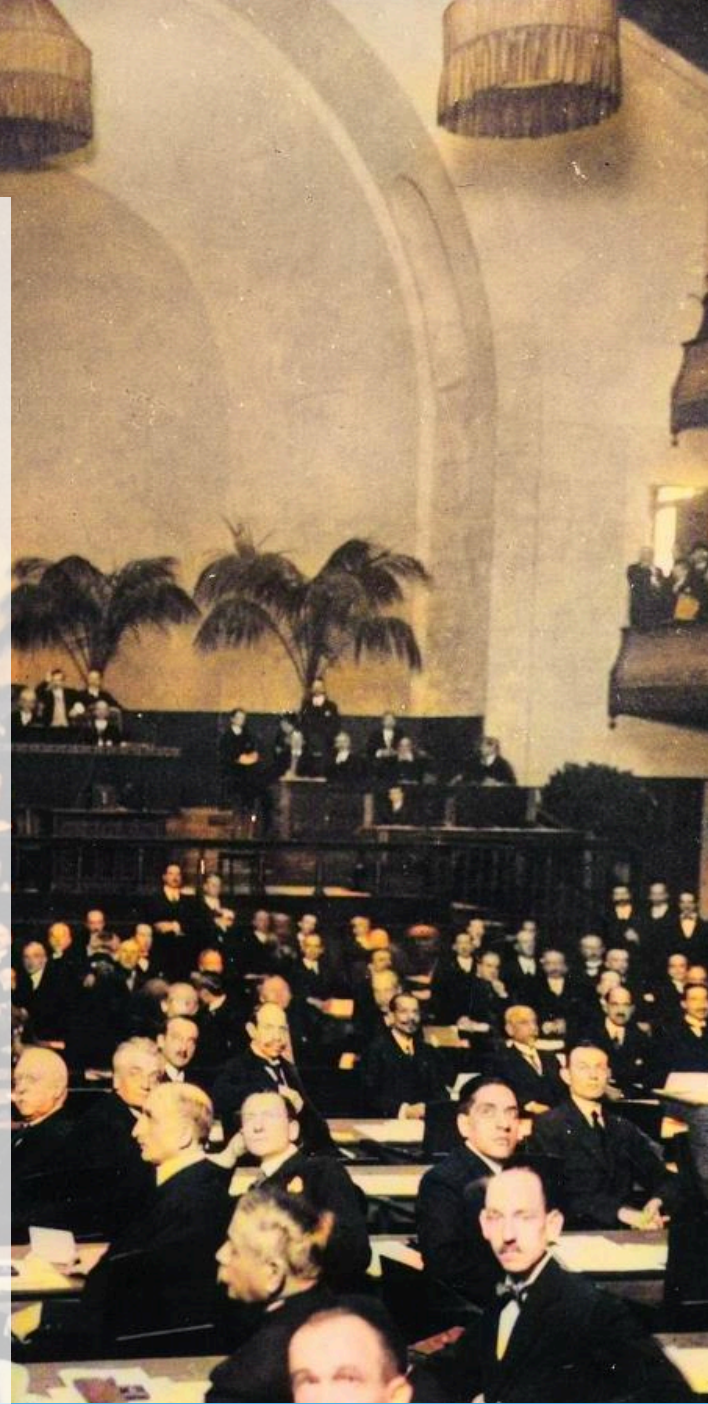
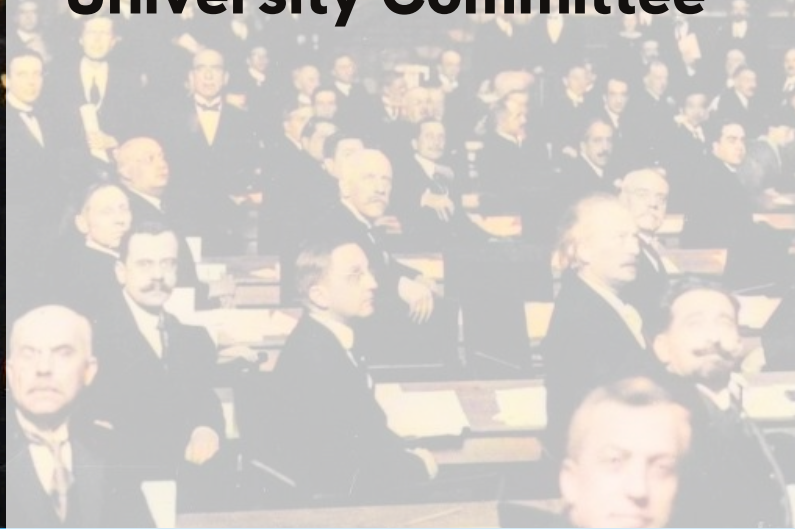


STUDY GUIDE

Historical League of Nations University Committee



ZuMUN 2024

April 12 - 14





Disarmament or Destruction



The League of Nations 1932-35

Study Guide for Zurich Model United Nations 2024

Written by Derk Beemer and Darius Niederer

April 12 – 14, 2024

Zurich, Switzerland



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The Japanese Invasion of Manchuria
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Letter from the Presidents

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor to be your chairs (or presidents, in League parlance) for this committee of ZuMUN. Our committee will be unique: we will cover three topic blocs over three days: the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the World Disarmament Conference, and a third surprise topic that will be announced on the evening of day 2. In deciding the actions to be taken regarding the first issue, the invasion of Manchuria, all delegations will be allowed to vote, but unanimity (-1) is only required among the members of the Council of the league (the permanent members at this time being Britain, France, Japan, Germany, and Italy).

We hope to see whether you, delegates, can do a better job than your predecessors in the league to prevent conflicts and ensure eternal world peace. The hopes of all peoples for a peaceful and prosperous future rest on your shoulders.

Best wishes,



Derk Beemer, President



Darius Niederer, Vice President

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Introduction to the League of Nations



Background

The League of Nations was founded after the First World War with several goals in mind, the first among them being the prevention of another global conflict, while also attempting to promote international cooperation, development, and social justice. The late 19th Century had seen the gradual development of international treaties and organizations, such as the Red Cross (1863), and International Telecommunications Union (1865), and treaties such as the 1907 Hague Convention governing the rights and responsibilities of countries at war. The idea of a global organization like the League of Nations dedicated to peace and welfare stemmed from this long tradition of increased internationalization. However, the League itself was the brainchild of American President Woodrow Wilson, a fervent Liberal internationalist who made establishing the League one of his “14 Points” outlining the goals of the United States in the war. Ironically after the Treaty of Versailles established the League, the US Senate refused to ratify the treaty, leaving America on the outside of the project it had started (Steiner, 2005, 350). This unpromising start did not deter the other victors of the war from continuing the project aiming to abolish violence as a means to resolve international disputes.

The Organization of the League

The League of Nations was divided into three bodies: the Council, the Assembly, and the Secretariat. It was based in Geneva, a city famous for its previous importance to international organizations like the Red Cross, and located in neutral Switzerland (UN Geneva).

The Assembly

The Assembly of the League of Nations was the main body of the League. It included representatives from all member states who could discuss and vote on predetermined agenda issues based on one country, one vote, with unanimity being required on substantive matters. This was revolutionary, as the equality of sovereign states had not previously been recognized in this manner, additionally, the yearly sessions of the assembly were open to the public, taking diplomacy out of the smoky back rooms of power politics and into the light of public scrutiny.

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The Council

The Council of the League was similar to the UN Security Council with permanent and non-permanent members. Like the Security Council, it was composed of the most important victorious powers after the war and intended as a smaller body than the assembly that could take action. It was to punish aggressors and settle international disputes before they could escalate into larger wars. The initial Permanent Members were France, Britain, Japan, and Italy, while the non-permanent members, elected for 3-year terms by the council, varied in number. Here too, unanimity of all members was required to adopt resolutions.

The Secretariat

The secretariat was responsible for the administration of the League's activities, organizing meetings, and publishing the results. The secretariat was open to men and women, reflecting the leagues' advanced social views for the time.

The Covenant of the League

The Covenant, signed in 1920, was the "constitution" of the League of Nations, encompassing the key goals of the league and the procedures for achieving them. Articles 10-17 are broadly considered to encapsulate the very core of the League's purpose: collective security and preserving world peace. It is worthwhile for our committee to consider this section of the covenant as excerpted below:

ARTICLE 10.

The Members of the League [...] preserve as against external aggression the territorial **integrity and political independence** of all [...] The Council shall advise upon how this obligation shall be fulfilled.

ARTICLE 11.

Any war or threat of war, [...] is hereby declared **a matter of concern to the whole** League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. [...]

ARTICLE 12.

The Members of the League agree that, if there should arise **between them any dispute** likely to lead to a rupture they will **submit the matter either to arbitration or judicial settlement** or to enquiry by the Council, and they agree **in no case to resort to war** until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the judicial decision, or the report by the Council. [...]

ARTICLE 14.

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The Council shall formulate and submit to the Members of the League for adoption plans for the establishment of a **Permanent Court of International Justice**. The Court shall be competent to **hear and determine any dispute** of an international character which the parties thereto submit to it. [...]

ARTICLE 15.

If there should arise [...] any dispute [...] which is not submitted to arbitration or judicial settlement by Article 13, the Members of the League agree that they will **submit the matter to the Council**. [...]

If the dispute is not thus settled, the Council [...] shall make a report [...] containing a statement of the **facts of the dispute and the recommendations** which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto.

[...] If a report by the Council is unanimously agreed to by the members thereof other than the Representatives of one or more of the parties to the dispute, **the Members of the League** agree that they **will not go to war with any party** to the dispute **which complies with the recommendations** of the report.

If the Council fails to reach a report [...] the Members of the League **reserve to themselves the right** to take such action as they shall consider **necessary for the maintenance of right and justice**. [...]

ARTICLE 16.

Should any Member of the League **resort to war in disregard of its covenants** under Articles 12, 13, or 15, it shall ipso facto be deemed to have **committed an act of war against all** other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the **severance of all trade or financial relations**, the **prohibition of all intercourse** between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State [...].

It shall be the duty of **the Council in such case to recommend** to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval, or air force the Members [...] contribute [...] to protect the covenants of the League.

The Members of the League agree, further, that they will **mutually support one another** [...], to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures [...].

Any Member of the League which has **violated any covenant** of the League **may be declared to be no longer a Member** of the League by a vote of the Council concurred in by the Representatives of all the other Members of the League represented thereon.

The league thus had significant authority to intervene, even militarily, against aggressor states while deploying a battery of economic sanctions (revolutionary at the time) where arbitration failed to produce results. Unfortunately, the requirement for unanimity among the members of the league made these provisions difficult to enforce.



The League up to 1931

Early Successes

By 1931, the League of Nations had navigated a decade of both triumphs and tribulations. Early on, it demonstrated its potential for resolving territorial disputes peacefully. In 1921, for instance, the League mediated a dispute over the Åland Islands, claimed by both Finland and Sweden. The islands, located in the northeastern Baltic Sea, had a predominantly Swedish population but belonged to Finland after the dissolution of the Russian Empire. The League appointed a commission of inquiry that visited the islands and heard arguments from both sides. Ultimately, the commission recommended that the islands be granted autonomy under Finnish sovereignty, with guarantees protecting the Swedish language and culture. This solution was accepted by both Finland and Sweden, preventing a potentially bloody conflict and establishing a model for future peaceful resolutions of territorial disputes (Ikonomou, 2018).

Germany and The League

Germany's exclusion from the League until 1926 stemmed from several factors. The victorious powers, particularly France, were suspicious of Germany after World War I (Steiner, 1993, 48). The Treaty of Versailles, which Germany was forced to sign, imposed harsh penalties, including territorial concessions, disarmament, and crippling reparations. The exclusion was seen as a way to punish and isolate Germany, preventing them from regaining their military strength and challenging the established order (Gibbon, 2015).

However, by the mid-1920s, the landscape began to shift. Germany's economic instability and the rise of extremist elements within the country worried the international community. Furthermore, excluding a nation of Germany's size and importance from the League undermined the organization's claim to universality. The Locarno Treaty of 1925, signed between the social democratic government of Germany under Stresemann and the Western allies saw both sides guarantee the integrity of Germany's western border and reduced the burden of reparation payments on Germany. It also opened the way for German membership in the League of Nations (Ibid).

Germany's relationship with the League after joining in 1926 was complex and ambivalent. While they participated in some League activities and benefited from a period of relative economic stability facilitated by programs like the Dawes Plan, they never fully embraced the League's ideals. Many Germans resented the Treaty of Versailles and saw the League as an instrument enforcing its unfair provisions, thus membership in the League became a tool to attempt to remove the remaining

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restraints of the Treaty (Steiner, 1993, 50). In the council, the German delegation consistently supported disarmament and criticized the League's mandate system by which the German colonies had been given to the victorious powers to manage after World War I (Ibid, 40).

The Great Depression

The League's greatest challenge during this period was undoubtedly the Great Depression, which began in 1929. The global economic collapse exposed the interconnectedness of nations but left the League with limited tools to address the crisis. Member states, facing internal economic woes like unemployment, bank failures, and deflation, prioritized national interests over coordinated action (Steiner, 2005, 611). This focus on self-preservation hindered the League's ability to foster a collective response. The League did attempt to convene international economic conferences, but these ultimately failed to produce a unified strategy to combat the Depression (Ibid. 638). The lack of international cooperation during this economic crisis would have severe consequences, contributing to rising nationalism and instability, which would in turn undermine the League's authority in the coming years.

The League's approach to the crisis was further hampered by the very structure of the international economic order established after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles had imposed heavy reparations on Germany, which in turn had borrowed heavily from the United States to pay these reparations. When the American stock market crashed in 1929, the United States abruptly stopped lending, triggering a domino effect that crippled economies around the world (H.L. 1931, 171). The League lacked the authority to compel nations to adopt expansionary fiscal policies or dismantle trade barriers, measures that many economists today believe would have helped mitigate the Depression's severity.

The Depression's devastating impact on national economies fueled the rise of nationalist and protectionist policies. Countries raised tariffs and restricted imports in a desperate attempt to shield their domestic industries and jobs. This further choked off international trade, deepening the crisis. The League's commitment to free trade and economic cooperation was severely undermined by these beggar-thy-neighbor policies.

The League's inability to address the Great Depression had a profound impact on its legitimacy and future. The crisis exposed the deep divisions between member states and their unwillingness to subordinate national interests to the greater good of international cooperation. This would have severe consequences in the coming years, as the League would be increasingly called upon to

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address major international conflicts, but would find its member states more reluctant than ever to act in concert.



The Japanese Invasion of Manchuria

The State of China

The End of The Qing and the Rise of the Republic of China

Internally, China's decline with the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1911) and the rise of warlords created a fractured country vulnerable to external attack. The new Republic of China, originally a democracy that has become more autocratic under the current leader Chiang Kai-Shek, has faced significant instability and been unable to fully control all its claimed territory. Manchuria itself, while recognized as a part of China by international law, was de facto ruled by the warlord Chang Hsueh-Liang (Iriye, 1960, 42). While being against the expansion of Japanese influence in his province, he called upon his troops to “avoid any clash with the Japanese” in an apparent effort to reduce tensions (Chang, 2003, 46). China in general and Manchuria in particular, however, continued to be unstable with bandits roaming the countryside in many places.

China, Japan, and the Great War

While China officially declared war on Germany in 1917, its involvement in World War I was largely symbolic. They offered to send laborers to the Western Front to aid the Allied powers, hoping to gain favor and pressure on Japan to return control of Shandong Province, which Germany had leased.

Japan, on the other hand, saw an opportunity in the war. They joined the Allied side and captured German holdings in China, including Shandong. However, a secret agreement with Britain, France, and Italy in 1917 allowed Japan to retain control of these territories after the war.

The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 awarded these former German concessions in Shandong to Japan, despite China's expectation of their return. This decision sparked outrage in China. Students in Beijing led massive protests on May 4th, 1919, which snowballed into the May Fourth Movement, a national outpouring of anger against imperialism and the perceived weakness of the Chinese government. China initially refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles due to the Shandong decision, however, the weak Chinese government eventually agreed to a compromise with Japan.

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Japanese Involvement in China

Pre-1930s



Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) marked a turning point as China, the traditional dominant power in East Asia, was defeated by the much smaller Japan. The subsequent Treaty of Shimonoseki forced China to cede Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, demonstrating Japan's newfound military might and sparking its ambitions for regional dominance (Kim, 2012).

During the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War, Japan expanded its activities in Manchuria, gaining control over several railways and stationing troops to guard them. It also gave Japan influence in Korea, which was formally annexed into Japan in 1910 (Nish, 1990, 604). Japanese businesses invested heavily in Manchurian mines, railways, and industries, and a significant number of Japanese citizens lived there, enjoying special commercial rights. The idea of Manchuria as a vital source of raw materials and a strategic buffer zone against Soviet Russia has held particular appeal to the Kwantung Army, the independently-minded Japanese military force stationed in the region (Iriye, 1960, 43).

The Mukden Incident

On September 18, 1931, an explosion occurred near the Japanese-controlled South Manchuria Railway. The Japanese Kwantung Army claimed this was an attack by Chinese bandits. Seeing it as a deliberate provocation, they attacked Chinese garrisons in the area, including shelling the city of Mukden with artillery. The Kwantung Army proceeded to occupy all of Manchuria as the Chinese forces under Chang Hsueh-Liang withdrew from the Area. Japan has since then established its control over the region, bringing in its police and beginning preparations for establishing a new state in Manchuria, presumably under Japanese oversight.

The Current Situation

China, shocked by the incident, has seen a rise in Anti-Japanese feelings throughout the country, sparking a widespread boycott of Japanese goods. On September 21, 1931, the Chinese Government Appealed to the League of Nations under Article 11 of the Covenant (Any war or threat of war, [...] is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action [...] to safeguard the peace of nations). The Chinese delegation requested that the league take immediate action to 1) prevent a situation from endangering peace; 2) restore the status quo ante, and, 3) determine compensation due to China by Japan. China pledged to abide by any ruling or recommendation the League may make, while Japan asked the League to consider it a bilateral issue,

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to be resolved through negotiation between the two countries directly (Chang, 2003, 47). The League of Nations must decide what if any, action should be taken in response to this incident.



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The World Disarmament Conference

Normal text

The Events that lead up to the Disarmament Conference

The Post-World War I Security Environment

The end of World War I in 1918 left Europe in a state of turmoil and transformation. The Treaty of Versailles, aiming to prevent future conflicts, imposed severe restrictions on the defeated Germany, including significant territorial losses, military limitations, and financial reparations. These punitive measures, however, sowed seeds of resentment and economic hardship, setting the stage for future conflicts. The League of Nations was established in 1920 as part of the Treaty of Versailles, with the ambitious goal of maintaining peace through collective security and disarmament. Despite its noble objectives, the League faced immediate challenges, including the absence of key powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union, limiting its effectiveness and credibility. (Kearn Jr., 2015)

The immediate post-war period was marked by a collective desire to avoid the horrors of another global conflict. This led to various diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability, such as the Locarno Treaties of 1925, which sought to normalize relations between Germany and its Western neighbors, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, which renounced war as a means of national policy. However, these agreements lacked the mechanisms for enforcement and were ultimately unable to prevent the rise of aggressive militarism in the following years. (Vaisse, 1981)

The Emergence of Offensive Weapons

The interwar period witnessed significant technological advancements that had the potential to alter the nature of warfare. Innovations in tank warfare, aviation, and chemical weapons, many of which had their origins in World War I, were further developed during the 1920s and 1930s. These advancements raised concerns among the international community about the potential for a future conflict to be even more devastating than the last. The emergence of air power, in particular, introduced a new dimension to military strategy, with the capability for strategic bombing campaigns that could target civilian populations and industrial centers far from the front lines. (Kearn Jr., 2015)

The potential for these new weapons to undermine the existing security environment led to calls for arms control and disarmament. The League of Nations took up the issue, organizing conferences

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and committees to address the challenges of military innovations. Despite these efforts, the lack of trust among nations, combined with the strategic value placed on technological superiority, hindered progress toward meaningful disarmament. (Ibid)

The League of Nations and Early Disarmament Efforts

In response to the growing threat posed by military advancements, the League of Nations endeavored to facilitate disarmament through international cooperation. The League's Disarmament Commission, established in the early 1920s, aimed to draft a comprehensive treaty that would limit armaments and promote transparency among nations. However, the Commission's efforts were met with resistance from states unwilling to compromise their security for the sake of disarmament.

The culmination of these efforts was the World Disarmament Conference, convened in Geneva in 1932. The Conference brought together representatives from numerous countries to achieve a general reduction in armaments and the prohibition of offensive weapons. Despite initial optimism, the Conference was plagued by disagreements over definitions of offensive versus defensive weapons, the verification of disarmament commitments, and the need for security guarantees. The rise of nationalist and militarist movements, particularly in Germany, Japan, and Italy, further complicated the diplomatic landscape, ultimately leading to the Conference's failure.

The inability of the League of Nations to achieve disarmament underscored the limitations of international diplomacy in the face of deep-seated mistrust and the rapid pace of technological innovation. The lessons from this period highlight the challenges of achieving lasting peace through disarmament, challenges that remain relevant in the contemporary world.

The Conference

High Hopes and Hard Realities

The Conference commenced with a genuine, albeit optimistic, aspiration towards global disarmament, inspired by the collective trauma of World War I and the League of Nations' foundational aim to secure peace through disarmament. Yet, from its inception, the Conference faced intrinsic difficulties, partly due to the vague disarmament clauses of the League's Covenant and the deeply entrenched national interests and security concerns of participating states (Kearn Jr., 2015).

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The Stalemate: Security Concerns vs. Disarmament Aspirations

As discussions unfolded, it became increasingly apparent that the road to disarmament was fraught with obstacles. Key issues such as the definition of offensive versus defensive weaponry, the mechanisms for verifying disarmament commitments, and the crucial question of security guarantees led to protracted debates. The tension between France's demand for security assurances before disarmament and Germany's call for parity reflected deeper geopolitical rifts, further complicating the dialogue. This impasse underscored the challenges of reconciling the Conference's lofty goals with the stark realities of international politics and national security imperatives (Vaisse, 1981).

The Outcome: Disarmament Elusive, Tensions Unresolved

Ultimately, the Conference failed to achieve its primary objectives. Instead of fostering global disarmament, it highlighted the limitations of collective security mechanisms in the face of national interests and the absence of a shared vision for achieving peace. The rearmament that followed in many countries underscored the Conference's inability to alter the course of international relations, paving the way for the escalating tensions that would eventually lead to World War II (Kearn Jr., 2015).

The Disarmament Conference's trajectory from hopeful beginnings to its eventual failure illustrates the complexities of disarmament as a tool for securing peace. The interplay between the desire for security, the legacy of past conflicts, and the challenges of international diplomacy during this period offers valuable lessons for future disarmament efforts. While the Conference may not have achieved its immediate goals, its history reflects the enduring challenge of reconciling national interests with the collective pursuit of peace and security in the international arena (Vaisse, 1981).



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