Peace Education or Militarisation? Submission to the 72nd session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

Quaker Peace & Social Witness

1. Summary

1.1 This report highlights interrelated concerns for children's rights in the United Kingdom (UK):

1.2   (i) the failure of direct education to prepare children for a responsible life in a 'spirit of peace' in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[1];

       (ii) the continued military recruitment of 16 and 17 year olds in circumstances that undermine the safeguards in Article 3 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as infringing the rights in Articles 3, 5 and 24 of the CRC itself;

       (iii) the encroachment of the military in children and young people's lives, particularly in education, infringing Articles 14 and 38 as well as worsening the failure to deliver under Article 29;

       (iv) the marginalisation resulting from the Prevent counterterrorism strategy[2], breaching Article 2 protection from discrimination.

1.3 Three of these issues (i, ii and iv) having been raised previously with the UK by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 2008 and 2015, it is time for the UK government to respond with meaningful progress. The third issue, the troubling prioritisation given to military programmes directed at children, exacerbates the first two concerns. It undermines peace education for all children and the candour and objectivity of information afforded to armed forces recruits. Evidence is also emerging that the Prevent Strategy increases division in schools and undermines peace and human rights education.

1.4 This submission explores these four issues in the UK, raises questions which the UNCRC may wish to pursue, and concludes with recommendations for the state party.

2. About Quakers in Britain

2.1 This submission comes from the national umbrella body of Quakers in Britain[3]. It focuses on our concern that the increasing role of the armed forces in schools is injurious to children's rights and on the need for peace education to be mainstreamed.

2.2 While the state party under review is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, we focus on England, Scotland and Wales as the countries in which Quakers in Britain work.

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[1] Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29, part d: "education of the child shall be directed to: (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin";

[2] UK government (2015), *Prevent duty guidance*, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

[3] This submission is written by the Peace Education Programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, which forms part of the centrally managed work of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. Registered with charity number 1127633. Around 22,000 people attend 480 Quaker meetings in Britain.

2.3   Informed by the Peace Testimony, Quakers in Britain have long been proponents and pioneers of "peace education". Equally, Quakers' opposition to war is well-known. Historically, this has manifested in various forms including relief work and conscientious objection in times of war, peace building and nonviolent conflict resolution. Quakers in Britain today continue to work for peace, campaigning against war and its roots in the arms trade and militarisation of society.

3.   Failing to educate for peace

3.1   Meaningful peace education is key to the realisation of children's rights. Article 29 of the CRC states: "...the education of the child shall be directed to...the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples..."[4]. The specific need for a stronger approach to harmful conflict in schools in the UK was further identified by the UNCRC in 2008:

> *To intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools, including through teaching human rights, peace and tolerance.*[5]

3.2   However, the UK government has done little to fulfil this obligation. While excellent initiatives have taken place to tackle violence in schools, this has been with sparse state support. Schools and civil society organisations have worked to introduce successful mediation[6] and restorative justice programmes in schools and training for young people, but this provision is variable and depends on availability of local or civil society initiatives. It is likely to remain so in the context of the dissolution of local authorities' role in education in England.

3.3   Social relationships in schools must fundamentally be based on truth and fairness. Purely punitive responses to conflict in schools do not model the skills young people will need as democratic citizens.

3.4   Encouragingly, support is given to practices such as emotional literacy and peer mediation in Scotland through the Rights, Support and Wellbeing Team, showing that support can be offered [7], but England's Department for Education (DFE) does not exercise an equivalent.

3.5   The DFE's statutory guidance and advice on "behaviour and discipline"[8] and "preventing bullying" is vague: "A sophisticated approach… might involve talking to pupils about issues of difference, perhaps in lessons, through dedicated events or projects, or through assemblies"[9]. This advice does little to support schools and

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[4] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

[5] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008), Concluding observations on the report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UN Doc: CRC/C/GBR/CO/4

[6] The Peer Mediation Network (2016), Open Letter to Secretary of State for Education

[7] Education Scotland, Peer Mediation (retrieved April 2016)
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inclusionandequalities/relationshipsandbehaviour/approaches/restorative/peermediation/index.asp

[8] Behaviour and Discipline in Schools, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools

[9] Department for Education Preventing and tackling bullying,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444862/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

fails to capitalise on the wealth of expertise and good practice in restorative approaches and peace education that could be promoted.

3.6   Schools are inspected on "personal development, behaviour and welfare", but there is not a strategic approach to educating children *for* peace in their own relationships and communication.

3.7   The need for more peace education in the UK was further identified by the UNCRC in 2008:

> *To develop and implement training programmes and campaigns to promote the values of peace and respect for human rights and include the subject of peace education and human rights as a fundamental subject in the education system, in collaboration with civil society organisations[10].*

3.8   Peace and human rights remain fringe subjects in practice in British schools. Yet UNICEF has noted that peace education is not a peripheral need, but "an essential component of quality basic education"[11]. Quakers see peace education as a corpus consisting of the values, skills and understanding to effect justice and peace. This covers layers beginning within individuals' emotional and mental wellbeing, extending outwards to interpersonal conflict and relationships[12] and beyond to peace and justice in the wider world.

3.9   This corpus requires resources, time and teaching expertise. Currently UK educators are given an unclear mandate to teach peace.

3.10   There are positive aspects to national policy which support aspect of peace education, but nothing comprehensive.

3.11   For instance, the subjects Citizenship and Personal Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education can both contribute to peace education, but Citizenship is only compulsory on the national curriculum at secondary age (from 11 years old) and PSHE lacks statutory status or a shared programme of study.

3.12   The curriculum in Wales is currently being redeveloped, with one of four key purposes stated as supporting children and young people to be "ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world"[13]. This is a welcome starting point from which we hope will grow a rich peace education practice.

3.13   Meanwhile, Scotland is completing the implementation of its national Curriculum for Excellence, which similarly has four capabilities including "responsible citizens" who "understand different beliefs and cultures" and "develop informed,

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[10] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008), Concluding observations on the report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UN Doc: CRC/C/GBR/CO/4

[11] Fountain, Susan (1999), Peace Education In UNICEF: Working Paper Education Section Programme Division UNICEF New York http://www.unicef.org/education/files/PeaceEducation.pdf

[12] Bower, Sue; Leimdorfer, Tom (1984): 'The personal roots of conflict and education for peace, 24.54, Quaker Faith & Practice'
[13] Welsh Government (retrieved April 1016), Curriculum reform, http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=en

ethical views of complex issues."[14] This does mandate at least some elements of peace education without making them explicit, though it is less clear how this manifests in classrooms.

3.14   It is the UK government, and the DFE's approach in England, that least promotes peace education.

3.15   Before 2010, Rights Respecting Schools, a project of UNICEF UK, achieved strong outcomes across over a thousand schools[15] utilising DFE funding. This success was achieved in spite of a lack of capacity in schools as "no additional resources were specifically earmarked". Moreover, the DFE offered no further support despite the impact of the RRS pilot programme.

3.16   In the area of education about peace, the Global Learning Programme has, with some government funding promoted good "teaching and learning about development and global issues at Key Stages 2 and 3"[16], though this as with many programmes depends on schools having the extra resources, capacity and ethos to engage with it.

3.17   Additionally, other civil society actors seek to promote peace and human rights education including the members of the Peace Education Network[17] and Amnesty International UK. However, the space given to these inputs is highly variable and likely to remain so in an increasingly unstable education sector.

3.18   We welcome the continuing value placed on, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)[18] development in schools in the school inspection framework England, though practical guidance from government is also haphazard in this area. It has been linked to a set of "Fundamental British Values", which do not address peace[19].

3.19   The passive government approach appears to be to allow for emergent peace education development in schools, but the result is inconsistent provision. Some schools have capacity to pursue it, some of these successfully; some have access to effective outside agencies, some are isolated; some institutions such as the Oasis Inspire Initiative[20] prioritise peace education, some are simply unaware of it. Nor does there appear to be an attempt by the UK government to monitor and review what is happening in these areas.

3.20   Overall, the right to education, inclusive of peace and human rights learning, is not being provided to all UK children.

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[14] Education Scotland (retrieved April 2016), The four capacities, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp

[15] UNICEF UK, RRS Evaluation Report (2010) https://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Education-Documents/RRSA_Evaluation_Report.pdf

[16] Global Learning Programme Website (retrieved April 2016), https://globaldimension.org.uk/glp

[17] The Peace Education Network, peace-education.org.uk/

[18] Department for Education (2013), Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural(SMSC) development of pupils http://www.retoday.org.uk/media/display/Departmental_advice_for_schools.pdf

[19] Department for Education, (2014) Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools Departmental advice for maintained schools https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf

[20] Oasis Foundation, INSPIRE, (retrieved April 2016) http://www.oasisuk.org/inspire

4.   Under 18 Recruitment

4.1   Quakers have objected to war and armed service on grounds of conscience for centuries, but we also question the UK government's conformity with the Optional Protocol to the CRC. In assiduously recruiting 16 and 17 year olds in to its armed forces, the UK undermines the criteria set out in Article 3, specifically the need for "genuinely voluntary" and "fully informed" recruitment.

4.2   This section complements the submission the UNCRC will receive from Child Soldiers International UK on the same topic.

4.3   We note the failure of the state party to implement its own recommendations for maintaining the duty of care to its recruits from 2005. Ongoing issues include poor information for potential recruits, the deployment of under 18 year olds on guard duty and an excessive three month notice period for leaving the armed forces[21] before reaching majority.

4.4   The negative effects of military service on both physical and mental health effects of military service contravene Article 24, while data shows that younger recruits experience more risk when they are deployed, which impacts on the right to life (Article 6)[22]. This information is not made readily available; more information is provided by the civil society website "Before you sign up[23]" than the official armed forces sites.

4.5   We believe these problems amount to a failure to meet Article 3.1 of the CRC for the "best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

4.6   This problem is exacerbated by the context of the militarisation of education, expanded on in the next section, which serves to disempower young people from making informed decisions about the prospect of military service.

5.   Concerns about the militarisation of children's education

5.1   British children and young people are increasingly exposed to military involvement in their lives, both in school and beyond. We fear the militarisation of children's lives normalises violence as an approach to conflict. Ultimately this undermines the conditions for peace and the realisation of children's rights.

5.2   This agenda conflicts with the intention articulated in the preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to see children "brought up… in the spirit of peace."[24]

5.3   Article 38 of the CRC states the state party should "promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure

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[21] Forces Watch (2015), 'Commonsense and Understanding': Recommendations from the Defence Committee's Duty of Care report that are still outstanding 10 years on http://www.forceswatch.net/resources/commonsense-and-understanding-duty-of-care-recommendations

[22] Gee, David/Forces Watch (2013), *Young Age At Army Enlistment Is Associated With Greater War Zone Risks* http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Young_age_at_army_enlistment_greater_risks(FINAL).pdf

[23] Before you sign-up, http://www.beforeyousignup.info/

[24] Preamble to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf

activity." However, the current UK government appears to place a disproportionate value on military activities.

5.4   The substantial support given by government to military programmes targeting children contrasts with the uncoordinated approach to peace and human rights education. For example, while the Rights Respecting Schools pilot received just £500,000 and the Global Learning Programme £21 million[25] (2013-18), £50 million (2015-20) was assigned to the expansion of the Combined Cadet Force into 500 state schools in "less affluent areas". Quakers in Britain have identified a further £45 million in new projects since 2011[26]. This expenditure is concurrent with cuts to services affecting young people such as Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and mental health services for young people[27].

5.5   When engaging with children, the UK Ministry of Defence's main priority is *not* education, having in its own words identified "recruitment" and "awareness… to ensure the continued support of the population" as the principal outcomes of military engagement with young people[28]. Biased material including learning resources[29] about the armed forces have been promoted to schools.

5.6   The shift in agenda has led to the policy and funding prioritisation for cadets in state schools, 'troops to teachers', 'military ethos' providers and frequent visits to schools by armed forces personnel. In some cases, arms manufacturers and the military are sponsoring University Technical Colleges and influencing what they teach[30] while other schools are encouraged to sign armed forces military covenants.

5.7   Coupled with recruitment under the age of 18, this shows alarming militarisation. Whether or not young people join the military, their minds can be recruited.

5.8   We have received reports of primary school children being given replica guns whilst taking part in armed forces activity days and of older students in the combined cadet forces shooting at human shaped silhouettes.

5.9   Government documents show the expanded role of the military in education is a deliberate departure by the UK of at least eight years gestation[31]. Until recently, most armed forces activity in schools was coordinated locally between individual schools and recruitment units or cadet associations rather than as a matter of national strategy.

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[25] DFID: Annual Review (2015): Global Learning Programme iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/5235684.odt

[26] Quakers in Britain, Militarisation of education (2015), http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/militarisation-of-education-3-7-15.pdf

[27] The Guardian (2014), Robbed of their futures: how austerity cuts hit young people hardest, http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/nov/17/robbed-of-their-futures-how-austerity-cuts-hit-young-people-hardest,

[28] Ministry of Defence (2011) 'Youth Engagement Review'.
[29] UK government, Armed forces learning, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/armed-forces-learning

[30] South Wiltshire UTC (2015) explains that the "The organisations supporting the UTC are some of the biggest employers in the area such as QinetiQ, Public Health England, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust, Chemring, Serco… They will work with the UTC to plan what we should teach and how to make the learning come to life with real world examples." http://www.wiltshire-utc.co.uk/who-will-teach-me/
[31] Ministry of Defence, (2008) 'The Government's Response to the Report of Inquiry into National Recognition of our Armed Forces'
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28287/govt_response_recognition_armed_forces.pdf

5.10   UNICEF's Anti-war Agenda[32] stresses the need for more prevention of war in order to realise the CRC. We fear that the involvement of the military does make armed conflict more likely, normalising the notion that violence solves problems.

5.11   This emphasis on the military is counter to the purpose of education set out in the CRC, the UNCRC to the UK government and the content of CRC General Comment No. 1 which specifies that education must promote nonviolence in schools and ensure that children have the skills to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner[33]. This danger is more insidious when children are not given balancing views about the military.

5.12   We see no moves from the UK government to balance this deliberate militarisation of education, though the Scottish and Welsh governments have responded to attempts to engage them.

5.13   The Welsh government is sufficiently concerned about unmonitored armed forces visits to schools to accept recommendations calling for new *'guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools take account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role'[34]*.

5.14   Similarly, a public petition was submitted to The Scottish Parliament by Quakers in Scotland and Forces Watch which raised the same concerns[35]. The petition will be heard by the Public Petitions Committee in the autumn of 2016. Quakers in Scotland are also discussing the funding of cadet forces in state schools in Scotland, as well as funding for peace education, with senior officials in Education Scotland.

5.15   While individual examples of militarisation may not constitute a breach of the CRC, we feel this skewed prioritisation in policy is injurious to children's right to education.

5.16   Secondary school Principal Chris Gabbett points out: "*Adolescence is a time for learning, questioning, receiving pastoral and academic guidance and growing as inquisitive, confident global citizens. Militarisation by stealth is not the best way to support our children, and neither parents nor school leaders have had a say in its validity*".

5.17   Article 14 of the CRC calls for "the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." Britain as a whole has a proud history leading the way in the recognition of freedom of conscience on issues such as military service. For many children and indeed parents, armed forces activities will contravene ethical and religious beliefs about the sanctity of life.

5.18   We are also concerned with government discourse conflating "nonviolence" with "extremism", largely as part of the "Prevent" policy. This narrative ignores the

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[32] UNICEF, The State of the World Children (1996), Anti-war Agenda http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/antiwar.htm

[33] Forces Watch (2015), *Peace education and the promotion of the armed forces in UK schools*, http://www.forceswatch.net/resources/peace-education-and-promotion-armed-forces-uk-schools

[34] ForcesWatch (2015) Forces Watch welcomes 'Welsh Government stance over military visits to schools' http://www.forceswatch.net/news/forceswatch-welcomes-welsh-government-stance-over-military-visits-schools

[35] Petition PE01603: Ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland ttps://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/armedforcesvisitstoschools

importance of the role of nonviolence in peaceful social change, and the power of people, children included, to effect peace and justice nonviolently.

6.   Marginalisation of Muslim Young People under "Prevent"

6.1   We are concerned that "Prevent" leads to the marginalisation of some children, particularly Muslims. We note the concern expressed by the UNCRC on this matter in its list of issues[36]. The Article 2 right to be free of discrimination is violated when Muslim children and young people face more barriers to safe learning. Both the right for *every* child to have access to secondary education under Article 28 and the preparation for friendship with all peoples under Article 29 are threatened when educators are given this policing role.

6.2   We fear the creation of a statutory obligation for teachers and other public facing workers to report on suspected radicalisation of children as it undermines access to education, with pupils assessed according to this perceived threat rather than on academic or welfare considerations.

6.3   Feedback we receive from educators consistently suggests that the training and discourse associated with "Prevent" is specious and potentially harmful. We have also heard of Muslim students being targeted because of acting under concern for human rights in Palestine[37], because of a non-white-British background and even because of the misspelling of "terraced house" as "terrorist house"[38] in the classroom.

6.4   While the Prevent policy is explicitly about all forms of "violent extremism", in practice it appears to be exercised most with Muslim children and young people. The Prevent strategy could have been conceived as a new impetus to deliver peace and human rights education, but instead it has been narrowly and negatively drawn as an early-warning system.

6.5   Some, like Steve Chalke, of the Oasis Academy Chain, embrace a broader vision: "rather than simply attempting to build a defence against the threat of radicalisation through… PREVENT…. we should be prioritising how we can imbibe a deeper, and more powerful, sense of purpose, identity, meaning and belonging in the lives of vulnerable young people."[39]

6.6   While we welcome the intention to prevent young people being recruited by armed groups and drawn into violence, in accordance with Article 4 of the Optional Protocol, we fear that Prevent is at best ineffective, and at worst may have the opposite effect, alienating young people from the values peace of and nonviolence. This issue affects UK society as a whole as reflected in the

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[36] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015), List of issues in relation to the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGBR%2fQ%2f5&Lang=en

[37] The Independent (2016) Anti-terror police question schoolboy for wearing pro-Palestine badge http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/anti-terror-police-question-schoolboy-for-wearing-pro-palestine-badge-a6873656.html

[38] Muslim Boy's 'Terrorist House' Spelling Error Leads To Lancashire Police Investigation http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2016/01/20/muslim-child-terrorist-house-spelling-error_n_9025336.html

[39] Chalke, Steve (2016), *Radical, exploring the rise of extremism and the pathway way to peace,* Oasis Books, Great Britain.

remarks of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2008**[40]**, but marginalisation of children in education will have a societal impact.

7   Questions the Committee may wish to raise with the state party

7.1   Since 2008, what steps have been taken to promote the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults:

- to prevent harmful conflict and violence, both overt and structural;
- to prevent structural injustice and violence;
- to resolve conflict peacefully;
- to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

7.2   What financial resources and mandate will UK schools and providers have access to for the purpose of peace education?

7.3   What action will the United Kingdom take to deliver its duty-of-care and ensure children and young people receive adequate, objective information about the military in line with the Optional Protocol with regard to recruitment below the age of 18?

7.4   How will the UK ensure that children and young people are exposed to alternative models to those presented by the military?

- What financial resources have been allocated to military programmes designed to engage young people by the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education?
- What evidence is there that 'military ethos' approaches to increasing educational attainment are more effective than non-military approaches when equally resourced?
- Will the UK Government issue guidance for schools in England about armed forces visits similar to that being developed in Wales?
- What measures exist within the Prevent strategy to protect children from experiencing marginalisation in schools?
- Is the training delivered in schools as part of Prevent being adjusted in the light of negative feedback?

8   Recommendations for the state party

8.1   Review and evaluate the current disposition of peace and human rights education in the UK.

8.2   Continue properly resourced pilot programmes in peace and human rights education in the UK in order to build momentum.

8.3   Formulate a long-term national strategy to fully realise Article 29 for all UK children.

8.4   End under 18 recruitment to the armed forces in the UK.

8.5   End the military involvement in state-run schools.

8.6   Suspend the Prevent Strategy in its current form.

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[40] Human Rights Committee (2008), Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsg%2fOK3H8qae8NhIDi53Mec K%2f2gqd4WjxGafXAOvi2gd8MGnqbt1avQnaNolUy2XcvBwJ5RjyX8HLStgrG3Gvb212L1D8aWEhetjn9vv7zgmO

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