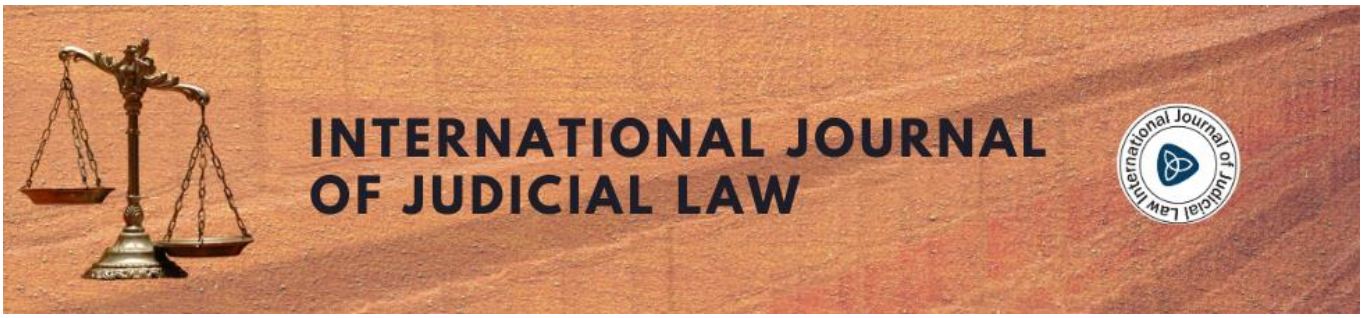




Constitutional Discourse around the Presidential Threshold and the Potential of Political Oligarchy

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-6536

Volume: 04

Issue: 03

May-June 2025

Received: 09-04-2025

Accepted: 08-05-2025

Page No: 109-114

Abstract

The Presidential Threshold restricts the right of every individual to have an equal opportunity in government. The Constitutional Court through Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013 stipulates that the Presidential and Vice Presidential Elections must be held simultaneously with the Election of Members of the House of Representatives, known as simultaneous elections. The provisions regarding the presidential threshold are actually part of the open legal policy. In the constitution, especially Article 6A paragraph (2) and Article 22E paragraph (6) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, there is no provision that limits who has the right to run for President or Vice President. The application of a threshold for political parties to be able to carry a pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates has a number of juridical consequences, including being contrary to the principles of the Presidential System in the 1945 Constitution, not in line with Article 6A paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, showing the inconsistency of the Constitutional Court in Decision Number 14/PUU-XI/2013, and violating the rights of citizens as guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution. Constitution, public debate, and its impact on the principles of people's sovereignty and constitutional rights, this study aims to evaluate the relevance and urgency of Presidential Threshold changes.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJL.2025.4.3.109-114>

Keywords: Constitutional Law, Presidential Threshold, Political Oligarchy

Introduction

In its implementation, Indonesia adheres to a democratic system, the journey of democracy in Indonesia has a long history in its implementation. Talking about democracy, this is a problem between the relationship between the state and other countries, the people with the state and the government or the government with the people. The people are the main pillar in the main goal of implementing a democratic government. The people have the dominant right in determining who and how the government will run, so that elections are one of the ways to realize a democratic system where choices come from the people, for the people, and are implemented by the people ^[1]. Elections in Indonesia have undergone several modifications in their implementation. One of the elections that is very decisive for the running of the government is the executive election. The first direct presidential election by the people was held in 2004. The presidential election for the first time is based on Law Number 23 of 2003 concerning the election of the president and vice president (4). In the submission of presidential candidates and vice presidential candidates, it is also regulated in article 5 paragraphs ^[2].

¹ Fajrin, A. (2020). Indonesia as a State of Law. Kompasiana. com, 21.

² Rafi Aufa Mawardi, "The History of Democracy in Indonesia and Its Development from Time to Time," Detik.Com (Jakarta, August 19, 2022), <https://www.detik.com/edu/detikpedia/d-6243165/sejarah-demokrasi-diindonesia-dan-perkembangannya- dari-masa-ke-masa>.

Indonesia in holding the election of the President and Vice President is elected every five years. Since 2004-2024, the implementation of the Presidential and Vice Presidential elections has been carried out directly by the people through elections. The people have the dominant right in determining who and how the government will run, so that elections are one of the ways to realize a democratic system where choices come from the people, for the people, and are implemented by the people^[3]. The implementation of people's sovereignty is how to pour the principle of people's sovereignty into laws and regulations under the 1945 Constitution in line with the spirit of Article 1 paragraph (2) of the constitution which mandates the implementation of people's sovereignty to be carried out based on the constitution. Therefore, the laws and regulations under it must not be contrary to the 1945 Constitution. Before the people choose who will be elected first, the political party will select the candidate who will later be presented to the people to be elected in the general election of President and Vice President by having threshold conditions that need to be met by the candidate pair, this is called Presidential Threshold Article 6A paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution states that the pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates must be proposed by the political party or a combination of participating political parties the election before the election takes place. Thus, each presidential and vice presidential candidate can only advance through the support of a political party, and the people will choose from the candidates put forward by that political party. However, the constitution does not explicitly regulate the presidential threshold for candidacy^[4].

The provisions for setting this threshold are regulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections (Election Law), which stipulates that political parties or coalitions of political parties must have a minimum of 20% of the seats of the House of Representatives or 25% of the national valid votes in the previous legislative election to be able to propose a pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates. This provision has been repeatedly challenged to the Constitutional Court (MK) on the grounds that it is contrary to the principles of people's sovereignty, the constitutional rights of citizens, and the spirit of democracy. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court has consistently rejected the testing request.

The democratic state system, elections play a role as a means to maintain and strengthen democratic values and create a just and prosperous society. According to Dahlan Thaib, in the life of a democratic society, elections are a mechanism for the change of power that takes place peacefully and periodically, in accordance with the principles set by the constitution^[5]. The general election itself can be interpreted as a forum for political actors to contest for power based on the people's choices. Theoretically, the election of the President/Vice President which is carried out directly is a form of implementing the principle of people's sovereignty. The general election shows that there is a strong power of the people over the President/Vice President elected later. The change of the position of President/Vice President from the one previously elected by the Parliament, in this case the MPR, becomes a vote in the general election as well as a tool for the implementation of the

presidential system that has been chosen by Indonesia^[6]. The existence of a presidential threshold in the President/Vice Presidential election is an effort to strengthen the presidential system of government in Indonesia. However, in fact, the existence of the presidential threshold is a contradiction to the spirit of electoral justice and weakens the presidential system of government in Indonesia because in the presidential system of government there is a firm and clear separation between parliament and executive institutions.

The ideal concept that should exist in the presidential system of government is the principle of separation of power. In the presidential system of executive government there is no responsibility to parliament, which means that executive power is outside of parliament, so in this system the President has strong power and becomes the chairman of the cabinet^[7].

Problem Formulation

1. How is the legal rationalization and arguments of the Constitutional Court in maintaining the provisions of the Presidential Threshold in Indonesia?
2. What is the impact of the implementation of the Presidential Threshold on the principle of people's sovereignty and the constitutional rights of citizens in the democratic system in Indonesia?
3. What is the potential of the Presidential Threshold in perpetuating political oligarchy and hindering the regeneration of national leadership?

Purpose

This journal aims to analyze and examine in depth the dynamics of constitutional discourse surrounding the Presidential Threshold provision within Indonesia's constitutional system.

Discussion

Presidential Threshold: The Origin and Rationalization of Law. The Presidential Threshold was set in 2004 according to Law Number 23 of 2003. In accordance with Article 5 paragraph 4 of the law, political parties that obtain 15% or 20% of the votes of the House of Representatives seats have the right to propose the president and vice president of the national election. If the deal fails, the political organization will be required to unite with different political organizations to adjust the terms of the vote acquisition to minimize the presidential and vice presidential pairs. Despite its limitations, the 2004 presidential and vice presidential elections produced five candidates: Hamzah Haz-Agum Gumelar, Megawati Soekarnoputri-Hasyim Muzadi, Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Yusuf Kalla, Wiranto-Salaudin Wahid, and Amien Rais-Siswono Yudhusodo. Of the five pairs, there is no candidate who meets the conditions stated in paragraph 3 of article 6A of the 1945 Constitution which stipulates that the pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates obtain more than 50% of the total vote count in the general election on at least 20% of the votes cast in each provincial region.

The president and vice president are elected with general elections held in more than half of the provinces in Indonesia. Because there are no presidential and vice presidential

³ Anindya, R., & Musaffa, M. U. A. (2021). Presidential Threshold: The Influence of Its Application in the Development of Indonesian Democracy. *IN RIGHT: Journal of Religion and Human Rights*, 10(2), 269-287

⁴ Sari, T. P., & Desiandri, Y. S. (2023). Politik dan HAM: Analisis Yuridis Regulasi Presidential Threshold Pemilihan Calon Presiden di Indonesia. *Politica: Jurnal Hukum Tata Negara dan Politik Islam*, 10(2), 164-178.

⁵ Dahlan Thaib, Indonesian Constitutional Perspective, Yogyakarta, Total Media, 2009, p. 98

⁶ Restiyani et al., "Anomali.Presidential.Threshold.In.System.Government in Indonesia, Res Publica.Vol 4, No, 3., Sep-Dec, 2020, p.304.

⁷ Inu.Kencana.Syafiie, Sistem.Gouvernementan.Indonesia, RIneka.Cipta, Jakarta, 2002, p.53.

candidates selected in this condition, so the two pairs of candidates who have the highest number of voters in the election are determined directly by the people and the pair of presidential candidates who get the most votes, so that they can fully serve as president and vice president^[8]. Historically, the implementation of the Presidential Threshold as a policy in the implementation of legislative elections was enforced for the first time during the 2009 General Election which was formulated in Law Number 10 of 2008 concerning the General Election of Members of the House of Representatives, the Regional Representative Council, and the Regional House of Representatives precisely in article 202 which states that political parties participating in the general election must meet the threshold. The limit of obtaining votes is at least 2.5% of the number of valid votes nationally to be included in the acquisition of seats in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia^[9]. Ahead of the next general election, namely in the 2014 general election, the regulation regarding the parliamentary threshold policy was changed by increasing 1% from the previous percentage of 2.5% to 3.5% through General Election Law Number 8 of 2012 in article 208 which explicitly states that political parties participating in the general election must meet the threshold of obtaining votes at least or at least 3.5% of the number of valid votes national to be included in the determination of the acquisition of seats for members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, the Provincial and Regency/City Regional People's Representative Councils which are then emphasized in article 209 paragraph (1) that political parties that do not meet the threshold in article 208, cannot be included in the calculation of the acquisition of seats for legislative members in each electoral area. Furthermore, before the 2019 general election, the General Election Law was revised again by increasing the threshold percentage by 0.5% so that the parliamentary threshold applied in the 2019 general election increased to 4% as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections in article 414 which states that parties participating in the general election must meet the threshold of obtaining at least 4% of the number of valid votes nationally to participate include in the determination of the acquisition of seats for members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI)^[10]. Various experts from observers and political researchers have different opinions regarding the amount of threshold that is considered proportional. According to Augustz Mellaz, the threshold is a threshold requirement that must be exceeded by political parties to send their representatives to parliament^[11]. The concept of thresholds in elections, including the Presidential Threshold, is not new in the modern constitutional system. Initially, the Presidential Threshold was introduced in the context of Indonesia's post-New Order party system with the aim of simplifying the number of political parties that can put forward candidates, avoiding extreme fragmentation, and encouraging the formation of an effective and stable government. The legal rationalization that is often used is that PT is part of the open legal policy of the lawmakers, which cannot be intervened by the Constitutional Court unless it exceeds the limits of authority or is clearly contrary to the 1945

Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

The Constitutional Court in its various decisions, such as Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013 and Decision No. 53/PUU-XV/2017, consistently rejected the applicant's argument that PT was contrary to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The Constitutional Court argues that PT is an effort by legislators to create a strong and stable presidential system of government, as well as to achieve a balanced degree of representation between the legislative election and the presidential election. However, this repeated rejection has actually sparked a wider public debate about the relevance and validity of the provision. Philipus M. Hadjon revealed that the application of the parliamentary threshold has in fact contradicted the principle of equality before the law and has the potential to cause state losses due to the abuse of authority as a member of the legislature^[12].

The parliamentary threshold is one of the basic variables of the general election system that has a direct impact on the conversion of votes into the number of seats. So this threshold is very closely related to the proportionality of election results, and the consistency of the regulations in an election regulation. In this proportional election system, it is carried out by dividing parliamentary seats to political parties based on the ratio of votes obtained by the political party or organization participating in the election concerned.

The Impact of the Presidential Threshold on Democracy and the Party System

The Presidential Threshold which was implemented starting from the 2004, 2009 and 2014 elections is not a problem because the elections are not held simultaneously. The forerunner of the Presidential Threshold became a debate when the Constitutional Court made decision number 14/PUU-XI/2013 which contained that the elections of the DPR, DPD and DPRD were held together. The decision was also accommodated by the Government as stated in article 167 paragraph 3 of law number 7 of 2017 which stipulates that voting is taken simultaneously during the time set as a national holiday, although the Constitutional Court's decision does not change the provisions of the Presidential Threshold in general. However, the national vote of 25% is considered irrelevant when applied in the 2019 election. With the implementation of simultaneous elections, the provisions of the Presidential Threshold are not feasible to be implemented because this will limit the ability of political organizations especially new political organizations, to participate in the elections and nominate the president and vice president, considering that the benchmark for obtaining national votes is based on the 2014 DPR elections^[13].

In fact, in the presidential system, the problem of thresholds is no longer relevant when used as a benchmark for the requirement for presidential / vice presidential candidates to be able to run for office or as a tool to restrict candidacy. Because in general, the threshold is only used for the minimum requirement for presidential candidates/vice presidential candidates to be elected. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the requirements for the percentage of presidential and vice

⁸ Widayati, *The Problem of the Presidential Threshold in the Implementation of Fair Simultaneous General Elections* (Semarang: Unissula Press, 2019).

⁹ Tirtio.id (Retrieved on May 29, 2025 at 12.07 Wita)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Harefa, D., & Fatolosa Hulu, M. M. (2020). *Pancasila Democracy in the Era of Pluralism*. Pm Publisher. p. 11

¹² Monteiro, Josef Mario. "Presidential Threshold and Parliamentary Threshold Setting in Elections." *Journal of Progressive Law and Legal Studies* 1.02 (2023): 75-87.

¹³ Widayati, "The problem of the presidential threshold in the implementation of fair simultaneous general elections"

presidential candidates have been regulated in Article 6A paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution, the amendment states, "The pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates who get more than fifty percent of the votes in the general election with at least twenty percent of the votes in each province spread over more than half of the number of provinces in Indonesia, inaugurated as President and Vice President" The implementation of a threshold means forcing the integration of two institutional designs, because presidential candidates/vice presidential candidates who initially hoped to be independent without being bound by many political parties will eventually have to rely on the coalition of parties that support them. At the end of the day, transactional politics arise from the implementation of this threshold system. The argument that considers the Presidential Threshold as a presidential reinforcement is automatically refuted, if in the course of the journey a political party that is considered a coalition friend in carrying and supporting the elected presidential candidate/vice presidential candidate changes direction to become the government's opposition, while a political party that was initially positioned as an opposition can become a party that supports the government. This needs to be underlined in politics that is so dynamic that it is very difficult to ensure that the president can manage coalition parties in government. Moreover, the practice in Indonesia of parties forming coalitions is not based on the same ideological basis or political platform, which has a long-term mission but rather on short-term interests that dwell on ministerial seats, bureaucratic posts and public positions. The application of the Presidential Threshold under the pretext of strengthening the presidential system is considered to have weak postulates. For example, if the president is elected from a small party, he will automatically look for other political parties to become a coalition partner to strengthen the president's position, so that the absence of a Presidential Threshold can still ensure the effective running of the government. An important point in this argument is that the use of the Presidential Threshold or not still opens up opportunities for parties to carry out transactional politics in coalitions.

It can be concluded that the ineffectiveness of the presidential government is not only due to the factor of the multiparty party system alone, but also concerns the individual behavior and character of a president and members of the House of Representatives. With the addition of the presidential threshold rule set by the Constitutional Court, it is certainly an irony in itself, because the goal of wanting to strengthen the presidential system is weakened. Especially in the simultaneous election process that uses the presidential system, it must be tied to the legislative results. This condition indicates the existence of presidential practices with a parliamentary sense. The Constitutional Court's decision number 14/PUU-XI/2013 itself contains that the implementation of elections carried out after the legislative election is unconstitutional in other words, the implementation of simultaneous elections. This decision means that the implementation of the Presidential Threshold is not possible because the results of the legislative election are not yet known. So when the presidential candidacy is not based on the legislative results, there should no longer be any

requirements that regulate the minimum number of presidential and vice presidential candidates to be able to participate in the presidential election.

There are at least 4 implications arising from the Presidential Threshold, namely: How the presidential election (Pilpres) will only give rise to two pairs of candidates who are head to head, even though on paper it is postulated that it can give rise to three to four pairs of candidates, but not so in practice. The Presidential Threshold hinders the nation's best sons and daughters who want to advance in the presidential election, without the auspices of political parties, because in fact this country does not lack competent leader candidates, but, its emergence is riddled with rules of the game that at the same time reduce the people's choice to find their best leader, the fewer candidates who fight, the less likely it is to emerge the best leader. The Presidential Threshold has the potential to delay the awareness and political participation of the people, restricting candidates means limiting the political channels of voters. The helplessness of small parties in front of the big parties regarding the pair of candidates to be carried together, in fact, political parties should be established to carry their cadres so that they can appear as national leaders.

Discourse and the Urgency of Changing the Presidential Threshold

A state of law is a state system governed by applicable law, which is just structured in a constitution, where all people in the State, both the ruled and the governed, must be subject to the law, so that everyone is treated equally, regardless of differences in skin color, race, gender, religion, region and belief, and the authority of the government is limited based on the principle of power distribution. So that the government is not arbitrary and does not violate the rights of the people, therefore the people are given roles according to their abilities and roles democratically^[14]. General elections (elections) are an important instrument in a democratic country that adheres to a representative system. Elections serve as a screening tool for "politicians" who will represent and bring the voice of the people in the representative body. Those who are elected are considered to be people or groups who have the ability or obligation to speak and act on behalf of a larger group through political parties (political parties). Therefore, the existence of political parties is a must in modern democratic political life. It is intended to activate and mobilize the people, represent certain interests, provide a way of compromise for opposing opinions, and provide a means of legitimate and peaceful succession of political leadership^[15]. The provisions of the Presidential Threshold that close the rights of small political parties are not in accordance with the essence of democracy of the Indonesian nation, Each nation has its own conceptions and ideals in accordance with the conditions, challenges and characteristics of the nation concerned^[16]. Given that the State of Indonesia is a State consisting of various groups of minority groups (racial, ethnic, religious, and so on) who agree to form a State, the State should have a role to accommodate all the aspirations of the community, including the aspirations of minority groups. In addition, conceptually Indonesia has strong national principles and visions. The vision of Indonesian nationality can not only bring together the plurality of society

¹⁴ Munir Fuady, *Modern Legal State Theory (Rechtstaat)* (Bandung: Refika Aditama, 2011), 3.

¹⁵ Moh. Mahfud MD, *Legal Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2017), 61.

¹⁶ Yudi Latif, *Pancasila Revolution* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2015), h.28

in the novelty of a common political community, but also be able to provide a possibility for the diversity of the community not to be uprooted from the roots of their respective traditions and histories^[17].

The importance of this issue does not only lie in the technical aspects of elections, but in the essence of democracy itself. A healthy democracy requires fair competition and equal opportunities for every citizen to participate, both as voters and as elected. If the PT continues to be maintained at a high rate, the concern about procedural democracy that ignores substantive democracy will be even stronger. However, in the future, there is a need for a reconstruction of the presidential threshold in accordance with the spirit of simultaneous elections, several interesting points:

- The presidential threshold does not violate the constitution / contradicts the 1945 Constitution, but the existence of a very high threshold provision can violate the constitutional rights of political parties to propose presidential and vice presidential candidates as guaranteed by the constitution.
- The author's view is that ideally since the simultaneous elections are implemented, the provisions of the presidential threshold become irrelevant, the true simultaneous elections aim to provide equal rights for political parties participating in the election so that there will be no more dirty practices by political parties (political parties) carrying presidential and vice presidential candidates, for example political deals for ministerial seats. However, if it is still applied, it can be applied the same as the parliamentary threshold, which is 4% so that it is still within the limits of constitutional reasonableness.
- With the provision that the presidential threshold is not regulated or regulated by the 4% provision, alternative figures will appear which adorn the 2024 Presidential Election contest, both those proposed by large and small parties and it could be that these alternative figures are the people's choice. On the other hand, with the absence of a presidential threshold or a maximum of 4%, all political parties that pass the parliamentary threshold have the same constitutional rights before the law and the constitution, but it does not mean that political parties are prohibited from forming coalitions, political parties can still form coalitions to nominate the President/Vice President or form coalitions at the time of cabinet formation.
- To strengthen the presidential government, a coalition can be carried out by the President/Vice President after being elected in the election by designing his government cabinet, here the President and the government supporting parties can accept the invitation of other political parties to form a coalition to support the government. This is a solution, because the presidential threshold is not able to realize a strategic coalition of political parties, many political parties jump (join supporting the government) after the presidential and vice presidential candidates they support lose during the contest.

In addition, the political participation of citizens through political parties is the responsibility of the human rights of

every citizen, namely Article 28 E paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution: "Everyone has the right to freedom of association, assembly and expression." The provisions of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, which require the threshold for the nomination of presidential and vice presidential candidates, is a violation of citizens' rights that should not exist in a democratic country like Indonesia. Although there is a valid constitutional basis in restricting the rights of every citizen, namely Article 28 J paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states: "In exercising his rights and freedoms, every person is obliged to submit to the restrictions established by the Law with the sole intention of guaranteeing recognition and respect for the right to liberty of others and to meet just demands in accordance with moral considerations, values of religion, security, and public order in a democratic society". However, in the context of the 2019 Election as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 which requires the existence of threshold provisions for the candidacy of the President and Vice President. It is certainly inappropriate if the threshold rules for the nomination of President and Vice President, are considered a logical and correct policy to restrict the fundamental rights of citizens to propose presidential and Vice presidential candidates and be nominated as President and Vice President, based on considerations in guaranteeing recognition and respect for the right to freedom of others and to meet just demands in accordance with moral considerations, values of religion, security, and public order in a democratic society.

Closing

Conclusion and Suggestion

From the results of the analysis conducted by the author on the problems described above, it can be concluded that:

The Presidential Threshold (PT) is one of the most crucial constitutional law issues in Indonesia that requires serious attention. Although legally it has been defended by the Constitutional Court as an open legal policy of lawmakers, the impact of the PT on democracy, the party system, and the potential to perpetuate political oligarchy cannot be ignored. The existence of a high PT has the potential to limit citizens' constitutional rights, reduce people's political choices, hinder leadership regeneration, and strengthen the concentration of power in a handful of political elites. In order to realize a more inclusive, participatory, and substantive democracy, the urgency to review or remove the provisions of the Presidential Threshold is becoming increasingly urgent. Broader constitutional discourse and legislative efforts are needed to ensure that the electoral system in Indonesia truly reflects the sovereignty of the people and democratic justice.

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¹⁷ Yudi Latif, *The Plenary State of Rationalist History, and the Actualization of Pancasila* (Jakarta: PT Kompas Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2011), 177

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