

## Ideology and Partisanship in the Daily *The Jakarta Post* during Presidential Election of 2014

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### Abstract

**Abstract:** The existence of the media and ideology is akin to two sides of a coin. This existence is characterized by interrelatedness and mutual influence. During the Presidential Election of 2019, partisanship became a prominent issue. The media was regarded as being partisan and supportive of the incumbent. Similar case was observed during the Presidential Election of 2014 where the author identified the partisanship of the daily *the Jakarta Post* toward one of the presidential candidates. This stance is reflected on the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* entitled *Endorsing Jokowi*. Through this editorial, *the Jakarta Post* established itself as the only daily that openly threw its support for one particular presidential candidate. The analysis of this research is based on the Critical Discourse Analysis developed primarily by Teun Van Dijk in order to identify the reasons and means employed by *the Jakarta Post* to demonstrate its partisanship. The choice of theme, outline, diction, vocabulary and sentences used in this editorial reflects the attempt to marginalize, trivialize and accost the other candidate. In addition, the editorial contributed in providing insight on the candidate and the unfolding event. The research also identified the ideology espoused by *the Jakarta Post* which included pluralism, human rights, civil society and *Reformasi* which influenced their stance toward partisanship in this daily. Two events that took place during the campaign, which include the bestowal of the title Islamic Commander in Chief and the proliferation of the use of memes as the form of people's political expression are observed as the social context that spurred the publication of such editorial.

**Keywords:** Ideology, media partisanship, *the Jakarta Post*, Presidential Election 2014.

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### INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, there is an established relationship between the press and politics and between the press and the dynamic of politics. The press as the social institution and the mass communication media has the power to influence public perception. This influence is mutual, as the dynamic of the press can also influence the press, especially in the form of existence and reputation, as well as the relationship between the press and the government and the society [1]. The Presidential Election of 2014 spawned a new trend. Nearly all the mainstream media threw their support for the presidential candidate Joko Widodo dan Jusuf Kalla (Jokowi- JK). This endorsement was not openly expressed, yet the entire news reflected this phenomenon. The endorsement was to some extent very significant to the point that some of the press endorsing these candidates violated the regulation set forth by the General Election Commission. During the silent week, the report for the activity of Jokowi and JK supplied the newsroom. Jokowi's pilgrimage (umroh) [2] and his homeward bound trip [3] were the staples for headlines

in major newspapers, prime time television programme and online media canal.

One of the major medias that openly endorsed these candidates is the daily *the Jakarta Post* [4]. This English newspaper openly threw their support for Jokowi – JK. This is reflected in the editorial of 4 July 2014 [5] which ran the title *Endorsing Jokowi*, published five days before the election day. This editorial not only became the first open endorsement for the 31 years of this daily's existence yet it did also mark the first open endorsement from many major print media as well in Indonesia. A number or arguments and reasons for the endorsement for Jokowi – JK were given in the editorial, and that included that of the ideology currently espoused by the Jakarta Post that included pluralism, human rights, civil society and reformasi. The editorial also emphasized that the endorsement was considered as morally acceptable.

The editorial of *the Jakarta Post* established a clear demarcation between the candidate that they

support and their opponent (within this article consisting of 663 words, there was no mention of the name Prabowo Subianto at all). The opponent of Jokowi was referred to as a transgressor of human rights, who supported the Islamist hardliners and would be very likely not to grant religious liberty (if he was elected), espoused the New Order style of leadership and openly offered the glory of the Soeharto era and other unfavorable description. This opponent was described as a 'much too dangerous a candidate to serve for this third largest democracy in the world'. On the other hand, Jokowi was described as having the opposite of all this description.

Regardless of the fact that Jokowi finally won the Presidential Election of 2014, the conduct of *the Jakarta Post* through its editorial is a new phenomenon in the mass media industry of Indonesia when a mainstream media openly endorses a candidate. This endorsement is interesting to analyze as *the Jakarta Post* had practically no ties with the candidate. This research is therefore conducted to answer the following questions:

- Why did the daily *the Jakarta Post* conduct partisanship and decide to publish the editorial *Endorsing Jokowi*?
- What characterizes the unfavourable depiction of Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa and what characterizes the favourable depiction of Jokowi – JK by *the Jakarta Post*?
- What role does the ideology of *the Jakarta Post* play in establishing the partisanship for Jokowi?

### Theoretical Foundation

#### *Socio-cognitive Approach*

In the model proposed by Teun van Dijk [6], discourse has three dimensions that include text, social cognition and social contexts. Texts have been formed within the discourse practice. Text is not an empty space yet it forms parts of a larger society. Meanwhile the social cognition factor is an important element in that particular discourse area. Discourse is analyzed not only by its structure, but also by the process of production. Text analysis will assist how a discourse may be used to marginalize particular minority within the public conversation. In the social context, each emerging discourse, according to Van Dijk [6] is part of the growing discourse in society, therefore text analysis would require intertextual analysis to see how one particular text is produced and constructed within the society. In the analysis of this social context there are two important points: power and access.

#### **Hegemony and False Consciousness**

The media according to Gramsci [7] can become a medium where one group establishes their position and marginalize other groups. Gramsci describes how this process of ideology dissemination unfolds. Power and capitalistic domination is achieved not only through the material dimension and economic

means, but also through power and hegemony. One of the powers of hegemony is the power to create a dominant mindset or a discourse which later on will be taken as true while other discourses are deemed as incorrect [8]. There was a value or a consensus that is considered as correct, therefore rendering other discourse incorrect. The media inadvertently become the tool to disseminate and penetrate this dominant discourse to become an agreed consensus [9].

The hegemony theory emphasizes that in the social field there is contestation to win the public heart. This happens as there is a different experience of the subordinate group and the ideology of the dominant group. There needs to be an effort from the part of the dominant group to disperse the ideology and the truth to be accepted with the least resistance. One of the keys to achieve this is by the common sense. If the idea or the dominant group is accepted as a logical idea, this ideology will be accepted and the hegemony takes place.

Raymond Williams groups the use of the ideology within the three areas. First is the belief system that belongs to a particular group or class. Second, the belief system that is created – the false ideas or consciousness – that can serve as the antithesis of scientific knowledge. Third, the general process of producing meaning and ideas. The way this ideology works in producing meaning can be observed from how the ruler and society action are described and how the involved group is positioned. In Marxist concept, ideology is a false consciousness. Their consciousness, on who they are and how they connect themselves within the society, is constructed and produced by society, not by a natural process. Therefore, this consciousness on the social reality is determined by the society and not by the individual psychology [10].

#### **Research Method**

This research uses the CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) that has been introduced and developed by Teun A. van Dijk as the analytical tool. The van Dijk analysis that is also known as the socio cognitive approach is used primarily not only because of its ability to analyze texts, but also for its ability to analyze how the text is produced, which allows us to understand why the text can become as such.

The paradigm used in this research is the critical paradigm which regards the social structure as context that determines reality, process and the dynamics of communication, including the mass communication [11]. The critical paradigm regards the media not as a free and neutral channel. Media is owned by particular group of people and used to dominate the minority. The focus of analysis on the critical paradigm is to find the dominant power and that marginalizes and trivializes the minority.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Partisanship of the Jakarta Post on Joko Widodo

The editorial *Endorsing Jokowi of the Jakarta Post* is the way how it observes and understands the Presidential Election 2014. For this daily, this Presidential Election is a political event of utmost importance that will have impact on the entire Indonesian population. The stake of this democratic process is therefore high. Unlike the previous Presidential Election, in 2014 there were only two pairs of candidates. The two pairs brought the consequence that support will be invariably polarized. Both candidates actually enjoyed similar amount of support. This balance amount of support also brought another consequence which was the heated contestation between the supporters from both camps.

The reality brought by the two pairs of candidates made the opportunity to win the election somewhat equal [12]. If one camp finally won the election, the other will become the opposition. This signifies that the vision and mission of the winner will be likely to be implemented, whereas those of the losing camp will be very unlikely to be implemented. The possibility for coalition is slim, given each candidate was supported by a coalition of political parties, consisting of many political parties. This scenario of unlikely power sharing and the equally forceful support from both camps prompted *the Jakarta Post* to publish such editorial. In the view of *the Jakarta Post*, if Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa win, this will be akin to the return to the bygone era, to the era of Soeharto where military rules and society becomes subordinated, the time when collusion and corruption were rampant and human rights were trampled.

This feeling of inconvenience became stronger when Prabowo Subianto was awarded the Islamic Commander in Chief by an Islamic mass organization. This event prompted the publication of the editorial as has been volunteered by the Chief Editor of *the Jakarta Post*. The bestowal of such title, in the view of *the Jakarta Post* runs against the principle of pluralism as has been understood and as part of the commitment of this daily. Pluralism respects differences in the society. The existence of the hardliners such of the Islamic Defender Front that rallied behind Prabowo, according to *the Jakarta Post*, could unsettle the secular tradition that has been espoused for many years. The agenda of the mass organization in support of Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa had their own agenda of intolerance that has always been part of the campaign, according to *the Jakarta Post*.

In analyzing the partisanship of *the Jakarta Post* towards Joko Widodo, the author focuses on the four main issues that have become central in the editorial: 1) Human Rights 2) Religious tolerance 3) Transactional politics and 4) Militarism and New Order. These four central issues were included in the

editorial as it is closely related to the ideology and the standpoint that has been espoused by the Jakarta Post for the last 31 years. This central theme is linked to the writing strategy employed by the editorial writer. However, Teun van Dijk reiterated that in their attempt to produce news, a journalist usually employs four main strategies that include the following: selection, reproduction, conclusion and local transformation [7].

### Human Rights

In relation with the issue of Human Rights, the writer of the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* made some generalization by omitting several facts that came with the problems. The editorial of *the Jakarta Post* failed to include or consider the information in the form of argument previously presented to public by the campaign team of Prabowo or Prabowo himself. The editorial of *the Jakarta Post* simply ran the fact in passing by using subordinate phrase within a negatively worded sentence: "...be it carrying orders or of his own volition..."

Taken within the political context during that time, this Human Rights issue was brought by Wiranto, the Chief of Hanura Party who supported Jokowi. Wiranto held a press conference to reveal the chronology of the abduction of nine activists. Wiranto admitted that he was encouraged to speak up and answer the questions circulating in public on the abduction and the role of Prabowo Subianto. It is evident that the press conference was part of the attack from KIH (Koalisi Indonesia Hebat/ The Great Indonesian Coalition) to Prabowo – Hatta camp as it was conducted on June 19, 2014 during the campaign period [13].

In response to the statement made by Wiranto, the Prabowo camp openly gave clarification. Similar statement was also provided by the Prabowo camp within the Koalisi Merah Putih (KMP). The statement ran the explanation that Prabowo only responded to order from his superior. Prabowo also explained that he was not dismissed but was given honorable discharge. He cited the evidence that he still receives the monthly pension. Other facts disseminated by the KMP camp was some testimonials given by some of the abducted activists who now serve as committee members of Gerindra Party [14].

### Religious Tolerance

When Prabowo received support from the hardliners Islamist organization – with the bestowal of the title of Islamic Commander in Chief at the Mesjid Agung Yogyakarta – this fact was considered by the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* as his penchant for religious intolerance. It signifies that Prabowo supports the formation a caliphate, an idea that has been repeatedly voiced by the Islamist hardliners. Prabowo is deemed by the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* as unsupportive of secularism, a tenet that has been openly

supported by Indonesia. Although the part containing this information is placed on the 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph, the writer of the editorial admitted that this affiliation actually prompted the publication of the editorial and the open endorsement for the Jokowi – JK.

The editorial failed to include the information on the stance that Prabowo has on religious tolerance issue. In many occasions Prabowo has reiterated his position. For instance, by telling the story of his family where tolerance has been built with his siblings who are Christians while he is a Moslem. At close inspection the awarding of the title failed to involve the hardliners Islamist organizations such the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) or the Islamic Defender Front. As many as 1000 people attending the event at Mesjid Agung Yogyakarta actually hailed from the Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah (GPK who is affiliated to the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan who is the member of KMP), Hisbullah Indonesia and the former Commander of Laskar Jihad, Jafar Umar Thalib.

Within the political context, an affiliation with the religious-based mass organization is a common strategy to gather votes. This affiliation is inevitable as within the KMP itself there are political parties with Islamist ideology (PPP and PKS) who have ties with many Islamist mass organizations. Prabowo may have simply attempted to gather votes from such mass organization to maximize the votes. Moreover, Joko Widodo also conducted some manouvers to endear himself with the Islamist mass organization, yet when Joko Widodo did this maneuver, he was not suspect for being intolerant.

### Transactional Politics

On the issue of collusion and corruption, the editorial of the Jakarta Post claims that Prabowo Subianto was actually encircled by New Order style transactional politics. This type of politics actually betrays the spirit of the Reformasi movement. This statement is related to the maneuver conducted by the Partai Golongan Karya (Golkar) before the Presidential Election of 2014. At that time, Aburizal Bakrie, the Chairman of Golkar was busy conducting political approach to the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan (PDIP) before actually chose Partai Gerindra. During the maneuver, Golkar was rumored to have accepted high-ranking positions (such as Senior Minister) as the reward for the affiliation. The drive of Golkar during that time was the 12% votes during the Legislative Election of 2014. This significant vote accumulation has become its own drive in building a coalition.

Within the political context, it is hardly a secret that there is no free lunch. Each political party will use their position to get what they want. The logical consequence of the formation of a coalition is the sharing of power. This consequence also existed

within the within the Koalisi Indonesia Hebat (KIH) who stated that this transactional politics is simply the style of the New Order is a generalization or construction of the existing facts. Some of the parties would want to have some its members being appointed as high-ranking officials within the cabinet of Joko Widodo, not necessarily ministers.

### Militerism and the New Order

The presence of a military power in a democratic country for the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* is not a must. This opinion is related to the attitude shown by Prabowo. Since the beginning Prabowo showed the attribute with strong military elements. During his rally at the Gelora Bung Karno, Prabowo appeared in front of his supporters on a back of a horse. The outfit he wore reflected that of Bung Karno, who also adopted the military uniform. His orational style was much associated with the decidedness of the past military leaders.

The editorial of *the Jakarta Post* considered that what was shown by Prabowo is part of his attempt to return the leadership of the New Order, in this case the Soeharto era. The New Order romanticism, according to the editorial of *the Jakarta Post*, is outdated and is no longer relevant for the present time, especially with the spirit of Reformasi. When alluring to the romanticism of the New order, the writer of the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* compared this condition to the Russian Presidential Election in 1996. He was compared to Gennady Zyuganov who represented the Russian Communist Party, while indirectly, Joko Widodo is compared to Boris Yeltsin, the incumbent who represented the new hope for the Russian people.

What is done by the writer of the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* is making a conclusion based on generalization. Certainly, these two events share similarities in terms of theme and the spirit of campaign. However, Prabowo did not actually support or come from the party who used to be the ruling party (Golkar). Prabowo represented Gerindra. Comparing Joko Widodo and Boris Yeltsin was also a generalization. Yeltsin continued the movement called Perestroika and Glasnost that were initialized by Michael Gorbachev, a movement that was around long before he came into power and that had been well received by the Russians. What had been offered by Jokowi was yet to be fully materialized in the national level. Jokowi was successful in developing Solo, and at that time he had only served as Governor of DKI Jakarta for only two years. There had never been any evidence that Jokowi had brought a breakthrough and became the hope of Indonesia.

### Pluralism and the Islamist Hardliners

During the campaign period of the Presidential Election of 2014, both candidates attempted to gain support from the Islamic enclaves across the country.

The involvement of the Islamic-based in the coalition called Koalisi Merah Putih (KMP), built by Prabowo Subianto for instance, there was the Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera. Whereas in the Koalisi Indonesia Hebat (KIH), that supported Joko Widodo, there was Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa.

The attempt to gain support from the Islamist hardliners was a common and important strategy for the Presidential candidate in Indonesia. As the country with the largest Moslem population - with over 87% of its citizens are Moslems [15] - the vote from this group will determine the victory of one of the candidates. However, in the view of the *The Jakarta Post*, the attempt of Prabowo Subianto to gain the support of the Moslems was regarded to have crossed the lines when he affiliated with the mass organization of Islamist hardliners such as the Front Pembela Islam (FPI). This affiliation is reflected in the bestowal of the honorable title Islamic Commander in Chief to Prabowo Subianto that was conducted at the Mesjid Agung, Kauman, Yogyakarta (The Jakarta Post, Issue 2 July 2014). *The Jakarta Post* expressed concerned that this bestowal will further endanger the pluralism in the country (*the Jakarta Post* Issue 6 June 2014).

The Yogya event merits special attention as the honorific title is given to Prabowo Subianto, one of the candidates for the Presidential Election of 2014. A candidate with an affiliation to the Islamist hardliners seemed to have inconvenienced the pluralism tenet espoused by *the Jakarta Post*. In the view of *the Jakarta Post*, FPI was simply religious thugs for hire who promotes intolerance and often campaign the values that disintegrate the nation for their own short term gain. *The Jakarta Post* contrasted this with the pair of Joko Widodo – JK, who had the track record of disengaging from religious-based politics. The most serious concern of *the Jakarta Post* over Prabowo Subianto alliance with the hardliners was deemed as a threat to the secular tradition of Indonesia. Indonesia characteristically defend their pluralism. Although Indonesia is known as the country with the largest Moslem population, many faiths have grown and developed peacefully. People of different religions profess their own faith without any intimidation from anyone.

### **Meme: The Manifestation of People's Support**

During the campaign time for the Presidential Election, there was an obvious shift showing that large number of people threw their support for Jokowi. One of the forms of support is in the form of *meme* "I stand on the right side". Basically, this meme features two frames put side by side to mimic that of the ballot box. These two frames represent the candidates. By order, Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa is on the left side, while Joko Widodo- JK is placed on the right side. This is what is being parodied by the meme. The word

'right' here refers to the double meanings being on the righthand side or being correct. People in support of Joko Widodo – JK would place the picture on the lefthand side and leave the slogan of "I am standing on the right side" on the righthand box, signifying that they claim to be on the right side.

The Chief Editor of the *Pemimpin Redaksi The Jakarta Post* admitted that he was influenced by the meme. The influence is reflected on the last paragraph (paragraph 20) where of the editorial *Endorsing Jokowi* commented: "But it is an endorsement we believe to be morally right". Although he admitted that this is simply a play of words, the word 'right' at the end of the sentence is the form of that support. The influence of the meme on the editorial echoes the idea proposed by Teun van Dijk that social context has the influence toward the cognition of the author and the way the author produces the text as a whole. The discourse offered by the mass media is the discourse that currently develops within the society. *The Jakarta Post* once ran an article on meme and politics in Indonesia [16].

If we follow the train of thought of Antonio Gramsci, the meme that became viral is the form of acceptance from the group that has been dominated. The acceptance was achieved in a peaceful submission without any violence. The domination of one group over another then lead to voluntary and active obedient from the dominated group. When a large number of people started using the meme, voluntarily, the process of creating new discourse take place with the statement gradually accepted as truth: that the candidate on the righthand side is the right figure to be supported to become the national leader. Other logical consequence followed, that the candidate on the lefthand side will be never be able to catch up with what the supporters for the right group have done. Attempt to create similar take will result in yet another discourse, ushered in by the supporters of the right group who will accuse their opponent of plagiarism if they attempt to use the same device.

### **Analysis**

The editorial *Endorsing Jokowi* was written by using the ideology espoused by *the Jakarta Post*. This daily develops amid the environment that nurtures pluralism, against violation of human rights, belief in the role of civil society in the development of the country and the spirit of *Reformasi* that have been fought for the past decades. Any event or individual who runs counter to these ideals will receive attention and criticism from *the Jakarta Post* as has been confirmed by this research. According to *the Jakarta Post* Prabowo Subianto embodies all that runs counter to the ideology of *the Jakarta Post*. *The Jakarta Post* considers that what has been outlined by Prabowo Subianto in his vision and mission has the potentials to create society whose values are incompatible for

governance, which has been the product of the *Reformasi 1998*.

This evaluation is baseless as it refers to unconfirmed data. The editorial of *the Jakarta Post* attempts to marginalize Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa by using unsubstantiated facts. The reality on Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa that is given to society by this daily was against the truth and this has been evident with the polling confirming that some parts of society still believe in Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa.

In their attempt to enforce their partisanship toward the Jokowi – JK, the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* to a certain degree conducted selection, representation, making conclusion and local transformation on Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa. This practice is based on their intention to reinforce the statement that the candidate endorsed by *the Jakarta Post* is the right figure to serve the third most populous democracy. This act denied some fact on Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa (such as the answer given to set the record straight on the abduction of the activists) as well as some of the presumptions given to Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa that remains unaccounted for.

The partisanship of the editorial of *the Jakarta Post* for Joko Widodo – JK shows that the editorial room of *the Jakarta Post* is not free from the meddling of external forces. This meddling came from the external forces within the organization as it came from the the Directors of the PT Bina Media Tenggara as the publisher of *the Jakarta Post*. Although the involvement of the directors is not related to matters concerning the news content or opinion presented by the daily, this meddling is a form of direct intervention. This is confirmed as this intervention was related to the stance that *the Jakarta Post* will take toward the candidate Joko Widodo – Jusuf Kalla. This intervention is an affront to the stance that *the Jakarta Post* maintained for the past three decades to not take part or show preference toward one candidate or political party.

The editorial *Endorsing Jokowi* serve as an example that text is not something neutral but it is something that can be influenced by the author cognition as stated Shoemaker & Reese [17] that the media content is actually influenced by five aspects that include the characteristic of the media workers. The understanding of the press neutrality is actually in direct collision with press objectivity. In the view of *the Jakarta Post*, the Indonesian media has never been neutral as they have always taken sides. The Chief Editor of *the Jakarta Post* observes that the demand to remain impartial is the dogma purported by the New Order regime to suppress the objective nature of the media. Therefore, neutrality needs to avoided in many cases where the event will impact many lives.

*The Jakarta Post* contributed to the news production in the Editorial Room. This editorial, especially the last part, also sprung from the phenomenon of meme that emerged and became viral within the society. This fact added support for the agenda setting theory that is developed by McComb dan Shaw [18] who stated that what is actually being put in the agenda by the mass media will eventually become the society's agenda.

Lastly, the editorial *Endorsing Jokowi* is the mass media product that runs counter to the role that it should serve, especially when the role is taken within its function in the society. Mass media needs to be impartial and not showing any preference toward one particular candidate under the pretext that this candidate is perceived to serve the society better. The Presidential Election of 2014 is a power struggle between the group supporting Prabowo Subianto – Hatta Rajasa and groups supporting Joko Widodo – JK. Each group shoed their power through the mass media. *The Jakarta Post* has been the media power outlet for Joko Widodo – JK.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows some findings related to the position and the attitude of the media during an important event that has become an issue in society. The understanding of the media about what one particular event is influenced by the cognition of the Chief Editor who is a media worker. The research also describes the attempt conducted by the media to sugarcoat and justify their partisanship they created.

There is an abundant opportunity for subsequent research to analyse the role of the media in society. This research has the potential to be developed to obtain a more accurate picture on how media partisanship actually occurs. One way of achieving this is by enlarging the social context of the editorial of *the Jakarta Post*.

The test on the neutrality and objectivity of the mass media can also be further intensified to be able to see the persistence, especially when links are drawn to other events that have similar potentially destructive effect to the live of the nation and its citizens, as can be observed during the run up of the Presidential Election 2014, which is characterized by the interefence of the media's external parties. In practice, more often than not, mass media often receives pressure from the society to do the right thing, yet the media often yield under pressure from the powerful media owners with their vested interests running against society's will.

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