universe that intervenes for people with God. (Thoraval, 1997, p. 147) In ideological terms, the Shiite doctrine finds that the holder of power lacks legitimacy to the coming of the Twelfth Imam - Mahdī (ar. Mahdī means "one who is well guided by God), which will achieve conquest of the world, is revealed again at the end of all time as the awaited Mahdi, to make absolute peace and justice reign. Ḥomeīnī asks to be introduced in the Iranian Constitution an article stipulating that the highest authority in the state must be a scholar in Islamic jurisprudence, depositary of moral, behavioral and intellectual high standing qualities, to be accepted by the population and subordinating political power to religious one.*

forms. Thus, Islam in the revolutionary becomes an instrument of rebirth of Persian identity and of the fight against cultural alienation, designated by the pejorative phrase "ġarbzadegī". (D'Hellencourt Yavari, 1999)

 Strong anti-colonial feelings during ante-revolutionary period offered a certain legitimacy to revolutionary speeches in confrontation with the West, and this paradigm shift has led to a political entity with a revolutionary rhetoric strongly influenced by societal metamorphoses inspired by the concept of " *ġarbzadegī* " and multiple references to Persian culture, politics, economics and Islam.

Nation with historical glorious past, the Iranian decision-making machine counts, whenever necessary, on the emphasis of this nationalistic feeling of historical proud by repeatedly sending to the reign of Cyrus, the capital of Persepolis, the Persian Empire with its boundaries that included continents. Equally, it designs a size of humility and a sense of inferiority, both powered by the period in which Shiites, as religious minority, were persecuted by the Sunni majority. This interpretation also includes the claiming of the right to nuclear energy, because an immemorial nation like Iran cannot be refused, in the end, they have a right that other nations have without such a historical background. (KhosraviNik, 2015, p. 10-11)

III.1.2. Diplomatic discourse rebranding

The death of the charismatic Ḫomeīnī (1989) revealed a fact not understood by the Iranian elite, namely the absence of a oratorical personality that relies on the power of words, on the context and the socio-cultural level of the audience, on the alternation of styles and on the ability to adapt the message in any circumstance. Therefore, the post-Ḫomeīnī era is marked by a completely different speech, with an expanded vocabulary, shaped by the regional and global context in the center of preoccupations placing "the international interests of Iran," including nuclear ones, because although labeled as "inhumane" the use of biological weapons, the nuclear program of Shah Pahlavī is resumed.

Systemic crises in the Middle East, the collapse of dictatorships in the region and tightening of international anti-Iranian sanctions have prompted the supreme leader and conservative faction to realize that foreign policy strategies must be dictated by regional and not ideological interests, and dialogue with the West and, especially, with the United States would give Iran political advantages translated by recognition from the US, of Iranian identity and status of Iran as key-state in stabilizing the region, but also economic advantages, consisting in the release of funds frozen in US banks, contracts in sectors with urgent needs and investments in the Iranian economy.

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Thus, the interaction between revolutionary credentials, his knowledge in religion and education accredited Hassan Rūḥānī portfolio to become a candidate with real chances in the presidential elections of June 2013. Of course, this openness is not accidental, the result of the presidential elections is predictable and reflected in the subliminal dispute between Ali Ḫāmene'ī - supreme leader and Aḥmadīnejād, former Iranian president, who occupied the political and media scene of 2013. Although with lower power than the supreme leader, Hassan Rūḥānī has the advantage of experience in nuclear policy, possessing excessive charm, being designated in Western diplomatic circles "Sheikh-diplomat", and promotes a flexible discourse dominated by the electoral slogan "moderation and hope" (fa. *tabdīr va āmīd*). Rūḥānī invites voters to be part of his election agenda, and words like "Respect" (fa. *eḥterām*), "settling" (fa. *ḥall*) "agreement" (fa. *tavāffaq*) "Cooperation" (fa. *hamkārī*) mark positively the speech and inspires to the audience the good intentions of Tehran in the equation with the West.

With postgraduate studies in the UK, Rūḥānī has drawn in his government a wave of intellectuals trained abroad and familiar with Western values and discourse, and the appointment of the head diplomat Moḥammad Ǧavād Ẓarīf is not random, him being the product of American universities. With real skills of understanding of the way by which American media perceive Iran due to his experience as a diplomat in the US, of ease in expression in public space, frequent openness supporting to the US even during the presidency of Aḥmadīnejād, Ẓarīf seems to be the perfect candidate for the foreign ministers, becoming the exponent of Iranian young segment hopes to change and pro-American right arm of Rūḥānī.

Disposing of virulent rhetoric, the new Iranian administration has structured its diplomatic discourse around Iran as a promoter of peace, combating extremism and terrorism and prosecuting military intervention in the Middle East. Also, Israel is not the subject of public Iranian imprecations of Rūḥānī and Ẓarīf cataloging the Holocaust as a "heinous crime" and "genocide", the personification of US in the "Great Satan" appears to have been eliminated, terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 being "terrifying events" and Arabs become "our brothers ".

But the analysis of the interview with American TV station "NBC" (09.21.2013) given by Rūḥānī and, also, the speeches to the UN General Assembly (24.09.2013/ New York; 25.09.2014/ New York) shows that he follows a standard model in discourse structuring, his provenance among the clerical elites justifying the religious formulas at the beginning of his speeches: "*Thank God, peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions*", *"Praise be to God, the lord of the worlds. Blessing and Peace be upon our Prophet Mohammad and hid kin and companions"* or " *In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.* "

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The antithesis "good - evil" becomes the leitmotif of his rhetoric, "fears and fear" opposing "hope" and "misunderstanding" is answered by "friendship" between nations. On the other hand, the repeating dichotomy "we" - "they" is an attempt to cloak 'ours' and accusation of "theirs", the West, but also a dividing line between the Islamic and Western world, a border between the world perceived as "ocean of instability" and Iran as "anchor of stability". In antithesis is the "others" (fa. *digarān*), which condemns the attacks in the East, the proliferation of terrorism and extremism, the implementation of coercive military and economic policies, Iran becoming also a victim of the "others" through sanctions adopted by the West.

Relying on victimhood, Rūḥānī is trying to sensitize the audience: "*We have the experience of destructive wars of the region (...) and as you know, we ourselves are victims of chemical weapons*" and providing of evidence to the detriment of abstract (Western intervention in North Africa, West Asia, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria) is to inculcate in the mind of the audience negative feelings of revolt and disavowal of such acts: "*what has been and continues to be practiced on innocent people in Palestine is nothing more than violence (...) "; "Human tragedy in Syria is an example of spreading acrid catastrophic violence and extremism in our region* (...)"

In nuclear matter, stand the repetitive phrases such as "the legitimate right of all states to have civil nuclear power" (fa. *haq-e mašrū'e-ye hame-ye kešvarhā barā-ye dāštan-e enerjī-ye hasteyi-ye ġeyr-neẓāmī*"); "Illegal Sanctions" (fa. *taḥrīmhā-ye ġeyr-qānūnī*) with dual intention to persuade and sensitize the audience, but their arguments on religious "nuclear bomb is *ḥarām* (prohibited)" because "religion and our faith tell us that mass destruction weapons are inhumane and destructive to humanity", therefore, "nuclear weapons have not and will not have any place in our doctrine. "

Supporter of resolving nuclear dossier to climb out of international isolation, the Iranian president waives negative lexical fields marked by slogans " *marg bar āmrīkā* " (literally, "Death to America") and adopts phrases such as "constructive cooperation", "transparency" and " peace " ensuring audience of its full availability in containing tensions with the United States and cancellation of international sanctions. Consequence of ideology and political beliefs, Rūḥānī resorts to the same phrases that demonstrate the differences in mentality between Iran and West in nuclear sector "*is an illusion to think that the peaceful nature of Iranian nuclear program may be achieved by blocking the program through illegal pressure* ".

The adverb "today" used at the end of the speech highlights the beginning of a new phase in relations between Iran and the "others", and the slogan of Mohammad Ǧavād Ẓarīf - "The world has changed" -

pronounced on the conclusion of nuclear agreement in Vienna concludes diversification of Iranian diplomatic strategies.

IV. Conclusion

Islamic Revolution of 1979 has not brought only policy changes, but imposed a new discursive approach of the type of Shiite revolutionism centered on the infidelity of western leadership and decay of these societies, with significant implications in the collective consciousness globally.

Result of awareness of the need for revitalize the way to act and address Iran in a globalized world and in a region dominated by the systemic crisis, attempts by Tehran to build bridges of direct communication with Iranian citizens and the world resulted in a discourse. Also, by encouraging a moderate rise in the forefront of Iran, 'Ālī Ḫāmeneʿī has agreed on rethinking communication strategies and innovation of internal and external public opinion persuasion or manipulation tools.

The offensive charm of Iran in last two years and personalized messages engaging in the settlement of the nuclear issue are successful steps in the attempts of winning the minds and hearts abroad, but the flexible attitude and diplomacy of opening can equally be theater approaches carefully directed by Tehran to buy time in the uranium enrichment process.

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