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Pakistan's Stance on War on Terror and its Treatment in the National Press

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Abstract

After the 9/11 incident, the U.S declared war against terrorism under the umbrella of the U.N Security Council resolution. Almost the entire Western World and some Asian states militarily joined the war. Pakistan also joined the war, extending considerable military and non-military support to the U.S. At the beginning, there was a series of protests against the government decision but it could not change the direction of the government policy in this regard. The situation in the Pakistani print media was not so different. Both hard and soft news stories appeared in the press severely opposed the government stance. But when the Pakistani cities became the victim of acts of terrorism, a sharp shift in the press policy towards the government stance was observed. This study has examined the Pakistani press approach towards the government stance on war on terror. The positive, neutral and negatives frames were applied to analyse the content published in the two dailies — the Nation and the Business Recorder from 01 March 2008 to 28 February 2009. The content published in the two newspapers was categorized as hard news and soft news; the government and private source. Moreover, the study compared the coverage of the two selected dailies that which one is more supportive to the government stance. It was found that the press is overall supportive to the government stance and comparatively the Business Recorder has published more material in favour of the stance taken by Pakistan's the government.

Keywords: framing, war on terror, Pakistan's stance, support, oppose

Introduction

The Rise and Fall of the Taliban

After the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Afghanistan in 1988 and the fall of the Naiibullah regime in 1992, the Afghan political parties agreed on a peace and power-sharing formula. This Peshawar Accord created the Islamic State of Afghanistan (Human Rights Watch, 2005). But the accord could not work and a bloody civil war among Afghan resistance groups began (Neamatollah, 2002). Foreign involvement in Afghanistan's affairs and supporting different warring factions in the region provided more fuel to the civil war in the country. Saikal (2004) notes that Saudi Arabia and Iran supported Afghan militias hostile towards each other. He maintains that without, "ISI's logistic support and supply of a large number of rockets, Hekmatyar's forces would not have been able to target and destroy half of Kabul." Iran was assisting the Hezb-i Wahdat forces to maximize its influence in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia supported the Wahhabite Abdul Rasul Sayyaf faction and Pakistan's support for Hikmatyar was not a hidden agenda (Gutman, 2008; and Human Rights Watch, 2005). Conflict among different militias groups soon escalated into a full-scale war and the capital city of Kabul saw extremely violent fighting during that period (Neamatollah, 2002).

Southern Afghanistan was neither under the control of foreign-backed militias nor the government in Kabul, but was ruled by local leaders. The Taliban, a movement of religious students from the Pashtun areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan, emerged in 1994 as a reaction to the failure of the other Afghan warring factions to establish a government and ensure stability in the country. When the Taliban took control of the city of Qandahar in 1994, they surrendered dozens of local Pashtun leaders who were responsible for the situation of lawlessness. That is one of the possible explanations that Taliban acquired a heavy support of the local people and swept into power. Their early victories in 1994 were followed by a series of defeats that resulted in heavy losses (Human Rights Watch, 1998). On September 26, 1996, the Taliban prepared a major offensive and consequently captured the capital Kabul (Coll, 2005) and got full control of Kabul on September 27, 1996. But their government received recognition only from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

War on Terror

On September 11, 2001, nineteen men of Al-Qaeda organization, hijacked four U.S. commercial passenger airplanes and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center in New York City and one into the Pentagon, symbols of the U.S economic and military might. The World Trade Center's Twin Towers completely collapsed that killed approximately 3,000 people. The U.S. President, George Bush coined the term "war on terror" in response to 9/11 terrorist attacks, which according to him were planned in Afghanistan by the terrorist group, Al Qaeda. He declared that they will not end the war until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. So, the U.S launched military operations against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001. After capturing Kabul, a new government of Hamid Karzai was established in Afghanistan. However, the country is still under the war, and the coalition forces have not full control of the region. Even some regions in the southern and eastern Afghanistan went back into the hands of the Taliban.

The Emergence of Militancy in the Region

After the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers, the U.S. declared a full scale war on Afghanistan under the umbrella of the U.N. Security Council Resolution. As a consequence of heavy bombing, the Taliban regime came to an end and thousands of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members infiltrated into Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area of South and North Waziristan. This region became a safe haven for the foreign elements and provided a base for the attacks on coalition forces on the soil of Afghanistan. The U.S and its allies put pressure on Pakistan for a military operation in the region against these elements. This development led the situation towards the emergence of Tahrik-e-Taliban Pakistan with its leader Nek Muhammad. After he was killed in a missile attack, Baitullah Mahsud became its leader. He was also killed in a drone attack and Hakimullah Mahsud was chosen as its Amir. During this time, Pakistan had launched a vigorous military campaign against these militants in the South Waziristan.

As a reaction to military operation in the tribal area of Waziristan, the Taliban started a string of attacks in the form of bomb blasts and suicide attacks on security forces, people, and the government installations across the country. From 2002 onward, Pakistan suffered a total of 2,273 terrorist attacks and a large number of casualties besides affecting the economy of Pakistan. The goal of the attacks was to force the government via pubic pressure to halt a planned military operation in

South Waziristan and other tribal areas. But these heavy human and economic loses could not stop military operation against the militants in the region.

Literature Review

Journalism is the art of conveying news by using mass media, such as, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet and the mobile phone. Journalists of all categories for example writers, editors, anchor persons, photographers, broadcasters or producers are the chief source of information and opinion makers in the contemporary mass media society. They collect the newsworthy happenings across the world and media transmit these content to audience members apparently in an objective manner. However, it is now observed that subjective approach is going to be dominant in the field of journalism. Sometimes events are presented according the agenda set by the media on the issue. The concept of imbedded journalism was emerged in the first Gulf War that influenced a fair and objective flow of information to the media outlets. The anchrocracy regime is another phenomenon that is frequently used by the electronic media across the world for transmitting the content frequently in a very subjective way. Majority of the anchor persons freely express their opinion during their programs. Columnists' writings reflect their personal biases regarding the issues and even hard stories are heavily opinionated.

Terrorism: Understanding the Definition

The word "terrorism" is derived from Latin word terror, means "to frighten." It was included in English dictionaries in 1798 that communicates the meaning of a "systematic use of terror as a policy." In modern times, it refers to the killing of innocent people by a self-interested group to create a media spectacle. It is the act of violence against civilians to achieve some political goals. This tactic of violence is carried out to exert pressure on decision making bodies of the state. The term "terror" is largely used to indicate violence that targets civilians and generates public fear. Thus, it is distinct from conventional warfare, and violates common law of war in which civilian life is regarded. The U.N Security Council Resolution 1373 describes terrorism as "criminal acts, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons, intimidate a population or compel a the government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act," (UN, 2001). Terrorism has been practiced by political parties, nationalist, religious groups, revolutionaries,

and even the ruling the governments (Encyclopaedia, 2006). It is an indiscriminate use of violence against non-combatants for the purpose of gaining publicity for a group, cause, or individual (Charles, 2002).

Its definitions include acts of unlawful violence or unconventional warfare, but at present, there are no internationally agreed upon definition of terrorism. Hoffman (1998) suggests that the word "terrorism" is politically and emotionally charged, that creates complication in providing a precise definition of the term but he asserts that on one point everyone agrees that terrorism is a destructive term. It is a word with inherently negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. Hence the decision to label some organizations as "terrorists" becomes almost subjective. Studies conducted in this regard have found over 100 definitions of the word "terrorism" (Record, 2003). The concept of terrorism itself is controversial because it is often used by states to delegitimize political or foreign opponents, and potentially legitimize the state's own use of terror against them (Geoffrey, 2001). For example, the use of force of India against Kashmiri people, Israel against Palestinians, and Russia against Chechens. A less politically and emotionally charged term, allowing for more accurate analyses, is violent non-state actor.

But Scheuer (2005) believes that Al-Qaeda has focused on a number of U.S foreign policies in the Muslim states. The most damaging is the U.S support for police states and dictators across the Muslim world. In the presence of these policies, the U.S will have to face the acts of terrorism and there will be no impact of the U.S. diplomacy. Pape (2005) argues that terrorist organizations utilizing suicide attacks have driven a clear strategic objective to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory they view as their homeland. Therefore, he prefers the term 'militancy'.

Media Coverage of the Conflict

Media is a double-edged sword. When it is employed positively, it can become an instrument of conflict resolution and bring peaceful changes in the society. However, when it is employed as a mean to propagate intolerance and hatred, it becomes a negative force among efforts to cultivate peace. Media exercises a powerful influence on people and their perceptions of the world they live in. The primary role of media is to report and disseminate objective information. It has the unique ability to reach many and this ability makes it an unparalleled tool for

disseminating information. The very information given by media should be accurate and balanced, and should be a fair representation of the diverse views, so the public would be able to make well-informed choices.

It is assumed that journalists usually like to report on violent actions and military operations repeatedly provoked scepticism (Hanitzsch, 2004). But the interviews with foreign correspondents, conducted by Richter (1999), drew a different picture. According to him the journalists said that their primary concern was to report the miseries and suffering of civilians instead of covering military operations. But the media gives coverage only to a conflict when it manifests violence and its coverage is always biased with nationalistic and ideological tendencies (Jacobsen, 2000). Boutros-Ghali, the then U.N Secretary-General comments, "The media ignores most conflicts most of the time." Similarly, Gowing (1994; as cited in Hanitzsch, 2004) believes, "the coverage of the preand post-violence phase is negligible at best and only a few armed conflicts are covered in the violence phase." Examples of such conflicts are there on international level in the past and present such as, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, East Timor, Kashmir, Liberia, Moldova, Nagorno Karabakh, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tajikistan, etc. Kellner (1992) conducted a study on the content broadcasted by ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN. He concludes that neutral reporting is not done by news media during the Gulf War and was influenced by national ideology or stands taken by their the governments.

Wolfsfeld (1997) examines the news media role in the Middle East and found that the media gave more coverage to the extremists and less coverage to the voices calling for peace and resolution. Carruthers (2000) explains that mass media, due to state restrictions and military censorship, follows the state policy in reporting conflict. Hence it accomplices state in its wartime propaganda, and plays significant role in instigating conflict. Wolfsfeld (2004) claims, "the default mode of operation for the press is to cover tension, conflict, and violence."

Role of the U.S. media

American opinion of the war on terror is directly influenced by the mainstream news media reports on war on terror. Kuypers (2006) believes that the American press covered the events with great bias and could not appropriately inform its citizens. He maintains that the US news media played an anti-democratic role and misinformed the audience on war on terror. Cooper (2006) found that mainstream reporting of the war on terror has inaccurate details and

failed to check the credibility of information or visual images supplied by the local Iraqis hired to relay local news. They argue that story framing approach is often problematic and manipulated interviews have often been used in place of methodologically sound survey data. Moreover, reporting has tended to concentrate on the more violent areas of Iraq, with little or no reporting of the calm areas. Barstow (2009 writes that Department of Defence recruited over 75 retired army generals to sell the war to the American public. He discovered links between some retired generals and defence contractors and reported that the Bush administration controlled the access to information to generate reports and analysis of its choice for the American media.

Pakistan's Position on War on Terror

During preparation of attack on Afghanistan, the U.S administration put extreme pressure on Pakistan for taking its support in the war. Resultantly, Pakistan revised its policy towards the Taliban the government and joined the U.S in the war against the Taliban the government. Pakistan provided air basis, logistic support and intelligence sharing as a coalition partner in the war against terror. Pervaiz Musharraf, the then president of Pakistan in his address to United Nations' General Assembly said, "The tragedy of 9/11 transformed security policies and changed geopolitical calculations. Pakistan took a strategic decision, based on the principles of humanity and our national interest, to support the war on terror." Resultantly Pakistan received about \$11 billion aid from the United States for the logistic support it provided for the counter-terrorism operations from 2001 to 2008, and for its own military operation mainly in Waziristan and other tribal areas along the Durand line (Wikipedia, 2011).

In 2009, President Barack Obama announced to continue supporting Pakistan in its war against terror and has pledged that U.S. would provide Pakistan an economic aid of \$1.5 billion each year for the next five years (Ali, 2010). War on terror greatly affected not only the people of Pakistan from social and psychological point of view but also have adverse effects on the economy of Pakistan. A lot of bomb blasts and suicide attacks took place in different parts of the country, resulting in loss of human lives, infrastructure, destruction of property, and curtailment of short and long term economic activities.

Institute for conflict management generated a table showing annual fatalities in terrorist's violence in Pakistan totalling of 25,329 people including military personnel and civilians. Terrorist attacks created uncertainty and reduced the rate

of investment and greatly influenced growth rate which came to halt at around 2.00 per cent in fiscal year 2009. According to Federal Bureau of Statistics, the contribution of agriculture and industrial sector to GDP saw significant decline from 2004 to 2009. The State Bank of Pakistan (2010) reports shows that foreign direct investment fell from \$1.116 billion to \$463 million due to war against terror (Ali, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted within the framework of framing theory. The frames of "support and oppose" of the government stance were put to examine the content appeared in the two selected newspapers. Although a lot of framing definitions are available yet no definition of framing is universally accepted. Gamson (1992) identified four frames used in the news framing of the Arab-Israeli conflict: (a) strategic interests, (b) feuding neighbors, (c) Arab intransigence, (d) and Israeli expansionism. He found that 'feuding neighbors' to be the most consistent frame.

According to Tankard et. al. (1991), "framing stems from a process of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration," (p.3). Entman (1993) standardized framing as, "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem interpretation, evaluation, causal moral and/or recommendation for the item described," (p. 52). In reality news framing refers to the way in which news media organize and present news to convey a specific message. The media framing makes certain aspects of an event or issue more salient than the others. It directs the audience to consider certain facts and ignore certain other facts. In this way it affects perceptions of people about an event or issue. In news writing, frames are manifested by the use of specific words and phrases that reinforce certain ideas at the cost of other ideas. Entman's (1993) definition considers framing from both a media and consumer standpoints. The media is involved in the salience of issues. It not only includes and omits, but also put emphasis on particular aspects of the reality at the cost of others. That is why it resembles with second-level agenda setting in which media not only suggest what the public think about but also influence how people should think about the issue.

After reviewing relevant literature, the following hypotheses and sub hypotheses were formulated to investigate the treatment of the press regarding the stance taken by the government Pakistan on the issue of terrorism.

Main Hypothesis: Pakistani press supports the government stance on war against terrorism.

Sub Hypothesis-1: Hard news stories are more favourable towards the government stance on war on terror as compared to soft news stories.

Sub Hypothesis-2: Stories contributed by the government sources are more favourable towards the government stance as compared to stories contributed by the private sources.

Sub Hypothesis-3: The frequency of stories that support the government stance on war on terror is more than the stories that oppose.

Sub Hypothesis-4: The mean length of stories that oppose the government stance on war on terror is greater than the mean length of the stories that support the government stance on war on terror.

Sub Hypothesis-5: The slant of the daily Business Recorder is more favourable towards the government stance on war on terror as compared to the daily Nation.

Methodology

This study is basically a content analysis of the Pakistani newspapers. It has examined the coverage of "War on Terror" in the two Pakistani newspapers — The daily Nation and The daily Business Recorder—from 01 March 2008 to 28 February 2009 that makes the period of one year. The newspapers were selected on the basis of their circulation and reputation as the leading and influential newspapers in the country. Another factor for their selection is their availability on Lexis-Nexis. Population of the study is all news stories on war on terror published in both the newspapers during the specified period.

The content in these stories formed the unit of analysis. The units of analysis were determined according to the formula introduced by Twohey (1941). According to this formula, these contents were first classified as 'relevant or

irrelevant.' Relevancy was determined on basis of coverage given to the events of acts and issues of terrorism. The relevant contents were then classified in the following fashion: hard news and soft news stories; the government and private sources; supporting and opposing stories.

Coding Scheme

For the determination of slant (supporting, opposing and neutral), each paragraph was the coding unit and the whole story the contextual unit. Thus story was the unit of statistical analysis. Comprehensive rules were developed for measuring each variable and its categories in this study. In order to test intercoder reliability, a small separate study of 25 stories was conducted. The sample study yielded 90% agreement for topic, 88% for type of stories, and 81% for source and 89% for slant. Cross tabulation, frequency, and difference of proportion were used to analyse the data and chi-square and t-test were used to test the hypothesis and sub hypotheses.

Operationalization of the terms

Framing: Framing means that how a news story was presented and organized in the context of war on terror. Three frames were used: support the government stance, oppose the government stance and neutral that neither support nor oppose the government stance.

Slant: The use of language that supports or opposes the government stance regarding war on terror.

Hard news: Stories that are based on facts and statistics, and are mostly published on the front and back pages of the two dailies selected for the study.

Soft news: Stories that tell background, draw conclusions, and also offer opinions. It includes columns, features and editorials.

Government source: Stories that are originated from the government source such as APP, press note, the government official press releases, and news conferences.

Private source: Sources other than the government for example, national and international private news agencies.

The mean length of stories: It was measured from counting the number of words in the relevant stories.

FINDINGS

Finding-1

The number of the stories in both dailies that support the government stance on war on terror is greater than the number of stories that oppose the government stance. The slant of both the newspapers is favourable towards the government, i.e. 422 (42.2%) news stories as compared to unfavourable slant i.e. 169 (17.0%) and the difference is statistically significant (chi square =30.984; p =0.000).

Table 1:Name of newspaper, slant in the story, cross tabulation

N	,			
Name of newspaper	support	oppose	neutral	Total
The Nation	195	117	243	555
THE NATION	35.1%	21.1%	43.8%	100 %
The Business Recorder	227	52	162	441
The business Recorder	51.5%	11.8%	36.7%	100%
Total	422	169	405	996
1 Olai	42.4%	17.00%	40.7%	100%

Finding-2

Both the genres of news stories, i.e., hard news and soft news have more favourable than unfavourable slant towards the government stance on war on terror. The number of favourable stories in hard news is 262 (62.1%) as compared to favourable stories in soft news i.e., 160 (37.9%). So hard news stories have more favourable slant than soft news stories and the difference is statistically significant (chi-square =53.262; p=0.000).

Finding-3

The the government source is more favourable towards the government stance on war on terror as compared to private source. The number of favourable stories in the government source is 62% as compared to favourable stories contributed by private source, i.e., 39.1% and difference is statistically significant (chi square =32.784; p =0.000).

Table 2: Slant in the story, story types, cross tabulation

Slant i	Story	Total		
Slant in the Story		Hard news	Soft news	TOtal
favourable	Count	262	160	422
lavourable	% of Slant in the story	62.1%	37.9%	100%
unfavourable	Count	58	111	169
unavourable	% of Slant in the story	34.3%	65.7%	100%
neutral	Count	167	238	405
Tieutrai	% of Slant in the story	41.2%	58.8%	100%
Total	Count	487	509	996
Total	% of Slant in the story	48.9%	51.1%	100%

Table 3:Slant in the story, story source, cross tabulation

Source of the story		SI	Total		
		support	oppose	neutral	IOlai
	Count	88	6	48	142
govt.	% within source	62.0%	4.2%	33.8%	100%
	Count	334	163	357	854
private	% within source	39.1%	19.1%	41.8%	100%
	Count	422	169	405	996
Total	% within source	42.4%	17.0%	40.7%	100%

Finding-4

The frequency of appearance of favourable stories towards the government stance on war on terror is higher than the frequency of appearance of unfavourable stories towards the government stance. The frequency of favourable stories is 42.4% as compared to unfavourable stories that is 17.0% and difference is statistically significant (chi square = 120.476; p = 0.000).

Table 4:Frequency of the story, story nature, cross tabulation

S	Stories	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	favourable	422	42.3	42.4	42.4
	unfavourable	169	16.9	17.0	59.3
	neutral	405	40.6	40.7	100
	Total	996	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.2		
Total		998	100.0		

Finding-5

The mean length of unfavourable stories is greater than favourable stories. It is 567.16 as compared to mean length of unfavourable stories that is 665.01. The difference is statistically significant (t-test = 45.206; p = .000).

Table 5:The mean length of stories—favourable vs. unfavourable

Slant in the story	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	
Favourable	567.16	422	418.847	
Unfavourable	665.01	169	359.680	
Neutral	608.76	405	440.406	
Total	600.68	996	419.560	

Finding-6

The Business Recorder slant towards the government stance on war on terror is more favourable as compared to the daily Nation. The number of favourable stories is 227 (53.8%) as compared to the Nation where the number of favourable stories is 195 (46.2%) and the difference is statistically significant (chi square =30.984; p =0.000).

Table 6:Slant in the story, newspapers, cross tabulation

Slant in the story		Name of		
		The Nation	The Business	Total
			Recorder	
favourable	Count	195	227	422
lavourable	% of Slant	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%
unfavourable	Count	117	52	169
	% of Slant	69.2%	30.8%	100.0%
neutral	Count	243	162	405
neutrai	% of Slant	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	555	441	996
	% of Slant	55.7%	44.3%	100.0%

Discussion

The analysis of 998 stories from two English newspapers suggests that overall stance of the government of Pakistan on war on terror is supported by the Pakistani press. Thus it supports the main hypothesis that the approach of the Pakistani press is more favourable than unfavourable towards the government stance on war on terror. The reason behind this support of the government is the menace of cumulative threat of Taliban in the form of religious fanaticism and extremism to the Pakistani society and challenge to the writ of Government. A lot of bomb blasts and suicide attacks were carried out by Taliban throughout the length and breadth of the country resulting in economy and human losses. Pakistan's economy suffered a lot because of this bloodshed and law and order situation prevailing in the country. So, Pakistani press supported the government in its war against terrorism. Due to the acts of terrorism in the region, there was a continuous drain of the capital from the country and this situation put very adverse effects on the economy and then on the newspapers' business industry of the country.

Government support was found in both hard and soft news stories. In hard news stories favourable slant is dominant as compared to the favourable slant in soft news stories and the difference is statistically significant. Hence the sub hypothesis-1 was statistically proved that hard news stories are more favourable

towards the government stance on war on terror as compared to soft news stories.

Both the government and private sources supported the government stance on war on terror. The most favourable response to the government stance on war on terror is contributed by stories from the government source as compared to stories by private source and the difference is statistically significant. Thus it supports the sub hypothesis-2 that stories contributed by the government sources are more favourable towards the government stance as compared to stories contributed by private sources.

The frequency of appearance of favourable news stories towards the government stance on war on terror is higher than the frequency of unfavourable news stories towards the government stance. The frequency of favourable stories is 42.4% as compared to unfavourable stories i.e., 17.0%. Thus, it supports the sub hypothesis-3 regarding the frequency of appearance of favourable and unfavourable stories.

Overall support to the government stance on war on terror is favourable in the news stories. As far as length of the story is concerned, the phenomenon moves in reverse order. The mean story length of unfavourable stories is greater than favourable stories and the difference is statistically significant. Thus it supports the sub hypothesis-4 that the mean length of unfavourable stories is greater than the mean length of favourable stories. The length is measured in words and the number of words contributed to unfavourable news stories is more than the words appeared in favourable news stories.

Both the newspapers supported the government policy on war on terror. As compared to the daily Nation, the daily Business Recorder provided more support to the government policy on war on terror. Thus it supports the sub hypothesis-5 that the slant of the daily Business Recorder is more favourable towards the government stance on war on terror as compared to the daily Nation. This difference is statistically significant. The reason behind this phenomenon seems that the daily Business Recorder has a major focus on economic and trade issues and these sectors suffered a lot due to attacks by Taliban on civil and strategic installation resulted in major fall in production. So, Business Recorder supported the Government stance on war on terror more favourably than the daily Nation.

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