African Union
Dear Delegates,

My name is Martin Kononov, and I am a first-year student at Brown University. I plan to concentrate in Chemistry. I have extensive experience in MUN: having been a delegate at four conferences, a chair at five THIMUN affiliated conferences, including THIMUN itself. I have also been the Deputy Secretary-General for my school’s annual Middle School MUN conference and the President of the General Assembly (Secretariat-General) at THIMUN 2019—the world’s largest MUN conference with over 4,000 participants. I am incredibly excited to be able to chair the African Union at BUSUN XII this year! It will be my fifth time as a chair and the first under the U.S. style of Parliamentary Procedure.

The African Union (AU) was established in 2001 and currently has 55 Member States—including every country on the African continent. The underlying goal upon which the organization is based is to foster cooperation, dialogue, development, growth, and preservation of human rights throughout the continent. It is no secret that historically, Africa and its constituent nations have been exploited for resources and wealth by empires—namely those from Europe. As a result, even when nations began to become independent, they had significant issues with establishing governmental and economic systems that helped the populations of these new countries. Historically, these generally benefited the leaders or previous imperialist nations. Intercontinental trade will be a large part of providing economic support and structure, leading to faster and more efficient development and improvement in standards of living in the Member States. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA)—launched in 2018—is the latest attempt towards this goal which effectively removes trade barriers between countries in the region, crucially aiding in bringing down the costs of doing business across borders.

Personally, having lived in Moscow, Russia, for most of my life, I have always been inherently part of international relations and politics. I understand that global geopolitics are incredibly complex, and issues which look simple at the surface may, in fact, have complex underlying mechanics. I look forward to the new perspectives and opinions that will undoubtedly be expressed by delegates in the committee and wish to facilitate constructive debate efficiently. I would also like to sincerely thank Adam Stein for his assistance in writing this guide.

Best,

Martin Kononov  
Class of 2023  
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Position Papers

Position papers are mandatory for this committee and only delegates who submit position papers on time will be eligible for awards.

If delegates would like to receive feedback on their position papers, the due date for submission is 11:59PM on November 1st. Position papers will be returned with feedback at least 3 days prior to the start of the conference. Delegates will still be eligible for awards if they submit their paper before the first committee session; however, they will not be guaranteed feedback. Please email position papers to the committee email listed on the conference website in either .pdf, .docx, or .doc form. Google Docs is acceptable as well.

Please write your name, your school, and the name of your position in the subject line of your email.

These submission guidelines are also outlined in the Preparation & Procedure section of the Conference Resources tab on the conference website. Any questions, concerns, or individual requests for extensions may be sent to the chair at the committee email address included at the bottom of the chair letter in this guide. Requests for delegation extensions should be sent to info@busun.org.

Parliamentary Procedure

This committee will follow standard BUSUN parliamentary procedure. Details can be found on the conference website.
Topic 1: Intracontinental Trade

Background

Though one of the most resource-rich continents on the planet, Africa has long struggled to develop economically. One major barrier to further economic growth is a relative lack of intracontinental trade, or trade between African countries. To understand why this is, it is necessary to understand the role of European colonial powers in shaping Africa’s economies. Beginning in the 19th century, European countries colonized nearly the entirety of the African continent, with the primary goal of exporting natural resources back to Europe. Though political and economic structures ranged across Africa, all emphasized the continuous intercontinental flow of goods over the wellbeing of the people living within the colonies. Thus, when decolonization took place between the 1950s and 1970s, the newly independent African nations inherited political systems designed to move natural resources as quickly as possible from their production sites to Europe. This led to the rise of what has become known as the “gatekeeper state,” a political structure in which the government mainly tasks itself with managing international trade instead of developing a strong control over the day-to-day lives of its citizens.

This arrangement had significant effects on both African economies and governments. In addition to creating a reliance on foreign demand for African natural resources, it encouraged the creation of trade restrictions as a means of allowing governments to display authority. In other words, because many African governments lacked internal control, exerting power over the borders proved the most effective means of showing control, encouraging governments to place strict restrictions on international trade. Though the effects of these policies were strong on the entire continent, it should be noted that the exact circumstances varied widely by country. For example, Ethiopia—the sole African country to have never been colonized—was strongly affected by the trade restrictions of its neighbors but maintained a degree of free trade during Africa’s postcolonial period.

This trend continued as political instability plagued the continent and leaders imposed more and more limitations on free trade. However, things began to look up in 1991, when Benin became the first postcolonial mainland African country to see a peaceful transfer of power after an election. Since then, this has become the norm for many nations across the continent, which has reduced the need for political showmanship and increased the accountability of leaders to their populace. Furthermore, the years since have seen other promising signs of economic fortune: Africa’s population is growing, the proportion of young people as a share of the total population is increasing, cell phone and internet usage is high across the continent, and Africans are significantly less likely to suffer from diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS than they historically have been.

All of these factors have led to African countries becoming more willing than ever before to loosen trade restrictions, leading to many regional initiatives to encourage cross-border economic relationships. One of the most notable examples is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an organization of 15 West African countries that aims to encourage economic

2 Ibid.
3 “Ethiopia,” Encyclopedia Britannica.
4 “Africa Rising,” The Economist (2011)
5 Ibid.
collaboration between its member states. The organization has pioneered initiatives such as the creation of a free-trade zone in 1990 and the implementation of a common external tariff in 2015.7 This has created a more cohesive economic policy between member states and encouraged them to trade with each other instead of foreign powers. However, despite being an economic community, the organization’s actions have not all been economic in scope. Because economic success depends on a stable political situation, ECOWAS has also led several peacekeeping missions to ensure regional security. For example, in 2017, ECOWAS led a successful invasion of The Gambia after the country’s dictator of 22 years lost an election and refused to step down.8 This case offers a valuable lesson to policymakers that any attempts at economic collaboration are contingent on external factors such as the existence of a peaceful and democratic political environment.

Past Action

Perhaps the two most important attempts at continental economic integration in Africa’s history came from the African Union’s predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In 1980, the OAU created the Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa, which proposed a number of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to encourage trade between African states, and in 1991, the OAU wrote the Abuja Treaty, which proposed an African Economic Community (AEC) to manage trade at a continental level.9 To this day, the African Union refers to the RECs as its “building blocks” in recognition of the importance of regional development in pursuing pan-continental aims. ECOWAS is an example of one such REC, and all African countries belong to one. 

More recently, the African Union has attempted to increase regional integration in one of Africa’s most troubled regions: the Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Seeing intracontinental trade as a means of reducing the potential for further conflict in the region, the African Union has collaborated with organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank Group, and European Union to implement the Horn of Africa Regional Initiative, an ambitious project launched in 2014.10 The organizations involved have pledged billions of dollars to increasing economic linkages between countries, increasing resilience to droughts and other climate effects, and creating sustainable work opportunities.11 By creating more jobs within individual countries and ensuring those industries will not be endangered by climate change, this initiative is creating a base from which these economies can expand. Another way in which external actors have helped to increase intracontinental trade is by expanding international infrastructure. For example, in an effort to increase trade between Uganda and Kenya, the African Development Bank (AfDB) gave $223 million to expand a major road that connects the two countries.12 Though policy is of course very important in increasing trade, infrastructure projects that physically bridge the gaps between countries and regions are essential in making this policy effective in the first place.

Current Situation

The most recent milestone in the history of African intracontinental trade came in March 2018, when the African Union launched the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). This landmark agreement aims to reduce barriers to trade between the 55 member states of the African Union, in part by removing tariffs from 90

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7 “Economic Community of West African States,” Office of the United States Trade Preservation
9 “Regional Economic Communities,” African Union
10 “Horn of Africa,” African Union
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
percent of goods and liberalizing trade. So far, 27 countries have ratified the AfCFTA, and if the rest successfully join the agreement, Africa will be the world’s largest free-trade area. In addition to its reach, what makes the AfCFTA unique among free-trade agreements is the scale of its contents: in addition to deregulating the trade of goods, it also sets expectations for member states regarding everything from investment to intellectual property rights.

At the official launch of the AfCFTA’s operational phase at a summit in Niger this July, African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat emphasized the importance of creating an atmosphere of peace and security to ensure the agreement’s success and called for open borders across the continent. Despite the relative optimism of the leaders involved, it should be noted this agreement is coming at a time where the rise of populist leaders and economic justice movements like France’s Yellow Vests Movement are reflecting frustration with the inequalities created by unregulated free trade. Though increasing intracontinental trade is a necessity for Africa to raise the quality of life for its inhabitants, the member states of the African Union must be very careful to do so in a way that raises the quality of life for all its inhabitants.

Questions to Consider

1. What is your country’s colonial history, and how has it affected economic relations?
2. What trade relations does your country currently have with its neighbors and other African countries?
3. What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of free-trade agreements?
4. Are there any non-economic policies your country believes can increase intracontinental trade?

Further Reading

- African Union Press Release: *Operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area is launched at Niger Summit of the African Union*
- Brookings: “*Intra-African trade: A path to economic diversification and inclusion*"
- CNBC: “*What you should know about Africa’s massive, 54-country trade bloc*"

5. How can economic integration in Africa coexist with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals?
6. What opinions exist in your country on the AfCFTA?

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14 Grace Shao, “What you should know about Africa’s massive, 54-country trade bloc,” CNBC (2019)
16 Ibid.
17 “Regional Economic Communities,” African Union
Topic 2: The African Union and the United Nations

Background

Africa’s relationship with the United Nations has historically been a contradictory one, at times defying the historical power imbalance between the Global North and South and at others epitomizing it. In the early days of the United Nations, few African countries governed themselves as independent states, and those that did found themselves unable to wield major influence. However, as African countries began to shake off European colonial powers, the United Nations quickly found itself with a large number of African member states. Though these countries might have lacked power individually, this was not the case when they acted as a bloc: Africa is home to 54 countries, more than any other continent, meaning African unity promised great returns within the United Nations. Nevertheless, translating this ideal into action proved challenging: Africa, after all, is a diverse continent, and the countries within it often have wildly different goals. North African states such as Egypt and Tunisia, for example, often ally themselves with the Arab countries of the Middle East, while some African leaders occasionally use the United Nations as a forum in which to air out their grievances with one another.

To combat these divisions between African states, African unity has long been a goal of many of the continent’s leaders. In fact, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor to the African Union, was founded specifically with this goal in mind. At the organization’s second ordinary session in 1965, the OAU passed a resolution acknowledging the importance of the African Group of the United Nations in achieving better representation for the continent and expressing satisfaction at the establishment of relations between the OAU and the United Nations. Nevertheless, throughout the OAU’s history, the organization was largely ineffective due to a desire to maintain neutrality avoid intervening in continental disputes. This created challenges for intervention given that Article 52 of the Charter of the United Nations requires that “agencies shall make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council.”

In 2002, the OAU was formally disbanded and replaced with the African Union. One of the biggest hopes for the new organization was that it would be more effective in collaborating with the United Nations to resolve conflicts than the OAU had been: both the United Nations and the OAU had a long history of failing to intervene in African crises, and the African Union was created within recent memory of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, in which the OAU stood by and the United Nations removed its peacekeepers during one of the worst genocides of the twentieth century.

A key difference between the OAU and African Union was the inclusion of a Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) within the African Union intended to prevent and resolve conflicts quickly.

The African Union also worked from the beginning to gain more power for Africa within the United Nations. Most notably, the entire bloc was able to come to a landmark agreement in 2005 known as

18 “The Relationship between Africa and the UN: From he Relationship between Africa and the UN: From Disenchantment to a more Effective Cooperation,” Dialogue on Globalization
19 “Relations Between the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations”
22 “Rwanda: OAU Report, 07/07/00”
23 “African Union,” NTI
the Ezulwini Consensus. Among many issues, this agreement called for United Nations support on debt cancelations for low-income countries, collaboration between the United Nations and African Union on protecting democratic governments, and financial assistance from the United Nations for regional peacekeeping missions. Most important, however, was the call for African countries to gain greater representation on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The signatories urged the addition of two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats for African countries, all of which would be decided by the African Union. Though these reforms were never implemented, they have remained a defining issue in the relationship between the African Union and the United Nations, and to this day the African Union frequently reissues its call for the implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus.

Past Action

In 2006, Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan and Chairperson of the African Union Alpha Oumar Konaré signed the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union. This document encouraged the United Nations and the African Union to cooperate more closely, focus on security and peacekeeping, and create more partnership arrangements between the two organizations. In light of this, in 2010, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to establish a United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU). This office was designed to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations, allow the United Nations to more systematically give advice to the African Union, and encourage collaboration on a range of continental issues (e.g., international development, conflict resolution, and domestic policy).

Of note, given the tensions between the AUPSC and the UNSC resulting from the Ezulwini Consensus, is the amount of collaboration that has existed between them since the creation of the African Union. Since 2007, the two councils have held joint consultative meetings every year. These meetings are an opportunity for both councils to learn from each other and more effectively promote peace in Africa. In recent years, the largest issue between the two councils has not been the lack of African representation on the UNSC, but the AUPSC’s desire to receive funding from the United Nations for all peacekeeping operations approved by the UNSC, which it argues is necessary to properly address the threat of conflict within Africa. This was most recently affirmed at an AUSPC meeting in December 2018 that focused on the organization’s relationship with the UNSC.

Current Situation

In 2017, Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres and Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat signed the Joint United Nations–African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. This is the most recent guide to relations between the two organizations and builds on many of the aforementioned agreements to encourage closer collaboration. Specifically, it outlines specific responsibilities for the two organizations in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts within Africa; creates strategies

25 Ibid.
26 “African Union,” NTI
28 “United Nations Office to the African Union,” Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
to address the root causes of conflict (e.g., reducing the trade of illegal weapons); encourages frequent contact between the African Union and the United Nations to ensure the Framework is being implemented; and reiterates a desire to see the United Nations provide more support for African Union–led peacekeeping missions.14

Africa’s relationship with the United Nations has come a long way since the early days of the OAU. The United Nations has increasingly recognized the importance of giving African countries a voice and control over their own affairs, which has expressed itself in agreements between the United Nations and the African Union that recognize their relationship as an equal partnership instead of a hierarchical one. Nevertheless, there remains significant progress to be made. The African Union still has not gained the additional seats on the UNSC it desires for its members, which is reflective of a continued bias within the United Nations toward Western nations.

Furthermore, both organizations continue to struggle to react to emerging crises before they spiral out of control. This was most recently seen in the 2018–19 Sudan Crisis, in which the United Nations expressed concern about the government response to the protests as early as December 2019,35 but neither the United Nations nor the African Union took significant action until after the Khartoum Massacre in June 2019, in which over 100 protesters were killed by the Sudanese government.36 Moving forward, the African Union and the United Nations seek to more effectively respond to conflicts by embracing the regional and sub-regional organizations within the African Union, which are often better equipped to recognize and handle crises.37 Though opinions differ regarding the best ways to promote further cooperation and ensure it translates into action, all agree that the African Union and the United Nations must collaborate even more closely than they already are.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the African Union improve its relationship with the United Nations and ensure proper representation for its members?
2. To what extent is African unity still a worthwhile goal to pursue?
3. How can the African Union encourage action on the Ezulwini Consensus?
4. Are there specific areas in which your country would like to see the African Union and the United Nations collaborate more?
5. What specific strengths do the African Union and the United Nations have that can complement each other?
6. What should the role of regional and sub-regional organizations be in the relationship between the African Union and the United Nations?

Further Reading

- Charter of the United Nations: Article 52
- Kofi A. Annan: Letter dated 11 December 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

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34 Ibid.
35 “Sudan: UN experts urge halt to excessive use of force against peaceful protesters,” UNHRC
37 “UN–African Union partnership ‘not a choice but a necessity’, Security Council hears,” Africa Renewal
Topic 3: Foreign Direct Investment

Background and Past Action

African economies have long histories of being controlled by external sources. Though this was most clearly seen during the country’s colonial era, the role of foreign capital has continued to be a defining issue in African politics and economics to this day. As early as the independence process, many African scholars and officials expressed concern that removing colonial powers would not remove the threat of foreign domination of Africa, and this discussion came to a head in the 1980s with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). Created by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), SAPs are loans given to the governments of developing countries in exchange for the implementation of certain policies designed to liberalize economies, promote exports, and reform institutions and the public sector. Though in theory these programs are a means of incentivizing governments to implement changes that will encourage trade and investment, in practice they have increased poverty rates, removed protections for the poor, and prevented African countries from changing the basic structures of their economies.

Within Africa, SAPs have been perceived as a form of neocolonialism in which foreign organizations are able to use money to control African governments. This has built upon a long history of foreign domination in Africa to generate high suspicion of foreign investment in any form. This includes foreign direct investment (FDI), in which an investor in one country acquires a stake in an enterprise in another. Like many other forms of external economic intervention, FDI has proven controversial: supporters argue it is needed to encourage economic growth and productivity, while opponents argue FDI leads to a risk of exploitation of developing countries and limits the potential for independent industries to grow within those countries. Owing to Africa’s history, the continent has attracted more opponents of FDI than other parts of the world have, meaning FDI rates in Africa have historically been very low.

Beginning in the 1990s, African governments began to liberalize their economies in hopes of attracting FDI, and the United Nations even called for increased FDI to Africa in its 2000 Millennium Declaration. Nevertheless, FDI remained low throughout most of the 2000s, and many Africans remained skeptical of the threat that foreign domination of their economies posed to African sovereignty. Over time, a number of policy changes and agreements between African countries, the European Union, and the United States began to change this. In 2000, the United States passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which allowed some 40 African countries to export to the United States without paying tariffs and created more than one million jobs in Africa. The African Union and the European Union, meanwhile, launched the Africa–EU Strategic Partnership in 2007, which aimed to create reciprocal trade partnerships between Africa and Europe, in the process adding tens of

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
42 Foreign Direct Investment,” OECD library
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
billions of dollars of investment to Africa’s economy.  

The 2010s, meanwhile, saw the addition of a new player to Africa’s FDI landscape: China. As China has emerged as an economic powerhouse, private investment from Chinese-owned firms has skyrocketed. By 2017, some 10,000 Chinese companies were operating in Africa, one-third of which were in the manufacturing industry. As the Chinese government increasingly invests in large-scale infrastructure projects in Africa, many have come to fear the economic relationship between China and Africa is beginning to resemble a form of neocolonialism. For example, China placed its first overseas military bases in Djibouti, which it was granted permission to do in exchange for promises of substantial FDI and loans. Many Chinese companies operating in Africa are explicitly state-owned or otherwise have significant ties to the Chinese government, and not all of the effects have been positive. For example, Chinese manufactured goods are outcompeting African ones in many parts of the continent, and human rights abuses have been reported at Chinese-owned mines, with one major investor even claiming Africans must “learn to accept [that] inequalities are a reality at every stage of development.” Despite the concerns this has generated, it should be noted that FDI promises great returns for Africa as well. Already, it has created jobs in many sectors, brought new technologies to parts of the continent, and given Africans an opportunity to gain vocational skills. Meanwhile, to counter the rising influence of China, the United States and the European Union have increased their investment budgets in Africa, bringing both hope that these investments will stimulate the economy and fear that they are harbingers of a new cold war in which African concerns will fall to the wayside.

**Current Situation**

FDI declined worldwide in 2018, but Africa successfully escaped this trend, with FDI rising 11 percent across the continent to a total of $46 billion. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these gains were not concentrated evenly across the continent: significant increases in FDI in North Africa and Southern Africa existed alongside decreases in West Africa and stable levels of FDI in East Africa. This is partially because many of the policy changes that encouraged FDI were carried out by individual countries instead of the African Union as a whole. For example, Tunisia and Zimbabwe offered tax incentives to investors, while Egypt made investment promotion a matter of official policy. In response to these asymmetries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDG) has expressed a belief that moving forward, it is important that the African Union maintain a consistent position regarding FDI, since its members will have more negotiating power and economic allure when working as a bloc. Furthermore, the UNDG stresses that the African Union must continue to work toward creating an environment more favorable to investment. This means removing corruption and instability from the countries it continues to affect and strengthening infrastructure and education across the continent.

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Xan Rice. “China’s goods burden Africa’s Producers,” The Washington Post
53 “China in Zambia” Huffington Post (2011)
56 “Foreign direct investment to Africa defies global slump, rises 11%” United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
57 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
Partially in hopes of attracting more FDI, the African Union has increasingly been supporting the creation of special economic zones (SEZs) and free-trade areas. SEZs are geographically-bound areas that maintain unique trade laws in order to attract investment. For example, certain taxes may be reduced or removed entirely, which promotes economic development. On the flipside, certain protections for workers may be removed, which can lead to exploitation. 38 countries across Africa already have SEZs, many of which were created within the past decade, and they are continuing to proliferate. Increased regional cooperation has allowed countries to work together to create cross-border SEZs. In 2018, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali created a shared SEZ, and Ethiopia and Kenya are currently developing one as well. Despite the significance of these developments, the policy change that has attracted the most attention is the 2018 African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). The establishment of a single free-trade area that unites the African continent is predicted to be a major driver of economic growth, which in turn is expected to increase FDI. One of the clearest indicators of the future of FDI in Africa will come from the implementation of the AfCFTA. If it is successful, investors will likely be drawn to the continent’s economic potential, and a strong African Union will be able to ensure its members are able to gain from FDI without sacrificing the wellbeing and independence of their citizens.

Questions to Consider

1. How has your country’s history affected attitudes toward FDI?
2. What is your country’s position on the growing influence of China in Africa? Has your country’s government taken loans or investment packages from the Chinese government?
3. How can Africa reap the benefits of FDI while ensuring national sovereignty is respected?
4. In what ways is FDI tied to issues like national security, environmental sustainability, and education?
5. What industries are present in your country and who has invested in them?
6. What are some of the benefits of SEZs and free-trade areas? What concerns about them need to be taken into account?

Further Reading

- Center for Global Development: Is Africa’s Skepticism of Foreign Capital Justified? Evidence from East African Firm Survey Data
- United Nations Development Programme: Addressing the foreign direct investment paradox in Africa
- The Guardian: “China in Africa: win-win development, or a new colonialism?”
- Brookings: “Competing in Africa: China, the European Union, and the United States”

60 “Foreign direct investment to Africa defies global slump, rises 11%” United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
61 Ibid.


“Horn of Africa,” *African Union* https://au.int/ea/ric/hoi


“Regional Economic Communities,” *African Union* https://au.int/en/organisations/recs


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Renewal


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