



Strengthening the DPD RI Institution: Strengthening Regional Independence and the Bicameral System in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explain the critical role of strengthening the institutional framework of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) in strengthening regional independence, particularly regarding the minimal authority of the DPD based on the constitution, namely proposing draft laws related to regional interests, and participating in discussions. This is, of course, not the basic authority of the parliamentary institution, but only a derivative of the authority of the DPR, which means the DPD is not a complete legislative institution because it does not have the authority to make final decisions in the political process. This research methodology is qualitative with descriptive analysis. The results of this study explain the institutional position of the DPD in the Indonesian constitutional system, the strengthening of the bicameral system, and the idea of amending the 1945 Constitution to strengthen the position of the DPD. Constitutional breakthroughs to improve the position of the DPD are essential because, since the DPD was established, there has been no breakthrough in its institutional function. Strengthening the function of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) through the fifth amendment to the 1945 Constitution is expected to optimize regional autonomy as an anchor of development and national integration. Therefore, it is also necessary to build the desire, togetherness, and will of stakeholders, such as political parties, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), academics, and the community, to realize the noble ideals of developing a more advanced, effective, and equitable Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

One of the progressive changes in the Indonesian constitution after the reforms was the establishment of a new body called the Regional Representative Council (DPD) through an amendment to the 1945 Constitution (Golap, 2017). The old regulations during the New Order era stipulated that the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) consisted of the People's Representative Council (DPR) and representatives from regions and groups, each divided by law, with a number ranging from four to eight representatives, depending on the population density of each province in Indonesia (Hermanto et al., 2024; Tinambunan & Prasetyo, 2019).

In practice, before the amendments to the 1945 Constitution were implemented, a significant problem arose in accommodating regional interests to the central government (Sinaga & Machmud, 2024). This was due to the lack of a clear position in bridging the interests of the central and regional governments in relation to state administration (Jamaluddin, 2020). Therefore, the establishment of the DPD within parliament was projected to resolve this issue (Hudhaibi, 2023; Indrastuti et al., 2024; Irsyada & Wardana, 2024).

In a democratic system, the function of parliament is to represent the interests of the people (Taufik, 2021). Parliament has the authority to determine all laws and policies within a country. Referring to countries with vast territories and diverse societies, such as the United States, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, and the Philippines, the existence of political institutions

to advance regional interests is crucial (Adiputri, 2018; Poguntke et al., 2016). Parliament has two forms (bicameral), which function to represent national interests through political parties and regional interests through regional representatives through senators (Baidhowah, 2022).

Historically, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) has amended the 1945 Constitution four times (Marzuki & Sitompul, 2020; Yusdianto, 2015). Articles 18, 18A, and 18B implicitly regulate the basis for Regional Government. All laws are automatically reviewed and revised to accommodate amendments to the 1945 Constitution, Indonesia's highest law (Arizona, 2023). One of the things that was updated and adjusted was the regulation regarding regional government which was ratified in 1999. From there, Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government was born, following the principles of decentralization, deconcentration, and assistance tasks in accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution (Zein & Philona, 2022).

Furthermore, the consequences of the amendments to the 1945 Constitution also impacted the structure of the representative body, changing from a unicameral to a bicameral one, consisting of the House of Representatives (DPR) representing political parties and the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) representing the regions. The presence of the DPD in the Indonesian parliament (further regulated in Articles 22C and 22D of the 1945 Constitution) is undoubtedly a breath

of fresh air for regions in accessing central government policies (Nugroho, 2024).

This is because aspirations previously absorbed solely by the DPR are now energized by the DPD's presence, broadening the central government's perspective on the regions. Furthermore, the DPD's presence in Indonesia's representative system can bridge previously invisible interests between the central and regional governments. It's certainly better to see things from two perspectives than from one. Therefore, the noble ideal of establishing the DPD as the second chamber of the Indonesian parliament is expected to safeguard regional interests (Gani, 2020).

Furthermore, in the 2004 elections, for the first time, the Indonesian people elected members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) using a district system, which included electoral districts (dapil) covering one province (consisting of regencies/cities), competing for four seats in each. At that time, Indonesia had 32 provinces. This meant that the total number of DPD members for the 2004-2009 period was 128 (Gandhi, 2020; Ryantoni et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, for the 2009-2014 period, with 33 provinces in Indonesia, the number of DPD members was 132. Then, for the 2014-2019 and 2019-2024 periods, the number of DPD members was 136, as in those two periods, the number of provinces in Indonesia was 34. Then, for the 2024-2029 period, as a result of regional expansion, particularly in the Papua region, which has increased the number of provinces in Indonesia's 38th term, the number of DPD RI members is 152 (Cynthia, et al., 2024).

Research by Seftiani et al., (2023) found that the formation of the DPD from the outset has created numerous problems in the Indonesian state system, necessitating a reexamination of our state structure to identify these issues. This is emphasized by Syahidah (2024), who discusses the analysis of the role and performance of the DPD over the past four periods, which remains unsatisfactory. The problematic performance cannot be separated from its limited authority, despite the positive impact of several Constitutional Court (MK) decisions deemed favorable to the DPD. Furthermore, these issues will challenge the DPD to improve its performance so that its role is no longer seen as merely an accessory to democracy within a representative institution.

Mubarok & Turpyn (2024) emphasized that the Regional Representative Council (DPD) of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) truly plays a strategic role in legislative, oversight, and budgetary functions. However, the opportunities that elected DPD members can exploit to improve parliamentary performance cannot be maximized due to limited authority. Sasongko & Azhari (2025) concluded that the DPD, as a high-ranking institution, has not been able to demonstrate its political prowess and effectively perform within the Indonesian parliamentary system. This study substantively explains how strengthening the DPD will strengthen regional governments in their relevance to Indonesia's decentralization system.

Politically, the DPD's presence is considered part of a compromise between the central government and the regions in parliament, as its seats are evenly allocated, with four seats per province. This contrasts with the DPR for the 2024-2029 period, which has 580 seats calculated based on population and area using a proportional system, with 60% of its members coming from Java. At first glance, the existence of the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional Representative

Council (DPD) within the Indonesian representative body is similar to the House of Representatives (DPR) and Senate in the United States (US) parliament. Both implement a bicameral parliamentary system within a presidential system of government (Gunawan et al., 2023). In the US Parliament, the House of Representatives (DPR) and Senate hold equal power, with the Senate even tending to be more dominant than the DPR. This is why in the US, a president often lobbies a particular state Senate to pass a proposed bill after it has been passed in the House of Representatives (Andris et al., 2015).

In contrast to the representative body in Indonesia, the DPR plays a significant role, is directly involved in lawmaking, the State Budget (APBN) preparation process, and has direct oversight of the President. Meanwhile, the DPD seems to be only an accessory to democracy because its role is only complementary, namely: submitting Draft Laws (RUU) to the DPR, providing considerations to the DPR and participating in discussing the RUU with the DPR (Sulardi, 2024).

Over time, a significant imbalance emerged between the authority of the DPR and the DPD, ultimately leading to problems. This was due to the mismatch between the expectations surrounding the DPD's formation and the political reality. For example, institutionally, the DPR and DPD should ideally be equal. Each institution, both the DPR and DPD, has its own chamber. However, in reality, the DPD's position appears to be subordinate to the DPR (Safriadin, 2025). Consequently, the DPD's hopes of acting as a bridge between regional voices and the central government have been hampered. The reason is that the DPD's functions are limited, leaving it powerless to influence central policy. The DPD's lofty goal is to oversee the implementation of regional autonomy in the cities or regencies it represents.

Wasti (2018) explains that in many democracies, including Indonesia, it is rarely a monolithic or coherent institution, but often in a state of flux as competing and shifting interests seek to shape how the institution operates and how it makes or avoids decision-making. Usually, the dominance of specific institutional figures over parliamentary proceedings weakens its performance in its various functions through patronage, procedural control, or resource manipulation, a practice also seen in the Indonesian parliamentary chamber between the Regional Representative Council (DPD) and the House of Representatives (DPR).

Furthermore, DPD members are elected independently. However, in an effort to overcome the deadlock caused by the inability to accommodate their regional interests, some DPD members have opted to become closer to political parties. The tactical goal is to expand their reach and represent the aspirations of their constituents in the regions through party representation in the DPR. However, DPD members should be independent of political party interests because their election to represent their regions is a collective, collegial relationship, representing regional interests and ensuring equitable development. Therefore, based on the above background, it is important to examine "Strengthening the DPD Institution in Strengthening Regional Independence" with the aim of analyzing DPD institutional issues, solutions for strengthening the DPD institution, and the challenges faced.

METHOD

This article uses descriptive analysis with qualitative research methods, where the phenomena that occur can be explored and their meaning understood by answering research questions through inductive data collection and analysis, and interpreting the meaning of that data (Turale, 2020). The use of exploratory case studies, referring to Yin (2018) is used to explore situations where the evaluated intervention does not have a clear set of outcomes. This research seeks to analyze the phenomena that occur in actual problems or phenomena at the time of the study, then describe the facts about the issues investigated as they exist, accompanied by rational and accurate interpretations.

This method will help researchers understand the issues related to strengthening the Regional Representative Council (DPD) in strengthening regional independence and strengthening the DPD within the bicameral system in Indonesia. Research data collection was also conducted through a review of journals as primary data. Secondary data for this research were obtained from books, documents, or reports related to the research focus. The author then analyzes the case phenomenon inductively, focusing on the research focus on the implications of strengthening the DPD institution for development and regional decentralization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The idea for the birth of the DPD in Indonesia stems from the demands of democracy, where the people sovereignly elect their representatives outside of political parties as regional representatives. Furthermore, the birth of the DPD also arose from increasing demands for the implementation of regional autonomy, which, if not correctly managed, could lead to demands for separatism and disintegration. Therefore, the mission of the DPD, a state institution, has an integration function, as mandated by the third principle of Pancasila, namely the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This means that the essence of the DPD's existence in the Indonesian state system must flow from articles relating to regional government, including: Article 18 paragraph (1) of the Third Amendment to the 1945 Constitution, which states: "The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is divided into provincial regions, and provincial regions are divided into regencies and cities, each of which has its own province, regency, and city, each with its own regional government regulated by law."

This needs to be further strengthened, given that Indonesia's 38 provinces have unequal natural resources, human resources, and funding sources for regional autonomy. The Regional Representative Council (DPD) should have strategic authority to represent regional interests at the central level. This is particularly true in relation to its relationship with the House of Representatives (DPR) in Indonesia's bicameral system, which supports each other in advancing regional aspirations (Imran et al., 2020). However, the ideal bicameral system is in reality far from balanced (weak bicameralism), with the DPD's position weaker than the DPR and even considered merely an accessory to institutional democracy in Indonesia. While the DPD, like the DPR, is directly elected by the people, its functions and authorities are significantly subordinate to those of the DPR.

Compared to the DPR's functions and authorities, the DPD's authority is minimal, both institutionally and personally. The

House of Representatives (DPR) is the institution responsible for ratifying laws together with the President, exercising oversight over the executive, and exercising budgetary authority (Chun, 2022). Meanwhile, the Regional Representative Council (DPD) is subordinate to the DPR in its three functions: legislation, oversight, and budgeting. Furthermore, the DPD lacks constitutional protection, allowing the President to dissolve it at any time through decree, while the DPR enjoys constitutional protection regarding its existence. Furthermore, while all DPR members are protected by constitutional immunity, the DPD lacks such constitutional guarantees (Supriyadi, 2015).

This minimal authority renders the DPD a mere formality in the constitutional system, a consequence of the compromises underlying the four amendments to the 1945 Constitution. This is because when the idea for these amendments emerged, opposition from certain groups arose, resulting in two extreme ideas being confronted, leading to a political compromise within the institution. First, the idea that the 1945 Constitution needs to be amended because it consistently creates an undemocratic political system. Second, the idea that the 1945 Constitution should be maintained as is because it is the work of the founding fathers and is considered excellent (Failaq & Monati, 2023).

The rejection of these ideas ultimately led to a compromise in the form of a basic agreement, preventing the free implementation of amendments to accommodate constitutional law. Five points formed the basis for the implementation of the amendments at the inception of the DPD: first, not to change the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. Second, to maintain the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Third, to emphasize the presidential system. Fourth, to explain the 1945 Constitution, which contains normative matters to be included in the articles. Fifth, to implement the amendments based on an addendum, an additional article separate from the 1945 Constitution but legally attached to the Constitution. This fifth point related to the addendum also directly led to the formation of the DPD as a state institution, but its function was virtually meaningless (Armia, 2023).

With the amendments to the addendum, the original 1945 Constitution remained the primary foundation, allowing for amendments to be made through the insertion of individual articles. If any articles needed to be amended or replaced, these amendments were made as an attachment to the original Constitution. Thus, when the articles were amended in the MPR, it was stipulated that the MPR would consist only of members of the DPR and DPD, seemingly accommodating the bicameral idea.

However, when the amendments were implemented, the DPR's function was strengthened as a state institution holding the power to create laws without having to rely on the DPD. Therefore, the DPD then became merely a complement to existing state institutions. Outside of the amendments, the MPR's function was virtually non-existent, particularly in relation to joint sessions between the DPR and DPD in constitutional amendments. Since the DPD's inception, no constitutional amendments to the 1945 Constitution have been implemented.

Strengthening the Bicameral System

The DPD's constitutional authority is minimal, namely proposing draft laws relating to regional interests and

participating in deliberations. This is certainly not a fundamental authority of a parliamentary institution, but rather a derivative of the DPR's authority. This means the DPD is not a full-fledged legislative institution, as it lacks final decision-making authority in the political process. The DPD's full authority is limited to providing advice. In the legislative process, the DPD can indeed propose draft laws (RUU), but these proposed bills do not include the DPD's authority to participate in joint agreements between the DPR and the President (Akmal, 2022).

This means the DPD's function is limited to proposing laws. Its legislative duties merely support the DPR's constitutional auxiliary institutions. Empirically, the DPD has thus far served as a co-legislator rather than a full legislator. This is despite the spirit of the DPD's establishment as an integral part of parliament, which is expected to serve both oversight and legislative functions. An additional function closely related to these two is the budget function. The instruments that parliament can use to oversee the administration of government effectively are (a) the right to budget, (b) the right of interpellation, (c) the right of inquiry, (d) the right to propose resolutions, and (e) the right of confirmation, or the right to elect specific candidates. In addition to institutional rights, each individual member of parliament is also guaranteed the right to ask questions and submit proposals, as well as other rights such as immunity and protocol rights. Specifically regarding the legislative function, parliament also has rights such as (a) the right of initiative and (b) the right of amendment (Yani, 2018).

As a representative institution, the Regional Representative Council (DPD) should have legislative, oversight, and budgetary functions, similar to the DPR. However, the DPD, as a representative institution with these three functions, only has very weak and flexible functions. The bicameral system in the Indonesian parliament means that the DPR and DPD do not have the same authority.

Table 1. Comparison of the DPR and DPD institutions in Indonesia's bicameral system

Representation Aspect	People's Representative Council	Regional Representative Council
Forms of Representation	Representing national interests through political parties	Representing regional interests territorially
Electoral System Proportional	Sistem proporsional system based on population	District system (4 seats per province)
Number of Seats	580 seats	152 seats (from 38 provinces)
Legislative Authority	Holds full power to create laws alongside the President	Has only limited authority: proposing bills and providing consideration. Does not have the right to participate in final decision-making
Budgetary Authority	Has a budgetary function (along with the President).	Does not have a substantial budgetary function; its position is

		subordinate to the House of Representatives
Supervisory Authority	Has direct supervisory powers over the executive	Has very limited supervisory powers
Constitutional Protection	Protected by the constitution and entitled to immunity	Does not enjoy the same constitutional protection

Sumber : diolah peneliti (2025)

Above is a schedule of the stages of the registration process for prospective Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros Regency. But after the end of the registration period, only one pair of prospective candidates (paslon) registered so that according to PKPU 10 of 2024 and KPU Decree Number 1229 of 2024 it explains that if only one pair of candidates registers, registration can be extended. So the extension was carried out from 2 to 4 September 2024 which was previously announced on 30 August to 1 September 2024.

Based on the table above, the implications of the limited constitutional authority of the DPD are that the presence of the DPD as a representative institution which represents regions (territorial or regional), makes it difficult to maximize its role in collecting and articulating regional aspirations and interests in formulating regional policies and interests at the national level (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Furthermore, when the Regional Representative Council (DPD) was established, its primary goal was to increase regional representation. The DPD's presence as the second chamber in the Indonesian parliament is crucial and strategic in the development of the Indonesian constitutional system. Its function is to implement the principle of checks and balances.

As a counterweight to the DPR and the President, the DPD is expected to oversee the implementation of regional autonomy and bridge central and regional interests, as well as champion just and equal regional prosperity. This aligns with the idea of the Fifth Amendment to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, spearheaded by the DPD, with one of its key ideas strengthening the two-chamber model within the representative body structure. A bicameral system would establish a mechanism of checks and balances between the two legislative bodies. Of course, the conceptual idea of establishing an effective bicameral system can only be realized through an amendment to the 1945 Constitution (Nurjaman, 2024).

The purpose of this amendment to the 1945 Constitution is to strengthen the position of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) in the Indonesian parliament, primarily to enact legislation similar to that implemented in the United States. Therefore, to achieve this, the DPD must compel the House of Representatives (DPR) and the President to accommodate the DPD's interests by approving a bill to become law. If the DPD's wishes are not accepted by the DPR or the President, the DPD can refuse to provide its opinion on other bills being deliberated. Therefore, the legal consequence of approving a bill discussed by the DPR and the President without the DPD's opinion is that the approved law is no longer valid. A joint resolution by the DPR and the President is inherently flawed, or more accurately, unconstitutional.

Furthermore, if the DPD dares to take such a bold stance, it is assumed to have strong moral support from the people, particularly from regional governments, provided that what the DPD champions

truly serves the public and regional interests as a sociological reality. When the DPD's stance receives a positive response from the House of Representatives (DPR) and the President, it signifies political support, and ultimately, it becomes a constitutional tradition or custom, known as a convention. Thus, non-legal changes to the constitution gradually occur, but within the context of Constitutional Law, these are legally valid (Kosasih et al., 2024).

Constitutional Amendments

The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) remains uncertain as to whether it will adopt a bicameral or tricameral system, meaning that the MPR will be a combination of the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional Representative Council (DPD), or will have the same institutional status as the DPD and DPR. This unclear position of the MPR impacts the performance of the DPD and the institutional relationship between it and the DPR, as well as between the DPD and the President. Constitutionally, the DPD is a law-making body that has the authority to propose bills to the DPR. However, in practice, the DPD is merely an assistant to the DPR, and therefore can only be considered an assistant lawmaker. Indeed, the DPD's authority is minimal (Toding, 2017).

The establishment of the DPD in Indonesia stemmed from the fact that regional aspirations and interests had not been effectively channeled through the DPR or the Regional Representatives in the MPR. This is because political parties' participation in general elections was based not solely on the interests of the people as a whole, but rather on the interests of the elite. Unfortunately, the DPD's presence in the Indonesian parliament has not brought about significant change. The DPD's function remains co-opted in a political system that does not uphold democratic principles (Supriyadi, 2015). The DPD's function should be to protect autonomous regions from central government policies that are decentralized through legislation that applies to the jurisdiction of regional governments. Furthermore, in a bicameral parliament, both houses require equal decision-making power, at least with the authority to enact laws. However, in reality, the DPD and the DPR's positions as legislative bodies are unequal. There is a significant gap and imbalance in authority between the DPR and DPD, which is inconsistent with a bicameral system.

A bicameral parliament requires two chambers. These chambers are necessary to protect all passed laws. For example, the bicameral system in the United States is a compromise between densely populated states and less populous states. The House of Representatives (DPR) represents all citizens, with representation proportional to each state's population. Meanwhile, the Senate represents the states, with each state represented by two senators, regardless of population. However, empirically, constitutional breakthroughs to strengthen the DPD's position have not occurred because the DPD has not made any breakthroughs or progressive political maneuvers by mobilizing political power for the 1945 Constitution. Regardless of the success or failure of efforts to establish the DPD, the courage to improvise with the DPD's minimal authority remains a challenge, as constitutional amendments are not automatic but are fought for through political means.

The formal implementation of amendments to the 1945 Constitution is challenging because a proposal to amend the Constitution must be submitted by at least one-third of the total members of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). The current number of DPD members in the MPR does not even reach one-third. Similarly, to discuss the contents of the Constitution to be amended, a quorum of two-thirds of the MPR membership is required. Therefore, decisions to amend articles of the 1945 Constitution must meet the

requirement of approval by at least fifty percent of the MPR membership. This requirement is clearly considered difficult for the DPD to achieve without the support of the DPR in the MPR. Therefore, the DPD must find alternative ways. Thus, each DPD member is required to embrace a progressive legal paradigm, rather than the conservative one currently seen, which is practically passive. Indeed, the spirit of implementing constitutional amendments must be based on a spirit of championing regional interests, not the interests of elites or groups.

This means that the 5th amendment to the 1945 Constitution is indeed a momentum to place the position of the DPD at least on par with the DPR in the legislative, budgetary and supervisory functions (Gelora M, 2019). The goal is for the DPD to be sovereign as a representative institution to concentrate on building, prospering and accommodating regional interests. Related to other regulations regarding the optimization of the role of the DPD, of course, this is done through the new Election Bill and revisions to the MD3 Law, which are expected to be able to create an equal forum between the DPR and DPD.

CONCLUSION

The spirit of establishing the Regional Representative Council (DPD) following the amendments to the 1945 Constitution was a progressive effort to create a bicameral system capable of more effectively accommodating regional interests. However, in practice, this ideal goal has not been achieved. The DPD faces institutional problems that render it ineffective, primarily due to its minimal authority compared to the House of Representatives (DPR). This gap in authority renders the DPD merely an "accessory of democracy" or a complement to the DPR, ultimately hampering its function as a bridge between the central and regional governments. Although directly elected by the people, the DPD lacks legislative, oversight, and budgetary powers equivalent to the DPR, which is the root of its inability to champion regional independence.

Weak Bicameralism: Indonesia adheres to a weak bicameral system. In theory, a bicameral system should create a strong mechanism of checks and balances between the two chambers (DPR and DPD). However, due to the unequal authority, the DPD fails to act as a counterweight to the DPR. This serves as an essential case study in political science on how political compromise in constitutional amendments can produce institutional structures that appear ideal in theory but are practically dysfunctional. This is despite the concept of representation and decentralization: the establishment of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) aimed to strengthen regional representation and support decentralization. However, the DPD's limited authority demonstrates that representation is insufficient without adequate political power. The concept of regional autonomy becomes difficult to realize if the institution that is supposed to safeguard regional interests lacks the authority to influence central government policy.

One of the reasons for the establishment of the DPD was that it was expected to accommodate regional aspirations. However, in practice, the DPD cannot be a "guardian of regional interests" because its authority is limited to proposing bills without the right to participate in final decision-making. This blocks the channels for aspirations from the regions, potentially fueling dissatisfaction and weakening public trust in the legislative institution.

This presents a challenge for the DPD, as its members face a dilemma. To advance their aspirations, they are forced to resort to tactical means, such as approaching political parties, which contradicts the DPD's essence as a non-partisan representative body. This also demonstrates that the DPD's effectiveness relies heavily on individual political maneuvering rather than the institutional strength it should possess. This research directly implies that amending the 1945 Constitution is the only formal solution to strengthen the DPD's position. Without an amendment, the DPD's limited authority will continue to hamper its role, and its existence will remain a mere formality in the constitutional system. In an effort to make this research more structured and comprehensive, the following recommendations could be considered: a more concrete Fifth Amendment to the 1945 Constitution containing articles or revisions that would grant the DPD equal legislative, oversight, and budgetary authority.

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