

(SELF-)PERCEPTION OF ROMANIANS' CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AS A RESULT OF THEIR MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCES. THE CASE OF ROMANIAN MILITARY OFFICERS PARTICIPATING IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

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***Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to identify the manner in which the Romanian officers participating in multinational peacekeeping missions perceive Romanians' cultural dimensions. In this respect, our intention is to focus on Hofstede's estimation with regard to the Romanians' cultural profile, by simultaneously analyzing the results of the unique application of the VSM94 questionnaire on a consistent sample. The comparative analysis of the two sets of results brings up the Romanians' positioning, in terms of their cultural profile, in relation with European working areas identified by Hofstede: Balkan, Latin, German, Northern and Anglo-Saxon. The comparative analysis of the Romanian cultural profile represents the very approach to enlightening a former research and it is continued by a contextualization of Romanian realities, the perception manner of these cultural dimensions as a result of the multicultural experience being brought into discussion. The particular study case under analysis includes the Romanian officers participating in peacekeeping missions and it was accomplished by conducting an interview between May-June 2010, with 20 Romanian officers participating in operation theaters in Africa, Asia and Europe.*

***Keywords:** cultural dimensions, multicultural experiences, peacekeeping operations, Romanian military officers.*

1. INTRODUCTION. CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Starting from Hofstede's statement, which considers cultures to be conflict sources rather than synergy sources, a deeper approach to the Romanian's ethnic profile, from the ethnic dimensions' perspective, is imperious. The Hofstede indices represent independent dimensions, from a statistical point of view, based on which cultural differences between nations may be accounted, as follows:

- power distance index (PDI), measuring power inequality between individuals situated on hierarchically different positions within the social system (Hofstede, 2001:83), which is an indicator of society's accepting inequality, provided a high score, and of society's promoting opportunity equality, provided a low score;

- uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), reflecting the acceptance manner of uncertain situations, incertitude with regard to future being likely to be reduced, from Hofstede's perspective, by appealing to rules, rituals or technology. A high score of this index constitutes the rationale for a specific organization focusing mainly on uncertainty exclusion, alongside with a low tolerance toward novelty (a high score of conservatism), whereas collectivities reflecting a low score prove to accept incertitude more easily and to display higher tolerance toward novelty. Adherence to norms comes naturally related to the former situation, yet it is undesirable for the latter;

- individualism (IDV), which evaluates orientation toward individualism or collectivism within a specific society. According to Tönnies' study (2002), community (*Gemeinschaft*) implies a low

individualism score, whereas society (*Gesellschaft*) involves a high score of this dimension (Hofstede, 2001:209). The high value is an indicator of a high group cohesion score of that particular collectivity, while a low value shows a type of society where individualism and individual rights prevail;

- masculinity (MAS), regarding the distribution manner of roles between genders, under the circumstances of this distribution being a cultural indication (Hofstede, 2001:279). A high masculinity level reveals the man's traditional role in society, him occupying specific key positions, whereas a low masculinity level constitutes the standpoint of equal treatment of men and women within the specified community;

- long-term orientation (LTO) is a newer indicator, introduced in Hofstede's set of cultural dimensions, of Confucianist origin. Its characteristics oppose those of the short-term orientation. As a result, a high level of this indicator provides concluding results in relation with the long-term engagement, perseverance, and closeness to traditional values, specific to the community under discussion. On the other side, a low level indicates preoccupation for accomplishing certain social duties and establishing a near future perspective upon projects.

The five defined dimensions did not represent but proposals from the professor in Maastricht, they were also tools used for identifying the cultural profile of 50 countries (in case of PDI, UAI, IDV and MAS) and of 23 countries (in relation with the LTO). Romania was not placed among the 50 countries included in Hofstede's target, nor was she involved in the research of the LTO index, made on 23 countries. Nevertheless, the Dutch professor made some estimation in this respect.

In general, high values of the PDI index were found in Latin countries, while low values were located in German countries. Incertitude avoidance is valued especially in Latin countries, but also in states from Asia (Japan), while Northern Europe or China hold a lower UAI index. Individualism is predominant in Western countries and a low value of the IDV is characteristic for Eastern

Europe and less advanced countries. The MAS index is high in case of German countries of Central Europe and low in case of Scandinavian countries and Latin Western countries. Long-term orientation characterizes the Asian countries, whereas the short-term orientation is common with European and North-American countries.

2. ROMANIANS' CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Given this general presentation, we can now analyze Geert Hofstede's estimations with regard to Romania: PDI: 90, UAI: 90, IDV: 30 and MAS: 42 (Hofstede & Hofstede, *apud* Luca, 2005:5).

It is also worth mentioning that Hofstede values may range on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 stands for the inferior limit of the index (the minimum value concerning the studied index), and 100 represents the maximum value. Equally, these values may be divided, according to the methodology used for applying the instrument provide by Value Survey Module (VSM94) / Institute of Research for Intercultural Communication (IRIC) into three large classes (Luca, 2005:4), more precisely:

- between 0 and 39 – low level;
- between 40 and 60 – average level;
- between 61 and 100 – high level.

Consequently, Romania has met, according to Hofstede's estimations, a high level with PDI and UAI indices, an average level with the MAS index and a low level with the IDV index, thus the country being imagologically placed between the Balkan and the Asian values, yet far from the European ones. The estimation constituted, later on, the topic of further analyses (and disputes within the theoretical field) among specialists. The only ample analysis, which used exclusively the VSM94 methodology on a representative sample for Romania's population (1.076 subjects) was achieved in 2005 by the team interact and Gallup Romania Organization. It aimed at "*advancing a theory based on sociological research so as to analyze which of the managerial and human resources practices fit or do not fit the Romanian*

environment and why” (Luca, 2005:2). From this perspective, the study proves its utility to our purpose involving the identification of factors that cause the nature of intercultural relationships within the operation theaters. Another purpose is the identification of a set of activating or inhibiting factors, characteristic to communication throughout theaters belonging to different ethnical, linguistic and religious areas, by appealing to a comparison of Hofstede cultural dimensions of representatives from cultures in contact. Moreover, by identifying managerial and

human resources practices adequate to the Romanian cultural space, we can have a reference point in identifying selection and recruiting practices of the military personnel (and civilian also) to be sent to peacekeeping missions.

Resulting from the analysis were values that differ within a range of 3 points (in case if the MAS index) to 59 points (in case of the PDI index) and which lead to a re-configuration of the Romanian’s profile, based on those cultural dimensions, as follows:

Table 1 Comparison between Hofstede’s estimations regarding Romania and Hofstede index values resulting from VSM94 instrument application

ESTIMATIONS/RESULTS	PDI	UAI	IDV	MAS	LTO
Geert Hofstede’s estimations	90	90	30	42	
First survey Interact/2005	29	61	49	39	42
Second survey Interact/2005	33	61	49	39	42
DIFFERENCES	61	29	-19	3	
	57	29	-19	3	

Differences between Hofstede’s estimations and the results of the VSM94 surveys, applied by the Interact team, are shown in the graphic representation in Figure 1.

Practically, the resulting differences in relation with Hofstede’s estimations are the following: Romania maintains her high level for the UAI index, although it is at the bottom limit; she has average IDV and LTO indices, and low PDI and MAS indices. In contrast with the foreseen axiological formula of the Dutch professor, the new formula is substantially different, as shown in Table 2.

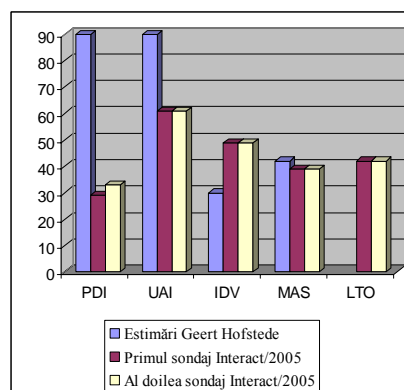


Fig. 1 Comparison between Hofstede’s estimations regarding Romania and Hofstede index values resulting from VSM94 instrument application

Table 2 Axiological formulae based on Hofstede’s estimations and following the VSM94 instrument application

ESTIMATIONS/RESULTS	PDI	UAI	IDV	MAS	LTO
Geert Hofstede’s estimations	H	H	L	A	
Interact/2005 Surveys	L	H	A	L	A

Note: H – high level (61-100), A – average level (40-60), L – low level (0-39).

There are similarities regarding one index (UAI) related to the category of values where the index may be included (nevertheless it is situated at 29 points away from estimation and the survey’s results). On the other side, the

Interact team also considered the LTO index: “Even though it did not offer estimation for the long- term orientation, we can assume that Romania may also have, just like all European countries, a short- term orientation” (Luca,

2005:5). As a result, the foreseen formula H-H-L-A-(L) has become L-H-A-L-A. The most surprising difference is that regarding the PDI index, various comments and interpretations being based on the obtained results (Luca, 2005:5-6), yet, disregarding two important dimensions of the Romanians' ethnic profile:

- prevalence of instrumental values as compared with finality values, as it was highlighted by Luminita Iacob and Adrian Lesenciuc, respectively, a prevalence of orientation values as compared with effective values, according to Iacob's study (2003:77). Luminita Iacob's study (2003:76-87), was accomplished by means of an investigation that included 132 personalities of the Romanian culture and 224 of their works and Adrian Lesenciuc's study of the military students' ethnic profile (2010a:46-57), was achieved on a sample of 1.020 students and it was valid for 821 of the subjects.

- lack of action cohesion and civic spirit, based on Rokeach's individual values table, used as a research tool by the two studies, but also inability of pursuing goals, which transforms the Romanian into a character lacking power, at attitudinal level, still, not into a reactive individual toward authoritarianism, at behavioral level. The difference between *do* and *say* does not necessitate a labeling of the Romanian as having a high PDI index: only action "inabilities" cause a certain type of behavior, found in its latent mode (with violent outbursts in the past) and it prefigures a specific passivity, even a certain degree of cowardice. Yet, these action latencies, to which ironical attitude may be added, are rather indices for a low PDI, in accordance with the results of the study. The difference is too considerable (61, respectively, 57 points out of 100) for the result of the VSM94 instrument application to be denied and for it to take into account an index of at least 70 points or closer to Hofstede's estimation. The value of the IDV

index equally asks for explicit interpretation. Compared with Hofstede's estimation (30), the result of the questionnaire reveals an average value of 49. Hofstede's estimation brought up a real positioning within the boundaries of collectivism, inclusive of anything deriving from it: existence of groups united by mutual interests, fighting for self-promotion to the detriment of others, "agrarian thinking", promotion of community values, to the detriment of society values (Hofstede, 2001:209). The difference appears due to, on the one side, Hofstede's "block" estimation of the Balkan countries: Romania – 30, Bulgaria – 30, Greece – 35, Serbia – 27, and, on the other side, due to most of the Romanian expert studies, which highlight the contemporary society's tendency toward individualism. This tendency has become manifest soon after the fall of the communist dictatorship and it may be explained by import of western behaviors.

Thus, considering that the valid formula is L-H-A-L-A, we can proceed comparing other countries' cultural dimensions (mainly from Europe), or other geographical regions' cultural dimensions. Within our comparative analysis, we will consider polar dimensions, without intermediary value. Consequently, the formula is L-H-L-L-L and we can compare it with other formulae, specific to larger cultural areas. Broadly, we can identify five geographical areas:

- Balkan (Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Albany etc.),
- Latin (Italy, France, Portugal, Spain),
- German (Germany, Austria, Switzerland etc.),
- Northern (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Holland etc.) and
- Anglo-Saxon (The UK, the USA, Canada, Australia etc.) with which we can compare the axiological formula specific to our culture. The comparative findings are as follows (Luca, 2005:4):

Table 3 Regional cultural profiles

	Balkan	Latin	German	Northern	Anglo-Saxon
PDI	long distance	long distance	short distance	short distance	short distance
UAI	uncertainty avoidance	uncertainty avoidance	uncertainty avoidance	uncertainty unavailability	uncertainty unavailability
IDV	collectivism	individualism	individualism	individualism	individualism

MAS	femininity	femininity	masculinity	femininity	masculinity
LTO	short-term orientation	short-term orientation	short-term orientation	short-term orientation	short-term orientation

By appealing to axiological formulae, these findings may be re-written as:

Table 4 Axiological formulae equivalent of regional cultural profiles

	Balkan	Latin	German	Northern	Anglo-Saxon
PDI	H	H	L	L	L
UAI	H	H	H	L	L
IDV	L	H	H	H	H
MAS	L	L	H	L	H
LTO	L	L	L	L	L

Note: H – high level (50-100), L – low level (0-49).

Romania’ specific formula L-H-L-L-L may be integrated between the Balkan and the Latin areas, as shown below:

Table 5 Romania’s inclusion within the regional cultural profiles

	Balkan	ROMANIA	Latin	German	Northern	Anglo-Saxon
PDI	H	L	H	L	L	L
UAI	H	H	H	H	L	L
IDV	L	L	H	H	H	H
MAS	L	L	L	H	L	H
LTO	L	L	L	L	L	L

Note: H – high level (50-100), L – low level (0-49).

On a more detailed analysis, we can discover that there is a series of differences:

- in relation with the Balkan area- one difference;
- in relation with the Latin, German and Northern areas - two differences;
- in relation with the Anglo-Saxon area - three differences.

The fact that there is not a consistent number of differences as compared with those areas labeled as “European profile” or compared with Europe’ s cradle, where Balkan, Latin, German, Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon cultures emerged (inclusive of Commonwealth states) indicates the possible role of a mediator that a Romanian may play within an intercultural context. Moreover, as far as the Romanians presence in the operation theaters is concerned, their closeness to the Balkan soldiers, as cultural structure, or to soldiers belonging to the Latin area is

confirmed by a comparison of cultural dimension indices in Hofstede’s model.

Nevertheless, mention should be made that the most obvious difference is between the Romanian and the Anglo-Saxon areas. Romania massively imports, though, a multitude of things from this area: forms lacking consistence, managerial practices (and also in human resource sector), applied models, even in the military environment. The cultural differences are also perceived very well by the Romanian military officers participating in operation theaters, and who mentioned conflicts with the representatives of this area (especially with British military people).

In general, Romanians’ openness and their efficient communication throughout operation theaters may be the result of a sort of closeness, at value level, to European averages, and world averages, as well.

In a comparative analysis, these results (and differences as compared to average values) are (Anton, 2007:89):

Table 6 Comparison between Romania's indices and the European averages with regard to cultural dimensions

RESULTS/AVERAGES	PDI	UAI	IDV	MAS	LTO
Results for Romania	29/33	62	49	39	42
European average	40	69	56	52	
World average	54	62	40	48	43
DIFFERENCES	-11/7	-7	-7	-13	
	-25/21	0	9	-9	-1

It can be easily observed that the greatest difference in relation with the European average is of 13 points (for masculinity index, much higher than for the German and Anglo-Saxon areas), respectively of 25 points in relation with the world average (at the level of that index expressing distance from power). Practically, the Romanian cultural dimension indices display minor differences from the European averages, which might be interpreted by a 'balanced' positioning of Romanians within the symbolical European matrix. Although there are only two differences in the axiological formula: Romania – L-H-L-L-L, Europe – L-H-H-H-L (identical with the German area's formula), Romanians may perceive themselves as catalyst.

Compared with the world formula, there is only one difference: L-H-L-L-L vs. H-H-L-L-L. This indicator is even more important because there is openness toward others (proven even by interviews with Romanian military participants in peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the U.N.), irrespective of the original cultural area, race, religion or skin color. At the same time, we can observe that index values for cultural dimensions are generally lower than the average values (excepting individuality index – an European brand), where Romania's specific value exceeds the world average by 7 points.

3. PERCEPTION OF CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

As a result of administering the AUM and S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G interview guides to a

number of 20 Romanian officers participating in U.N. peacekeeping missions, between May and June 2010, we considered the possibility of interpreting the results from the qualitative perspective, by relating them to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. Thus, we analyzed the possibility of bringing up the following aspects:

- the national entities' cultural dimensions perspective offers the possibility of approaching the participants in peacekeeping missions differently;
- as Romanian citizens, shaped in accordance with the Romanian cultural matrix and 'set' to function within the specificity of the local thinking, the military participants in peacekeeping missions are the bearers of a specific cultural imprint.

Even though the purposes of our investigation (based on applying the AUM and S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G guides) were not to confirm or infirm self-perception of cultural dimensions, we can establish a perception analysis of them. We may use the interview model established by Ilie and Macovei (2010) within the project *Confronting civilizations in international operation theaters – a study of impact from psychological, linguistic and judicial perspective on the Romanian soldiers*. The interview from the study *Determinant factors within the intercultural relationships in operation theaters* (Lesenciuc, 2010b) aimed at communication-related and cultural interference aspects rather than at aspects regarding distance toward power, incertitude avoidance or long/short-term orientation. Different from this, the interview drawn by Ilie-Macovei (considering the intentional

judicial dimension) completes the general picture of Romanian military personnel participating in peacekeeping missions both under the auspices of the U.N., NATO or the EU or within the international coalition from Iraq.

When asked about the perception of double control effects (national and international), Romanian officers provided a variety of answers that may be grouped in relation with the international organization under whose auspices the mission was accomplished, respectively, in accordance with the number of Romanian participants in that specific mission. Therefore, while the Romanian military observers serving under the U.N. auspices (present in the operation theater in a small number) did not feel the effects of Romanian control (UNAVEM III, UNMIS, UNAMI, ONUCI etc.), those participating in operation theaters within Romanian subunits in peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace enforcement or peace-building missions, encountered some restrictions from the Romanian leadership. Although in agreement with provisions regulating the authority transfer and the principle of command unit applicable to multinational force as well, national contingents cannot receive orders unless they are in a position of subordination, the Romanian 'contribution' was more than visible. And this contribution is specifically regulated through the obligation imposed on the Romanian contingent's commander to remain subordinated to national authorities totally. This subordination implies responsibility for the resources used, order and discipline within commanded structures and includes particularities stipulated in the agreement of participation and within the armed forces status. (SOFA), and in agreement with Law 23/1996, regarding the ratification of the Agreement between member states of the North Atlantic Treaty and the other participating states in the Peacekeeping Partnership, as well as in conformity with the Strategy for Romanian Armed Forces use and materiel within peacekeeping operations. This double conditioning of authority, related to national norms specifications within the

Romanian contingent and to obeying international norms (starting with organization and functioning documents and ending with standard operation procedures), may constitute an indicator of (self-) perception of distance in relation with power. The respondents, participants in missions under the incidence of Bruxelles Agreement (1995) and implicitly, under the incidence of Laws 23/1996 and 61/2000, indicated the negative effects of the Romanian authority control: "*reports created trouble*" (IRAQI FREEDOM), "*exacerbated stress caused by Romanians*" (IRAQI FREEDOM, ISAF), "*Romanian control: inopportune and inefficient*" (KFOR, EUFOR, ENDURING FREEDOM), "*daily, weekly and monthly reports to national authorities – all of which containing exactly the same data*" (KFOR, EUFOR). The military officers interviewed were, in fact, perfectly aware of the short distance toward the Romanian culture power, found in conflict with important norms and the "autochthonous" modalities of applying them.

The problematic situation under discussion may also be interpreted differently through the UAI index: reference to norms is natural in case of a high UAI score and it is exaggerated when the score is low. Norm acceptance occurs naturally – considering the international norm accepted and assumed by all participants in the same mission. On the other hand, Romanian control is perceived as "interference", given the fact that it does not contribute to uncertainty avoidance in operation theaters, but to an increase in the amount of stress (multiple responsibilities): "*difficulties created by Romanians, who would report on everything back home*" (a military person participating in the IRAQI FREEDOM mission), and contrasting the situation of the other participants in the mission. Norm acceptance also resulted after the application of AUM and S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G instruments. In case of the former, engagement in activity and norm acceptance (both explicit and implicit norms) were revealed, alongside with the accomplishment of functional tasks by appealing to a common request framework, having its cultural conditioning "latitude", which leads to

enrichment of perception of others, within a prefigured normative framework. The latter case of the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G scheme applied as an interview guide, revealed illustrative answers regarding the acceptance of the general framework of communication, explicit finalities acquisition (purposes-results), but mainly, the acceptance of interaction norms (even though the interview aimed at highlighting the discursive efficiency).

The preponderantly collectivist dimension was perceived by military officers participating in peacekeeping operations and being fully aware of it, by underlying the communication/socializing needs in interaction with foreigners (related to the normative framework convergence), to the detriment of the opportunistic/ selfish tendency of achieving results by means of using others. From the perspective of the informality degree, the Romanian military officers' capacity of coagulating "professional communities" (that is to promote the informal dimension of contacts and not to perform within societies- organized groups around some common goals) is illustrative. Equally, assuming the collectivist role becomes evident by high performance within the military group and within the boundaries of interpretation limits. We should not omit the fact that the "umbilical connection" with the origin community, is also highlighted by frequent mentioning of homesickness, longing for personal home, family or even lack of connection with family, besides the difficulties encountered during the mission. Thus, we can conclude that, as a result of interviews, the individualism index reaches Hofstede's estimation (30), rather than the resulting values after the VSM94 instrument application (49).

The masculinity dimension could not be highlighted by interviews. The presence of both male and female military people in operation theaters may constitute a standpoint regarding equal treatment of genders, although all respondents (20 military officers participating in U.N. peacekeeping missions) were males, fact that could have led to a one-dimensional perspective. Nevertheless, the distorted image of the MAS dimension within

the military environment could be based on particularities of the military institution's cultural organization, in which progress, personal development and competition are preponderantly valued.

The LTO index is reflected in the very recruiting policy of Romanian military able to participate in peacekeeping missions. This index was perceived as "*un-upgraded*" (ISAF), or, euphemistically speaking, "*needing improvement*" (ENDURING FREEDOM, ISAF) (Ilie, Macovei, 2010) as the long-term projection of selection and rigorous preparation of mission was brought up. With regard to both Ilie-Macovei study and the interviews, in our study case, forming and improving the performance of Romanian military officers participating in peacekeeping missions was either questioned or criticized. These two aspects were characterized as: inefficient, insufficient, non-applicable lessons learned (often they are disregarded), too much simulation and theory (reality of the operation theater being by far different), insufficient training together with foreigners etc. (UNMIN, UNMIS, UNAMI, MONUC etc.). This close horizon of projects, reflected in representation of the Romanian military officers participating in peacekeeping operation is illustrative for the perception of the LTO index at its resulting value (even under-appreciation of it). Despite a precarious and inadequate preparation, and despite lacking a formative framework for the communicative competence formation, in general, and of intercultural communicative competence by assuming the cultural norms, not by appealing to lexical corpus and grammar necessary for reaching a specific language performance in English, the results obtained by the Romanian military representatives in operation theaters were very good. On the one side, this reality may be interpreted as a result of the Romanian's way of being – friendly, communicative, sentimental – that confers an informal dimension to the most rigid formal situations. On the other side, it is seen as a result of their placement close to the average areas (both at European and world levels) concerning the cultural dimensions of the Hofstede model.

At professional level, the very good results of missions, reminding, among others that „(...) for the foreseeable future, Romania comprises one of the most willing contributors of special police units for peacekeeping operations in Europe” (Daniel *et al.*, 2008:76), and of “special forces capabilities of Poland or Romania” (Moroney *et al.*, 2007:74) etc., were presented (at professional and cultural level) by the people interviewed (both verbally and by producing sustainable documents able to certify facts).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Identification of a set of factors holding activating/inhibiting roles with regard to intercultural communication in peacekeeping missions cannot be accomplished only from the perspective of a theoretical re-configuration of a specific pluri- and trans-cultural ‘reality’ of the operation theater. It may also grant the possibility of confronting the results obtained against a set of cultural dimensions already configured. Although the research tools have not been projected for the purpose of adapting the indices of each of the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions to Romanian values, it was possible to compare the (self-) perception of four of the above mentioned dimensions.

We can admit that this analysis facilitated a correct foreseeing of the relation between communication efficiency throughout operation theaters and the cultural imprint of which Romanians are aware of (illustrated by the VSM94 indices).

A confirmation of the working hypotheses, to a large extent, and a total accomplishment of the projected goals grant validity to this study’s results.

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