

The problematic of state failure in Africa

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Abstract

The study focuses on literature on the concept of "failed State", and the main reason that makes some African countries on the top of the list of failed States in the world. The research will also discuss the secret behind the rush of Western countries to describe most African countries as failed countries, without taking in the consideration the differences between them, and the most undeclared objectives behind the excessive use of this concept. By highlighting this phenomenon, the paper will try to prove that failed States concept cannot be used as a reliable criterion for assessing the politico-economic realities of African countries.

Keywords: Africa , state in Africa ,failed state concept, trusteeship system.

إشكالية فشل الدولة في إفريقيا

ملخص

تستعرض هذه الدراسة الأدبيات التي تناولت مفهوم "الدولة الفاشلة"، إلى جانب الأسباب الرئيسية التي جعلت من بعض دول القارة الإفريقية أول المتصدرين لقائمة الدول الفاشلة في العالم. سناقش سر تسرع الدول الغربية في وصف أغلب الدول الإفريقية بالفاشل، دون مراعاة الاختلافات القائمة بينها. كما ساعمل على إبراز الأهداف الحقيقية غير المعلنة من وراء توظيفها المفرط لهذا المفهوم. ومن خلال تسليط الضوء على ظاهرة الدول الفاشلة، سأحاول في الأخير، أن أثبت أنه لا يمكن استخدام المصطلح في حد ذاته، كمعيار يعتمد عليه في تقييم الواقع السياسي والاقتصادي للدول الإفريقية في الماضي والحاضر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إفريقيا، دولة في إفريقيا، مفهوم الدولة الفاشلة، نظام الوصاية.

La problématique de l'État défaillant en Afrique

Résumé

Cette étude passe en revue la littérature sur le concept de «l'État défaillant», ainsi que les raisons qui font que certains pays africains figurent en tête de liste des États défaillants dans le monde. Je discuterai du secret de l'acharnement de certain pays occidentaux à décrire la plupart de ceux-ci comme étant en faillite, sans tenir compte des différences qui existent entre eux. Aussi, je tenterai d'expliquer leurs objectifs non déclarés derrière l'utilisation excessive de ce concept. En mettant l'accent sur ce phénomène, j'essayerai de prouver que ce concept ne peut être utilisé comme critère fiable pour évaluer la réalité politico-économique des pays africains.

Mots-clés: Afrique, état en Afrique, concept de l'état défaillant, système de tutelle.

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Introduction:

The absence of regional stability in various forms of armed conflicts, along with other security dilemmas such as debt, poverty and underdevelopment, are no longer indicative of the fragility of many African countries⁽¹⁾. The years after the end of the Cold War became known as the era of "failed States" when their manifestations began to manifest with the collapse of many regimes and the increasing internal violence in those countries. Some international actors, including some major countries, have also viewed this phenomenon as inherent domestic problems, especially in the African continent. They have deliberately marketed a stereotypical image of African people as: "irrational, emotionally immature and therefore incapable of identifying their own interests without experienced external intervention" to help them⁽²⁾.

The concept of a failed State became a major indicator of the post-Cold War policies of the countries of the South and of the concept of the African State. For many, as we will note later, this reality means that the failure of African States one by one - from Somalia to Sierra Leone and from Sudan to Zimbabwe - is largely due to the internal causes and circumstances, or to the "internal characteristics" known by African countries on a large scale.

Most African countries are consequently called failed States, collapsed States or other denominations; all of them aim to refer to those countries that continue to flounder in different types of crises. This situation is illustrated by a list of failed States conjointly prepared annually by Foreign Policy Journal and the Fund for Peace⁽³⁾.

The Problematic:

It is necessary to pay attention to the ambiguity that surrounds this concept, and examine this term, reconsider it, and study the reasons and norms that have been employed to determine which African countries are listed under this classification. And then try to understand the purpose of the generalization of this attribute to most African countries that suffer from disturbances and problems? And why have some international actors, especially the United States and the European Union, use increasingly this concept in their relations with many developing countries, and regard it as not only an imminent threat to their security but also to the security and stability of the entire world?

The objective then is to try to prove that the term in itself cannot be used as a reliable criterion for assessing the political and economic reality of these States in the past and the present. Indeed, the use of the term as "standard" by the major Powers is no more than a new argument or justification for the further legitimization of the policy of direct intervention in Africa. These powers do not hesitate to consider many developing countries - most of them are African countries- incapable of providing the most basic standards of services and protection for their people, and became a source of danger to their security and the world at large. This situation is encouraging to believe that these countries needed external care and why not, a new tutelage.

This research is divided into four axes. The first axis deals with the concept of failed State and the various definitions and previous studies that I have dealt with. Moreover, I tried in the second axis to focus on the most important reasons that lead to the prevalence of the phenomenon of failure of the State, especially in Africa. Then, in the third axis, I tried to shed light on the implications of the fragility of the State and its failure, both on its immediate geographical proximity and in the world. Finally, the fourth axis deals with the idea of a new tutelage, which some major Powers have called for as a solution to the various and multiple problems of these States.

1-The study of the concept:

The first usage of the concept of a failed State emerged in 1993, in an article published by Gerald Helman & Steven Ratner in the Foreign Policy journal⁽⁴⁾. The researchers referred to the weak States that became unable to shoulder their responsibilities towards their citizens, as well as their responsibilities as a member of the international community.

However, the majority of researchers didn't find a precise definition. This term usually refers to States that are sovereign, but can no longer sustain themselves as a viable political and economical unit, becoming ungovernable and without legitimacy in the eyes of their people and of the international community alike⁽⁵⁾. They are also unable to perform their domestic functions or fulfil their obligations under international law because of the collapse of their central government's authority⁽⁶⁾. Rachel and Michael Stohl added the fact that people of these countries lacked a strong sense of belonging to the nation; loyalty to ethnic, tribal and religious identities continued to compete for the loyalty of people to the nation-State, undermining their authority over time⁽⁷⁾.

Despite the multiplicity and diversity of attempts to define the phenomenon, there is consensus on some key points in most academic studies. All of them agree on the existence of three main axes around which the subject of vulnerability is concerned:

First, the failed State cannot extend its authority over all of its regions, which has been subjected to intense competition by ethnic groups or semi-armed movements that extend their hegemony over large parts of the territory of the State.

Second, its inability to provide public services to its people and protect them from violence against them or to provide basic services to all citizens without discrimination and to afford them their basic needs.

Third, the relative or total loss of legitimacy. This happens when the State is unable to obtain recognition of its legitimacy from large segments of its citizens or the international community alike.

However, it is important to point out that the State's failure is a State characterized by diversity, where States are exposed to many different forms of failure. Even so, their manifestations can be limited to a range of symptoms, including civil wars, corruption, economic collapse, poor infrastructure, widespread poverty, poor or lawless sovereignty, inability to control all of their territories, political instability, and destructive ethnic mobilization⁽⁸⁾.

Literature of Political Science is also interested in this phenomenon, when they describe a State that ceases to perform its basic functions and fails to meet these minimum standards, in particular, its inability to protect its citizens from any internal or external aggression; as weak, fragile, or poorly performing States⁽⁹⁾. And States with the most critical situations have been described as failing and their failure may be transformed to collapsed states.

Failed States are distinguished from others by the presence of non-state actors that control the means of violence and control resources and populations. Max Weber says that the State must be the monopoly and sole user of violence. Because when the State is not the sole owner and monopoly of the means of violence, as is the case today in many countries suffering from this phenomenon, it will inevitably be on the way to failure. William Zartman also asserts that failed States are those that "lost the right to govern." Thus, the Government cannot monopolize legitimate violence or provide public services, thereby increasing the possibilities of the collapse of the economy, the flow of refugees and violations of human rights⁽¹⁰⁾.

2-Reasons behind the emergence of failed States:

There are a host of reasons why many countries have fallen into the trap of failure. However, a number of them can be chosen to explain what makes these countries vulnerable to weak, failure or collapse. The first is due to the remnants of the colonial phenomenon after independence and the subsequent destruction caused by it, along with the phenomenon of conflicts and lack of development. The second reason relates to the nature and efficiency of the elites that came to power after independence and the way they came to power. The third reason is always about the negative external role that has seriously hampered the growth of these countries and prevented their success in achieving their ambitions⁽¹¹⁾.

2-1-Conditions of Statehood after independence:

At first, it must be emphasized that the form adopted by the African States after independence was primarily an imported form, which is artificially described⁽¹²⁾. It is artificial because compared to Western countries, which developed over a long period, the State in Africa with a few exceptions, lacked an organic development from within civil society. Its current difficulties may therefore be due to the rapid pace and rush to end the colonial phenomenon without taking into account the specific circumstances of each African country. Which has led to the spread of several weak States in the region, which made it easy to collapse.

Some people interested in African issues argue that the granting of independence by the former colonial powers of some of these countries did not take into account ethnic or tribal divisions within their borders⁽¹³⁾. The independence of those peoples was imposed on them, and the establishment of States was sometimes done in a way reminiscent of the ways prevailing at the beginning of colonial rule⁽¹⁴⁾. This is, of course, to maintain its dominance over it and facilitate interference in its internal affairs whenever it concerns the defence of their interests.

What confirms this reality is that the newly emerging States were not related to their original communities that existed before the advent of colonialism in those areas⁽¹⁵⁾, since these new political entities were instead based on landmarks resulting from arbitrarily colonized structures⁽¹⁶⁾. Therefore, the imposed and artificial citizenship of the African country is the essence of the crisis in Africa. This had a fundamental result, named the retention of governments that are less connected to their citizens. In return, their undervalued legitimacy is compensated by foreign aid that former colonial powers or some international poles work to maintain it still in power⁽¹⁷⁾. Which explains their collapse or failure and weak governance even before the process of its establishment is completed⁽¹⁸⁾. This weakness has in most cases undermined its legitimacy, which has always incited it to use violence to ensure loyalty and compliance with its policies. On the other hand, this vulnerability has largely caused its inability to resist external pressures, not only from the outside world but also from its regional neighbours.

2-2-Weak performance of ruling elites:

The absence of effective and responsive government institutions is another cause of failed States. As if some elites in post-independent Africa considered the establishment of strong and lasting institutions (in terms of the strength of their representation of their peoples or in terms of their effectiveness), the last thing they thought about. They found another way to communicate with a part of their societies through "close contact through tribal relations, kinship, and ethnicity"⁽¹⁹⁾. These sort of acts are all strong indicators of the weakness of the State institutions and their inability to provide a convincing alternative, and the conversion of loyalty from the tribe or clan or race to loyalty to the State and strengthen the link of citizenship.

Therefore, the State through its elites often lack the resources or the political motivation to contain opposition groups; they prefer using increased repression. Such elites are not resorting to such solutions, because they do not have a high potential for success but for the simple reason that their weakness precludes the possibility of resorting to less violent alternatives⁽²⁰⁾.

Their reliance on dependency-based relationships, to foreign or regional powers, and their pursuit of narrow interests have made ruling lacking legitimacy elites, in a permanent confrontation with their societies. This situation is called by Job as "captive States" living in isolation from their own peoples⁽²¹⁾.

However, we can not say that bad leadership, lack of good governance and corrupt rulers in failed African countries are the only reason for this failure. Nevertheless, it must be said that the failed States in Africa today are victims of the policies adopted by the international community in dealing with them since their independence. Which made some weak States that, in unfavorable conditions fail and some collapse⁽²²⁾.

2-3-The negative impact of globalization on emerging African countries:

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the situation in the world economy after the end of the Cold War was no less dangerous than many countries being forced to be failed States.

The post-colonial African State became in a State of excessive dependence, after its negative integration into the world economy immediately after its independence. By its production of raw materials, it has relied extensively on the international market for capital and equipment. These conditions have made them in a situation where their economic fortunes are hostage to the vicissitudes of the global economy. Primary products represent 80% to 90% of total exports in sub-Saharan Africa⁽²³⁾.

Since the end of the cold war and the beginning of the wave of economic globalization, the process of economic liberalization has begun to replace the "rent economy" and the industrial and agricultural protectionist policies of the cold war era. African countries have become weaker and closer to collapse because of the diminishing financial resources that some regimes in the Cold War have had from great powers to support loyalty policies⁽²⁴⁾. This fact led directly leaders of these countries loss the control on areas that were loyal to the system, which the loyalty was guaranteed over the past period through the bestowal on their leaders to ensure their support. As a result, popular dissatisfaction has increased, leading to despair at best, and at worst to the rise and usage of force and armed insurrection.

The globalization has therefore had devastating consequences for Africa and its fledgling economy, where globalization has complicated the old security and development dilemmas and created more. Thus increasing their limited options and alternatives. Were the therapeutic prescriptions that the international financial institutions had begun to propose made them more difficult under the new global economic order. The new role of the market forces, which have captured one of the State's functions of identifying political alternatives to find solutions for domestic economic issues, is evident.

The phenomenon of failing States in Africa and in many Third World countries is therefore an expected result knowing the historical circumstances in which they were born and the international context dominated by the details of the Cold War. Finally, a victim of the devastating globalization machine of such weak States since their independence from the colonizer.

3-The position of the great powers from failed States:

The phenomenon of state failure at the beginning of this century was widely debated, and almost all was about the need to intervene in those countries that proved to be failing under the pretext of "human security" ⁽²⁵⁾. This debate has evolved into an open discourse that believes that the collapse of these countries could harm the security and stability of Western countries. Francis Fukuyama, for example, overlooked the link between failed states and their impact on their external environment. He believes that these countries represent the most important source of serious problems facing the international system today, along with other threats such as poverty, terrorism and drug trafficking⁽²⁶⁾. The emergence of this concept was long before the attacks of September 11, 2001, when US foreign policy makers were already using it⁽²⁷⁾. The September 11 attacks have had a major impact on pushing the concept of "failed states" to the forefront of US security interests and part of the vocabulary used by US foreign policy, which has come to see the failed states as a safe haven for international terrorism, which uses these countries as camps to target US interests⁽²⁸⁾.

Immediately after these events, the White House began to state every year when national security strategies were published that "the threat from failed States is much greater than the threat of the big powers that are competing United States"⁽²⁹⁾. The EU followed suit and adopted the same approach. This is clearly confirmed by the European Union's security strategy for 2003, which adopted similar positions to those of the United States, where failed states were regarded as a "worrying phenomenon" ⁽³⁰⁾. As a result, they were considered failing states that became dysfunctional and dangerous for themselves and for others⁽³¹⁾.

In consequence, United States and most of the Western countries are emphasizing the point of view that what is happening as crises in some African countries is nothing more than purely African problems. Such a position would therefore deny all responsibility to these countries for the current crisis in African countries.

As discussed above, almost all perceptions tend to provide a descriptive account of the phenomenon of failed State without reference to the historical and social circumstances through which African countries reached this State of failure. "There is no reference to the process by which these countries became weak, while others became more" powerful. "The question that should have been asked from the start was not who failed, but rather who caused and contributed to the failure of these countries?"⁽³²⁾

4-The over usage of the failed State concept:

It cannot be said that "the failing State" is a new phenomenon peculiar to the African States. The reality is that international system faced the same problem after World War II in Europe, and especially after the wave of decolonization since the end of the 1950s. Nevertheless, many Western leaders, even politicians and experts, insist that these countries currently lack an effective government capable of managing public affairs and repelling the dangers on their borders, which, in their view, is proof of their failure and, consequently, of their inability to function. To resolve this situation, they believe that it is necessary to help these States and that the international community - institutions or countries - should be an alternative to their incapacity. It should be noted, however, that their proposed alternative goes well beyond the support and assistance normally provided to stranded countries. The alternative is simply to replace the traditional roles of African states with new roles played by parties outside the continent. This is the sign of an overwhelming desire to reactivate the guardianship system.

We can say that the Western countries in general, by joining the failure of the State to the international trusteeship system, could find a strong justification for them to intervene in these countries on the pretext of building a new legitimacy and preventing them from becoming a field of terrorism and chaos and stop them from spreading to other parts of the world. From this fundamental point of view, the debate today probably no longer concerns the legality of the intervention, but all the attention is focused on the means to succeed in the intervention.

Concepts such as the failed or collapsed State or other concepts that we have referred to in this research suffer from two types of imperfections, as confirmed by Jean-Bernard Véron⁽³³⁾. First, these concepts focus primarily on the Max Weber model of organizing the tasks assigned to the modern State. However, even though this model remains largely the norm today, this does not preclude the possibility that other models exist for countries that are also capable of providing their people with the same degree of service, protection and advancement. The second type of deficiency is, as Véron emphasizes⁽³⁴⁾, a deliberate focus on analyzing a particular situation of a country at a given time, with the risk of underestimating the historical path that led to that situation and thus neglecting an important aspect of research. The influential elements behind this phenomenon and this form. This rigid approach, which is implied by these concepts, can lead to the proposal of solutions that are not appropriate to the phenomenon.

The phenomenon has not changed, the new thing is that it has become more complex, influenced by the political and economic conditions that have become in control of international relations after the end of the Cold War. According to a September 30, 2000, report of the Working Group on Failed States, there were nearly 114 failed States counted between 1955 and 1998⁽³⁵⁾. the Cold War made the phenomenon clearer, and any claim to introduce the new concept of a "failed State" is false.

Thus, these unstable conditions, defined as "failed States", have become a major objective of global security strategies over the past two decades. This has been described as a "new threat" to international peace and security. More seriously, it is linked to security problems that are of great concern to the international community, such as the phenomenon of

international terrorism, illegal immigration and the drug trade. Since the absence of an effective government has become an indicator of the inability of the State to perform its tasks and therefore its failure, most of the perspective on the phenomenon of failed States is in the direction of the international community to save these countries and their people from the danger of chaos and violence.

This rescue, which takes the form of military intervention and international administration, is its most important form. Thus, the United States and the Western countries, in general, have been able to find a strong justification for this intervention to intervene in these countries on the pretext of building new legitimacy in these countries and preventing them from becoming a field of terrorism and chaos and an opportunity to move to other parts of the world. That the Treaty of Westphalia established since its inception the principle of the sanctity of the sovereignty of States and the prohibition of interference in its internal affairs. Accordingly, the debate today is not about the legality of the intervention or not, and the real goal, but all the attention is focused on ways to make the intervention successful. What has become known in recent years as the responsibility of protection is an explicit message by these countries to the international community and third world countries in particular that intervention in its human form is a model of a new intervention that transcends the UN in which they depend on the rules and values that have governed international relations to this day.

Conclusion:

Variance and severity of the vulnerability is one of the key features of distinguishing between state failure or weakness and possibly collapse. Therefore, this concept remains "loose" as long as it makes no difference between African countries that are difficult to compare in the light of the prevailing conditions. Derek W. Brinkerhoff says that failed states are dynamic, going through different stages: from stability to crisis, conflict and failure; he may emerge from crisis to recovery and stability⁽³⁶⁾. This suggests that each country can go through difficult times in its history, and faces internal and external pressures. This makes it more difficult to distinguish or attempt to separate failed and non-failed countries. Some even question the feasibility of including some countries in the group of failed states as long as their ability to emerge from the danger zone is not excluded, especially if conditions are appropriate. In addition, the problems of some African countries can be found even in highly stable countries (e.g. poverty, insecurity in some areas and the desire for secession, for example), but without being labelled as failed states.

The need to fight terrorism has prompted some major Powers to prefer to deal with certain African regimes and provide them with protection and means. The concept of a failed State has also been a powerful incentive for these Powers to support and strengthen the capacities of those African States, even though such support is often directed toward regimes that pursue arbitrary and repressive policies against their peoples. Although security is a sine qua non for stability and development, external efforts to strengthen the capacity of some regimes in the region have become hostile to the objectives proclaimed from the outset. Ignoring the nature of these coercive or corrupt regimes has reduced the possibility of transforming them into democratic and legitimate systems. This situation is referred to the last historical period when the Western Powers reinforced the abilities of some third world countries under the pretext of curbing the security threat of the communist expansion. This policy was behind a series of serious problems: The rise of repressive governments to power, serious violations of human rights and instability. Consequently, the policies of the major Powers have often been the direct cause of the emergence of failed States.

The results of Ratner, Helman or Johnson could therefore be considered correct, but provided that the former colonial powers and Western countries today leave these countries to live in peace and do not interfere in their internal affairs on every small or big issue, the reality will be the exact opposite.

Taking advantage of the issue of state fragility in Africa is an opportunity to undermine the remaining indicators of state existence, marking a new stage in the context of Western

intervention in African countries. **The first stage** of this intervention was to deal with and support the region's regimes without seeing its disadvantages and black records of human rights and corruption at all levels, or by planning to overthrow regimes that do not fall within the orbit of Western Powers, either during or after the Cold War era. **The second stage** comes in the form of prescriptions from international financial institutions, through which aid has been exchanged for proposed political and economic "reforms". It is clear that Western countries, through these institutions - and the disastrous consequences they have had in African countries - have shown the world their inability to fulfil their role and respect their responsibilities to their people. As if they were unaware from the start that these systems had originally failed.

Then the **last stage** emerged, as we mentioned earlier, through these new research concepts such as the failed, weak or even collapsed state. These concepts were a prelude to what was more dangerous. The concept of trusteeship that has come back from the past to deal with the prevailing international reality after the end of the Cold War, is a good justification and provides sufficient arguments for some international Powers that are seriously considering reviving it and employing it in their new strategies. That is, of course, only "to help and protect the African peoples."

We should notice that the growing Western interest in the failed African countries, joined with its declared war on global terrorism, leads to the belief that the region has become a magnet for the big Powers. The claim that the threat emanating from these countries and the taking of international terrorism into their territory is a pathway to target the interests of the Great Powers is a strong excuse to hide the rush of major powers to redraw the continent's map in the form of new spheres of influence. These areas are drawn in light of the presence of these forces on the ground and the various interests that seek to protect them. The term of failed States in this particular period came in the presence of intense competition that began to shape the relations between the major powers and even the emerging economic Powers that were seriously competing. Thus, the term is in fact the other side of what might be called neo-colonialism, which takes the desire to acquire new markets and ensure permanent sources of natural resources as a higher goal.

The excessive use of this concept is, therefore, part of creating the conditions to justify intervention in the region, through a real process of adapting world and local public opinion to accept the idea of a new trusteeship as the best way to find solutions to the problems of those countries, and the best tool to avoid and contain the danger that may emanate.

Endnotes:

1-The human cost caused by conflicts in weak or failed countries in Africa since the end of the cold war, is higher than in other parts of the world. Conflicts such as those in the Sahel, Sudan, South-Sudan, Somalia, have claimed the lives of many people. Between 500,000 and 1 million victims, in the case of those happened in Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Uganda. Unlike during the Cold War, these numbers were increased by the increase in internal conflicts, where the war between nations was no longer a dominant feature. Since 1989, the number of conflicts between States has not been more than two. On the contrary, there were 32 intrastate conflicts (intrastate but often externalized) in 2006. This confirms that today's violent conflict is taking place within weak and fragile States and not among States. More on this subject can be found in:

Arthur. A Goldsmith. «Foreign aid and Statehood in Africa. » *International Organization*, 55, 1, winter 2001, pp 123-148.

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3- For more details on this list, please visit the Peace Support Fund website at: http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/fsi_map_2017.pdf

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- 10- Eizenstat.S; Porter. J; Weinstein. J, ((Jan/Feb 2005), *Rebuilding Weak States*», *Foreign Affairs*, , Vol. 84, Issue 1, pp 134-137.
- 11- It should be clarified that this research is not intended to absolve some corrupted and failed regimes in the third world and Africa, but the intention is to put forward another approach, by highlighting the importance of the external role and its impact on the situation in the region; in order to discuss the reality of external interference in the internal affairs of African countries.
- 12- See what John Weisman wrote about this subject:
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- 13-Jackson.R, (1990), *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, international relations and the third world*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p 168
- 14-Ruth.G, (1997), «*Saving Failed States: Sometimes a Neocolonialist Notion*», *American University International Law Review*, Vol 12, N° 6, p 920.
- 15- Ibid, p 920.
- 16- Ibid, p 921.
- 17- Ibid, p 921.
- 18- Bratton.M, (April 1989), *Beyond the State: civil society and associational life in Africa*, *World Politics*, Vol 41, issue 3, p 409.
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