

Killing the “Culminating Training Event Culture” in the Army

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Abstract

The Army has created a culture out of its training enterprise that inhibits sustainment of unit readiness over time. Instead of units maintaining a continuous high state of readiness, they endure cycles of low readiness followed by ramp-up events in preparation for a major evaluation event, known as a Culminating Training Event (CTE). Today’s strategic environment is too dynamic and uncertain to allow the Army to continue on this path. Although the Army developed a new Sustainable Readiness Model to prevent the readiness cliff, it does not address the CTE Culture problem. This paper explores the problems that the CTE Culture causes for the Army and explores remedial options. Because CTE Culture is an institutionalized practice in the Army, institution theory is the analysis tool for identifying its artifacts and rituals as well as the basis for remedial actions. Finally, this paper will offer recommendations to kill the CTE Culture by building a new Sustainable Readiness Cultural in its place.

Killing the “Culminating Training Event Culture” in the Army

The Army has created a culture out of its training enterprise that inhibits sustainment of unit readiness over time. Instead of units maintaining a continuous high state of readiness, they endure cycles of low readiness followed by ramp-up events in preparation for a major evaluation event, known as a *Culminating Training Event* (CTE).¹ Then, at the peak of readiness, the unit disbands and loses the knowledge gained from the previous events. Over time, this pattern became a seemingly unbreakable habit, a CTE Culture that drives how Army units approach training and exercises. Rather than emphasizing preparedness for the next conflict, Army units only concern themselves with making it through the exercise.

The result is the “*readiness cliff*,” the precipitous drop in knowledge and readiness that routinely occurs immediately following a CTE. This phenomenon undermines the learning that occurs in the CTE and reduces the Army’s ability to provide adequate capability to effectively conduct operations.² Today’s strategic environment is too dynamic and uncertain to allow the Army to continue on this path. The Joint Chiefs of Staff characterize the current and future Joint Operating Environment (JOE) by the presence of powerful state and non-state actors who endeavor to negate the United States (U.S.) advantage with a state of persistent disorder with weak states being increasingly unable to sustain safe and secure environments in their territories.³ Army units are facing an environment that is uncertain, complex, rapidly changing and marked by persistent conflict.⁴ Units who do not learn cannot win in this type of environment.

Although the Army developed a new *Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM)* to replace the *Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN)* model to prevent the readiness cliff,

it does not address the CTE Culture problem.⁵ The SRM relies on organizations to retain and leverage knowledge and experience to sustain long-term readiness.⁶ The CTE Culture undermines both knowledge and experience. Thus, for SRM to succeed, the Army must take other measures to change the culture.

This paper explores the problems that the CTE Culture causes for the Army and explores remedial options. After providing background on the Army's Combat Training Centers (CTCs) and the CTE problem, the paper will present the Army's preferred culture as expressed in its philosophy of *mission command* and its new force generation model built on sustainable readiness. Because CTE Culture is an institutionalized practice in the Army, *institution theory* is the analysis tool for identifying its *artifacts* and *rituals* as well as the basis for remedial actions.⁷ Finally, this paper will offer recommendations to kill the CTE Culture by building a new Sustainable Readiness Cultural in its place.

Army Training Infrastructure

The purpose of the Army's training infrastructure is to provide a rigorous training and evaluation platform to ensure unit readiness and development of agile leaders.⁸ The heart of the Army's training infrastructure are the three CTCs in the United States: the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) that operates out of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁹ The NTC and JRTC focus on the Brigade through Company echelon of command.¹⁰ Mission Command Training Program focuses on higher levels, the Division and Corps Headquarters.¹¹ The U.S. Armed Forces, as well as armies around the world, consider these the premier training venues of the world.¹² The Army resources the CTCs with permanent staff, experienced

cadre and specially trained opposing forces units.¹³ The CTCs enable mission command readiness assessments through live-fire, force-on-force and computer-simulated training events.¹⁴

The U.S. Army Chief of Staff highly values CTC rotations and considers them top priority.¹⁵ Combat Training Center events replicate the operational environment and identify mistakes, weakness and other areas for units to improve. Each CTC trains approximately 50,000 soldiers in 10 brigade-sized units a year.¹⁶ But, CTCs do not come cheap. A single CTC rotation costs up to \$30 million requiring significant investment in funding, personnel, materiel, and time from both the exercising units and the Army as a whole.¹⁷

The CTE is a unit's rotation through a CTC event, every two to three years. A Brigade Combat Team and its supporting units, approximately 5,000 soldiers, deploy to the NTC or JRTC. A Division or Corps Headquarters establishes its combat command posts with supporting unit command posts, totaling up to 5,000 soldiers, and conducts a computer simulation-supported Warfighter Exercise (WFX) with the MCTP.¹⁸ The CTE is the final event in a long process for units to reach peak readiness.¹⁹

Army's Desired Culture

The Army's goal is to have organizations ready to excel in the JOE with leaders who are adaptive and innovative. The Army wants a culture that ensures ready forces are always available. Units should learn, change and improve from each rotation to achieve higher levels of readiness. The Army's philosophy on mission command, learning organizations and sustainable readiness can describe the desired culture.

Mission command is the U.S. Army's philosophy of leadership that enables commanders to capitalize on the ability to take action to develop situations and integrate

military operations to achieve victory. It focuses on a style of leadership that enables disciplined initiative to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of operations in today's uncertain, complex, and rapidly changing environment.²⁰ Its strength lies in centralized intent of the operation while allowing decentralized execution, giving subordinates freedom of maneuver and decision-making. This philosophy hinges on the ability of leaders and units to share common understanding, learn, adapt and act decisively. Mission command is essential for units to successfully operate in the environment of contested norms and persistent disorder.²¹

General Dempsey, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Army Chief of Staff stated, "Our need to pursue, instill and foster mission command is critical to our future success in defending the nation in an increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment."²² The CTE Culture affects the areas of Mission command, boxed in red in Figure 1.

Mission command principles such as *shared understanding* and mission command tasks such as *knowledge management* are essential to operate in the uncertain, ambiguous, competitive environment.²³ Shared Understanding is essential to enable trust and allow commanders to issue mission orders and enable disciplined initiative.²⁴ The concept of shared understanding, "...equips decision-makers at all levels with the insight and foresight required to make effective decisions, to manage the associated risks, and to consider the second and subsequent order effects."²⁵ Understanding also underpins the concept of 'intent' that fuses understanding, the mission and directing subordinates.²⁶ Knowledge Management, which "is the process of

enabling knowledge to flow to enhance shared understanding, learning and decisionmaking,” supports Shared Understanding.²⁷

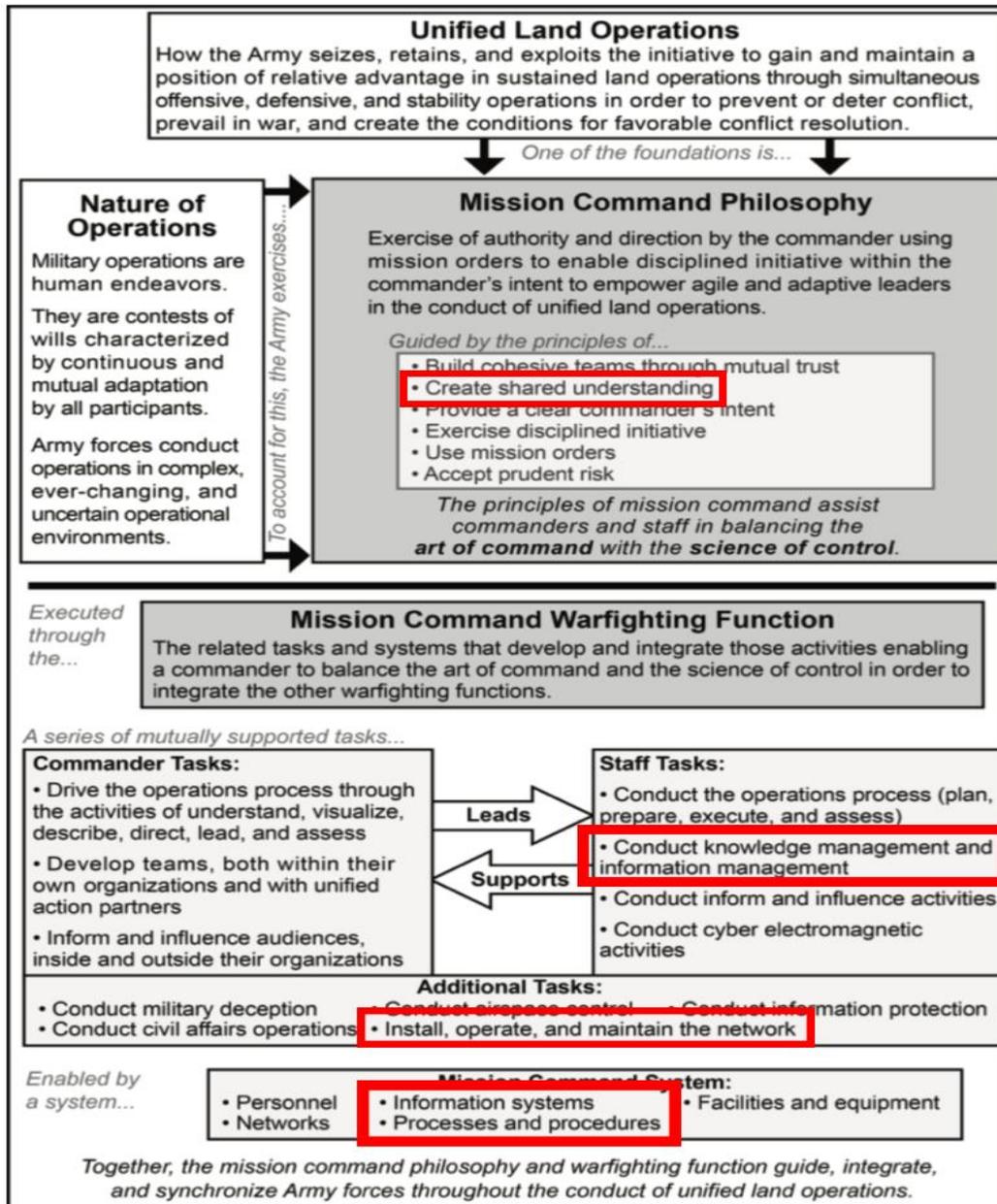


Figure 1. Overview of Mission Command²⁸

Mission command alone cannot guarantee success in today's rapidly changing environment. Army units must be learning organizations. Dr. Peter M. Senge, founder of the Society for Organizational Learning, states, "There is has never been a greater need

for mastering *organizational learning*.²⁹ It is the process that builds on shared understanding to align and develop the diverse talents of a team to create the results they truly desire.³⁰ Organizations must master the science and art of open communication and self-analysis through many repetitions over time.³¹ Learning organizations exercising mission command are more ready to operate in an uncertain, complex, rapidly changing environment.

General Milley, the current Chief of Staff of the Army, explained his priorities in his initial statement to the Army, "Readiness is #1, and there is no other #1."³² He charges the Army to, "...build an agile adaptive Army of the future. We need to listen and learn...We will change and adapt."³³ Thus, one can describe the vision of the future Army as comprised of adaptive, learning, and changing organizations that can execute operations in an ever-changing environment.

However, sustaining this vision is a challenge. The SRMs goal is to sustain a state of readiness commensurate with the requirements of a globally responsive and regionally engaged contingency force.³⁴ This will require a shift from a regimented, event-driven resource strategy to one that is more fluid to maximize readiness throughout a unit's training and deployment cycles and prevent the readiness cliff.³⁵ The Army will support units through forthcoming doctrine, metrics, and a resourcing strategy.³⁶ The SRM will adapt to the needs of the unit to be globally responsive and regionally aligned. The Army will shift from the ARFORGEN, which is a regimented, event-driven resource strategy, to a synchronized and fluid strategy to maximize readiness of each unit.³⁷

The Effects of CTE Culture on Sustainable Readiness

The CTE Culture is harmful to readiness because it directly affects units' ability to execute mission command and inhibits units from functioning as learning organizations. Mission command is the philosophy that enables Army leaders to exercise disciplined initiative to empower agile and adaptive leaders.³⁸ The current and future operating environment demands effective mission command. Furthermore, the Army requires learning organizations to enable operating in the JOE.³⁹

Background of the CTE Culture

The CTE Culture is an instance of an *organizational culture*, which Cameron and Quinn define as “the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories and definitions present in an organization.”⁴⁰ Gerras, Wong and Allen offer various ways to analyze culture, in particular military culture, through studying the organization's activities and applying several different theories.⁴¹ They explain, one can find evidence of the culture and its effects in its history and the things one can see, the *artifacts* and *rituals*. Artifacts and rituals include tangible things, such as regulations and field manuals, and actions, such as promotions and reassignments, which are evidence of the culture.

The CTE Culture emerged in the early 1980s when massive exercises at the CTCs became the norm. The Army expected units to fall within a “Band of Excellence” set in doctrine and training guidance in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴² Figure 2 shows how units underwent fluctuations in readiness levels, but never rose to new higher states of readiness.

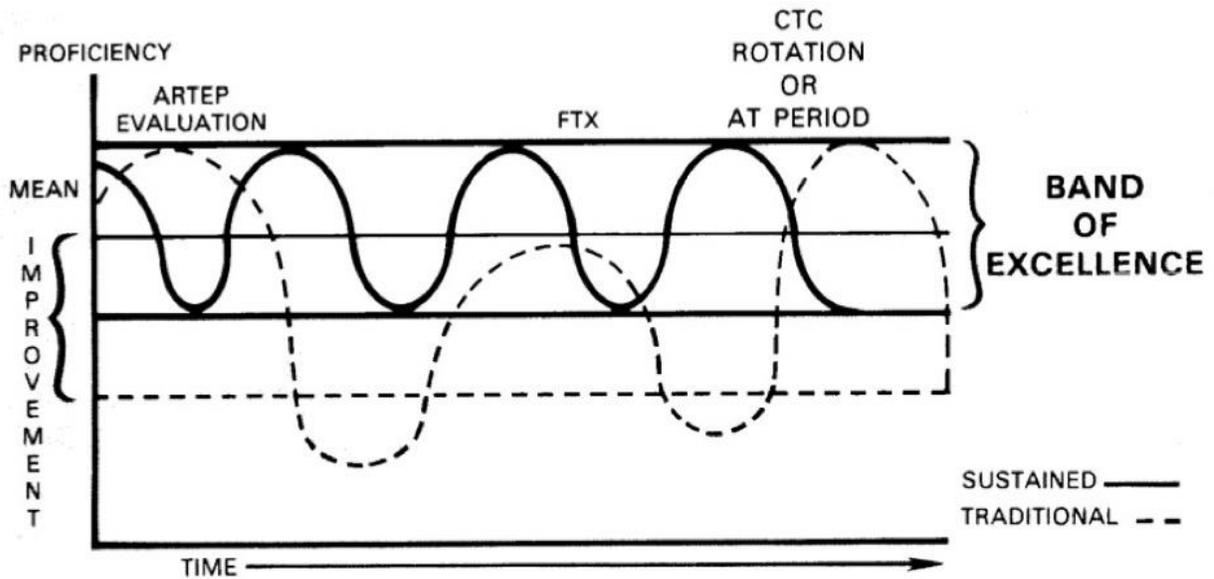


Figure 2. Band of Excellence as Described in the 1999 Edition of FM 25-100⁴³

The vertical axis “Proficiency” is analogous to “Readiness” in today’s doctrinal vocabulary.⁴⁴ The figure depicts how units never rise to higher states of proficiency (e.g., readiness), nor fall below a theoretical lower minimum.

The troubling second-order effect of this culture is how units fail to maintain their proficiency immediately after the CTC rotation. A Government Accountability Office audit found that despite this expenditure of resources many units cannot continue high states of readiness after the CTC.⁴⁵ In essence, the units *culminate*, meaning they “reach the end or the final result of something.”⁴⁶ On the battlefield a unit culminates when it reaches its final objective and no longer has the resources to continue the mission.⁴⁷ Additionally, the Army promulgates the term “culminating training event” in doctrine such as Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Regulation 350-50-3.⁴⁸ This term permeates training plans and training guidance throughout the Army. Additionally, the CTCs provide a venue to evaluate units’ readiness, so units will spend appropriately to earn high marks.⁴⁹ Understandably, units also desire to fight and win

against the CTC opposing forces and will use considerable resources to do so.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, units have shown to lack resources, especially time and personnel, after the CTC to take full advantage of the lessons identified.⁵¹

CTE Culture Impedes Mission Command and Organizational Learning

Evidence shows that units are repeating key challenges and mistakes with implementing mission command at CTCs since 2012 when Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) rotations replaced the standard Iraq and Afghanistan Mission Rehearsal Exercises.⁵² The trends since 2012 show repeated challenges in accomplishing shared understanding (SU), mission command information systems (MCIS), and knowledge management (KM). This evidence indicates that units are not learning as an organization.

The trends from the Combat Training Centers from 2012-2014, showed mistakes and challenges in critical tasks associated with enabling and supporting mission command in the new DATE. The NTC trends in 2012 showed challenges in shared understanding and information management, mission command on the move, enabler planning and synchronization, staff synchronization and estimates, mission command node employment, and key command post skills and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), e.g., mission command information systems.⁵³ The trends from the JRTC in 2012-2013 showed similar challenges in shared understanding, digital mission command processes, and information dissemination and staff synchronization.⁵⁴ The trends from the MCTP, also showed similar challenges in mission command, shared understanding, information sharing, and battlefield visualization.⁵⁵

The Center for Army Lessons Learned reports identified similar trends two to three years later, when units normally rotate through the CTCs again under different

leaders. When describing where units were challenged at the NTC in 2015, a high ranking officer said, "What emerges are the themes of collaboration, shared understanding and integration."⁵⁶ The report repeats findings of reports from 2012 and 2013, including challenges in SU; Common Operating Picture (COP); and KM processes of turning data into Information, information into knowledge, and knowledge into understanding.⁵⁷ The reports also relayed negative findings in MCIS, key skills and SOPs for unit tactical operations centers such as Digital Battle Rosters, Digital Master Gunners, KM Training, and MCIS hardware and software.⁵⁸ During high-tempo, rapidly changing situations, challenges with reporting and battle tracking, maintaining the COP, and using MCIS to create SU were especially challenging.⁵⁹ In summary, participating units struggled to execute "Mission Command on the Move," which is doing all of the above in a rapidly changing, complex, mobile environment.⁶⁰

The MCTP trends in 2014 through early 2016 again reported similar findings. Division and Corps headquarters needed to improve understanding through KM Processes.⁶¹ Maintaining a COP to create SU was still a challenge. The report stressed again the importance of sustaining skills in MCIS and Digital Master Gunners.⁶² Additionally explained, "Staffs struggle with conceptualizing and effectively executing knowledge management" which degrades shared understanding.⁶³

These challenges are particularly poignant because they show an inability of Army units to learn from these repeated challenges over multiple training cycles. They had fallen off the readiness cliff somewhere between the CTC rotations. They were not learning as organizations and these repeated challenges directly affected the ability of commanders and staffs to conduct mission command and be learning organizations.

Analyzing the CTE Culture with Institution Theory

For the Army to kill the CTE Culture, it must identify the artifacts and rituals sustaining it. Army leaders can then target and eliminate them, while cultivating a new culture that enables sustainable readiness.

Institution Theory, the Tool of Choice

Institution Theory is a useful tool to identify, and therefore target these artifacts. Institution theory models institutions, which are “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources.”⁶⁴ One can visualize the CTE Culture as an institution supported by three pillars, the *regulative*, *normative* and *cultural-cognitive*, as depicted in Figure 3.⁶⁵ These pillars represent different types of cultural artifacts. The regulative pillar includes formal constructs that compel the organization to act certain ways. Regulative artifacts include regulations, policies, and organizational structures that support and perpetuate the CTE.⁶⁶ The Army’s doctrine, expectations, obligations, leadership guidance, certifications and accreditations form its normative pillar, which are informal constructs that morally govern the organization’s members.⁶⁷ The unseen aspects of the institution, such as shared and assumed understandings, expectations, values, and beliefs that guide both soldiers and leaders comprise the cultural-cognitive pillar.⁶⁸ Artifacts under the cultural-cognitive pillar are often powerful and contradict those of the other two pillars.⁶⁹

Identifying CTE Cultural Artifacts and Rituals

Artifacts and Rituals are visible structures and processes of the organization.⁷⁰ Though clearly visible, they may be hard to separate and interpret. Several key groups of artifacts of the CTE Culture are: human resources and training regulations,

organizational structures, schedules and plans, counseling and rewards, senior leader actions, and unseen cultural assumptions and expectations shown in Figure 3.

The Army's personnel regulations and policies are regulative artifacts of the culture. Large scale personnel turnover after the CTE is evidence of this. Nearly half the Army turns over every other year.⁷¹ If the unit is not deploying immediately, a personnel turnover typically occurs, inhibiting lessons identified at the CTC from becoming lessons learned through retraining.⁷² This is a ritual that impedes organizational learning. Once the CTE is complete, human resource management processes move commanders and staff members to their next job or professional military education school. Units expect this ritual and key leaders devote their time and energy to ensure success at their final event, the CTE.

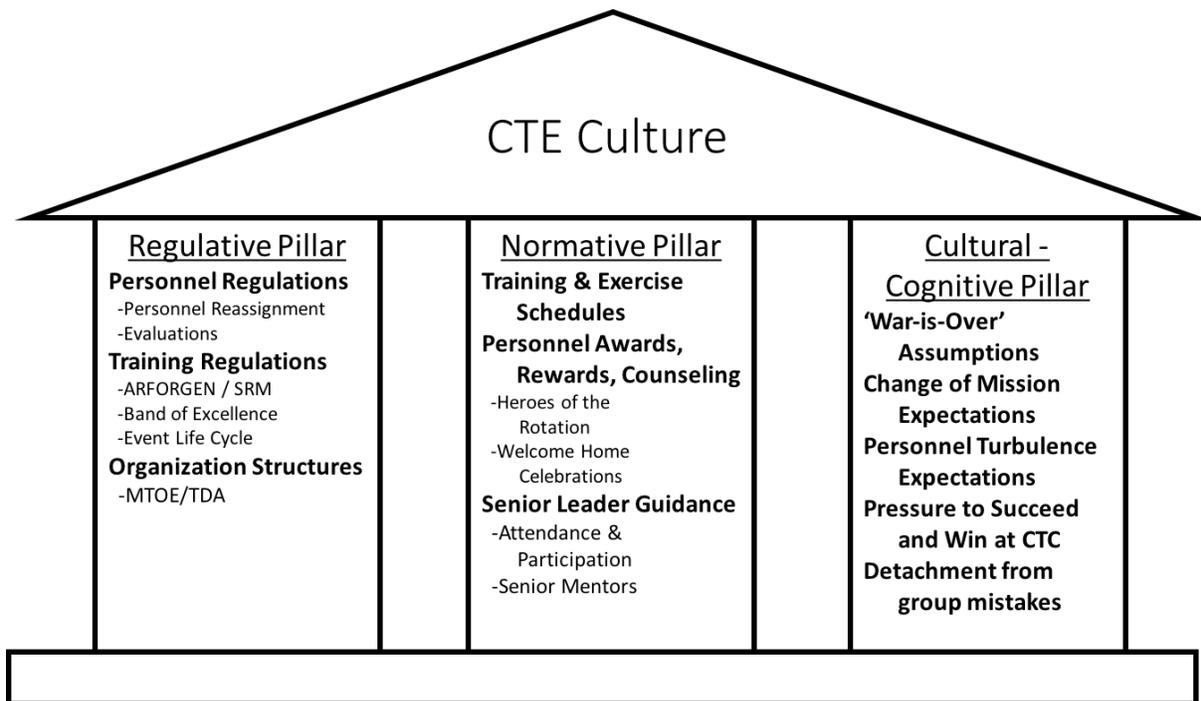


Figure 3. Three Pillars of the CTE Culture⁷³

Current Army organizational structures do not adequately account for the repeated challenges at the CTCs and their causes: mission command, shared

understanding, organizational learning and change management. No one staff element or leader is responsible for these areas.⁷⁴ For example, there is no staff element clearly responsible to the commander for tracking, applying metrics, resourcing, analyzing, reporting and making recommendations on over-all mission command, which is critical to succeed in the new operating environment.⁷⁵

Over time, organizations developed a shared understanding that the CTE Culture is the way business is done. This was evidenced in the recurring pattern that units would consistently lack time and personnel to conduct learning tasks after the CTE as shown in training schedules and repeated mistakes at future CTC rotations.⁷⁶ This demonstrated to units that long-term learning and change was not and would likely never be a priority. Instead, units were only obligated to perform at their absolute best during the CTE only, so that is where all the time and resources went. Personnel across the force assumed and believed this would happen on their upcoming CTEs and come to expect it without question. Soon, all units approached CTEs this way because it is what they had previously done.

The written and verbal guidance of senior leaders as well as their presence at CTEs are normative artifacts of the culture. The CTC rotations have become high priority and high-visibility events attended by many senior leaders.⁷⁷ Many general officers, including Division Commanders and Deputy Division Commanders, attend CTC rotations, sometimes with their Forward Command Post staffs, to observe and participate with their Brigades.⁷⁸ Routinely, retired generals attend exercises as mentors and trainers of the commanders and key staff officers.⁷⁹ The priority of a unit's effort goes toward where its senior leaders spend their time. Their presence demonstrates

what they care about most.⁸⁰ Thus, the participation and actions of senior leaders toward the CTEs are powerful signals of the high priority of the CTE. As a result, a commander and his unit's reputation depend on its performance during these CTC events. This makes the senior leaders' actions powerful cultural artifacts that promulgate the CTE Culture.

A cultural-cognitive artifact of the CTE culture is the "War-is-Over" assumptions that occur after the CTE is complete.⁸¹ Units go home when it's done no matter the result of the exercise. There is no extended deployment, no messy, long-lasting stability and support operations. Training and Doctrine Command, the organization that oversees the CTCs, standardized the "Event Life Cycle" that many units call, "The Road to War," as shown in Figure 4.

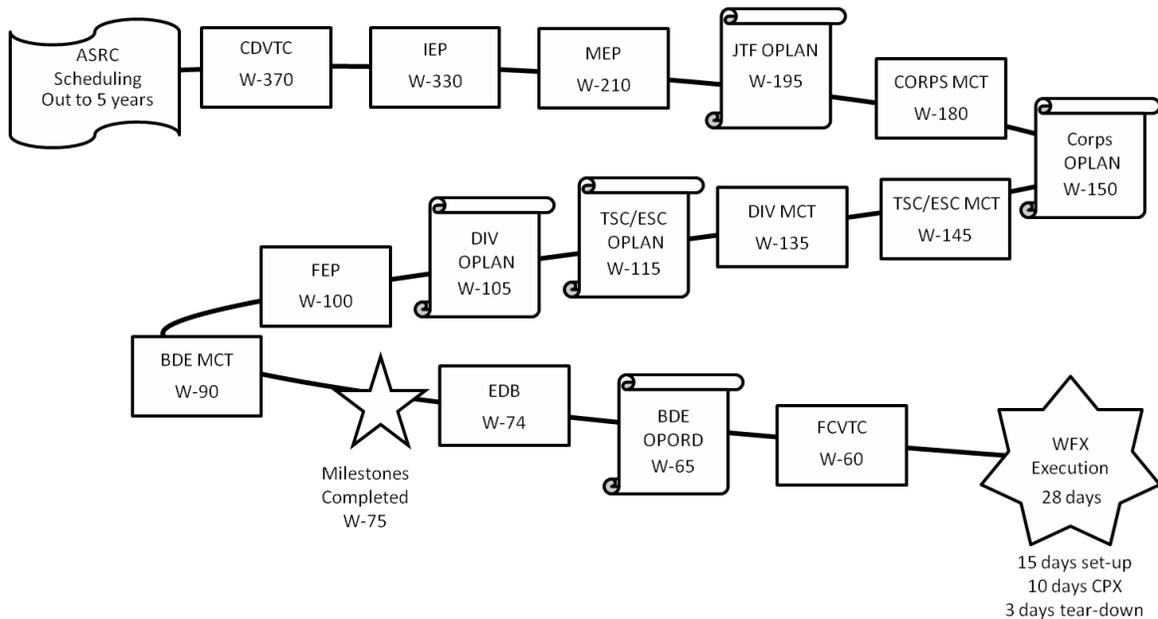


Figure 4. Event Life Cycle from TRADOC Pamphlet 350-50-3⁸²

Figure 4 shows the key events required for a successful WFX as outlined in U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Regulations.⁸³ It highlights the many events that consume a unit's time and manpower. It also shows the abrupt end of the process at the

CTE, the WFX. As a result, the events and tasks associated with learning and changing after the CTC event, a WFX in this case, may not get scheduled and garner command emphasis and necessary resources. In her book, *Wrongology*, Kathryn Schultz suggest a tendency toward “error blindness” and “amnesia for our mistakes” may be the cause of this.⁸⁴ In essence, because the war is over, units shift focus away from the CTC and its painful lessons and toward the next mission.

This abrupt transition separates what happened “over there” at the CTC with what will happen upon return to home station. Immediately after the CTE, units devote nearly all manpower and resources for retrograde back home, not on correcting mistakes. Schultz’s theories suggest these actions promote the tendency to dismiss organizational mistakes and failures as “not our own” and focus on the victories.⁸⁵

Additionally, commanders award soldiers publicly who did extraordinary things during the rotation. Units celebrate back at home station with welcome home and awards ceremonies symbolizing the finality of the event. The Army promotes and moves high-performing soldiers to positions of higher responsibility which can also exacerbate the aforementioned personnel turn-over.

After a CTE, units regularly deploy or transition to a “mission ready” phase per the SRM.⁸⁶ If transitioning to a deployment, the unit became immediately consumed with the myriad pre-deployment tasks and movement actions. If not transitioning to a deployment, being in the “available pool” period is fraught with supporting other missions such as equipment maintenance, troop schools, garrison duties, mandatory administrative training and short-notice external taskings.⁸⁷ Collateral duties overwhelm

leaders and therefore are unable to capture, document and implement the lessons learned from the previous CTE.⁸⁸

Killing the CTE Culture

To kill the CTE Culture, the Army must replace the artifacts and rituals to empower a new cultural institution that fosters mission command, organizational learning and the SRM. New artifacts and rituals can build a new SRM as depicted in Figure 5.

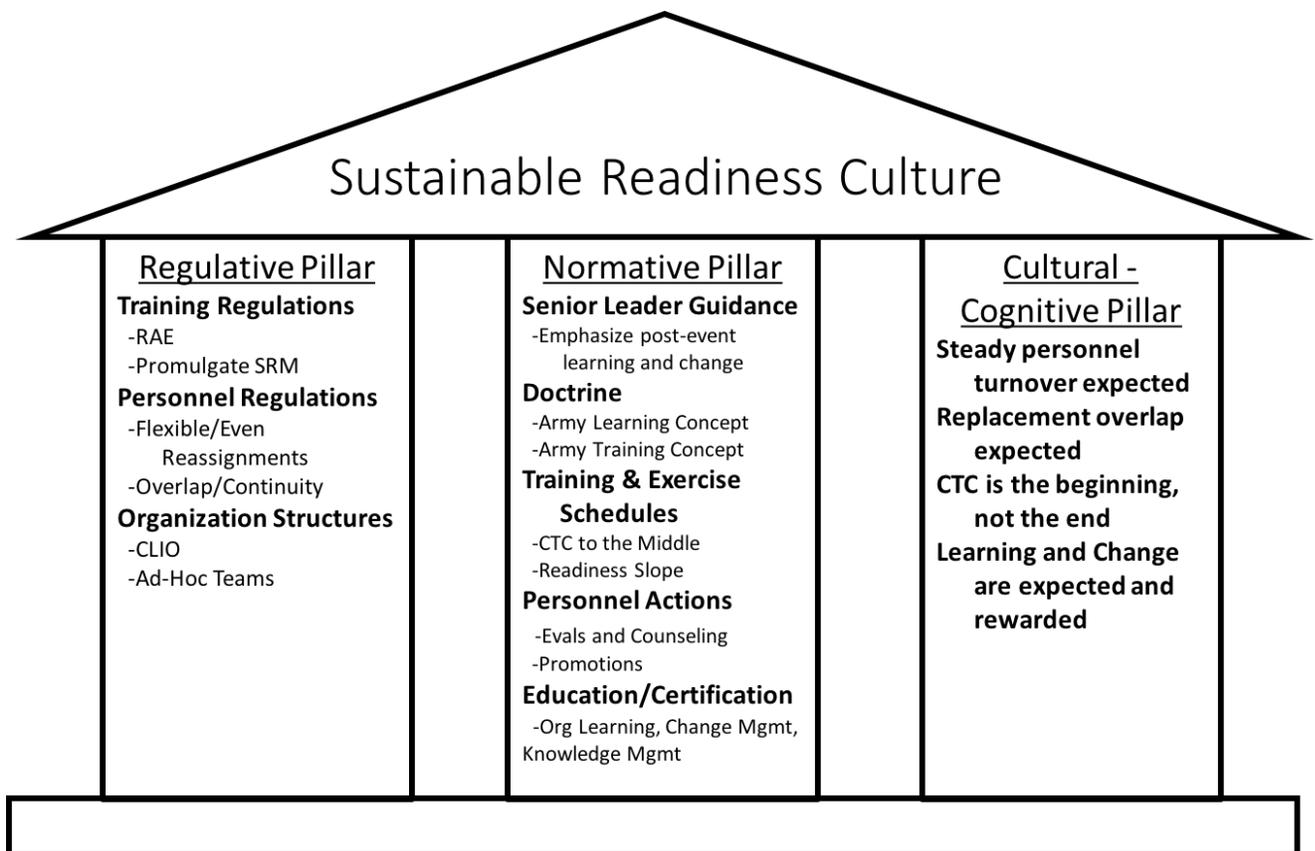


Figure 5. Three Pillars of the Sustainable Readiness Culture⁸⁹

Regulative Actions

The Army must first change training and personnel regulations as well as organizational structures to begin to build a new Sustainable Readiness Culture.

Change Training Regulations

The Army must purge doctrine of the “Culminating Training Event” terminology and replace it with a more relevant and useful name. A more appropriate term could be “Readiness Assessment Exercise.” This name stresses the purpose of readiness, and uses the term ‘Assessment’ which infers that the unit must track and measure readiness. Most importantly, it removes the term “culminate” to indicate that it is not the final event of a process or cycle. Senior leaders must lead the way in refusing to use CTE and correct it anytime they see and hear it. The new SRM doctrine should be the vehicle to enable this communication throughout all Army formations.

Change Personnel Regulations and Policies

Current personnel regulations, policies and replacement cycles cause considerable personnel turnover after a CTE.⁹⁰ After many decades of units losing a large percentage of their personnel after a CTE, unit leaders assume it will happen. To change this, the personnel system must be flexible enough to allow personnel to stay in place long enough to conduct tasks associated with organizational learning and organizational change after major exercises and deployments. Personnel must have enough time and resources to pass on what they have learned to their replacements.⁹¹

Change Organizational Structures

Army organizational structures do not have staff officers and sections dedicated to the key challenge areas of mission command and organizational learning.⁹² However, the Army could adapt the Chief Learning Innovation Officer (CLIO) idea from the U.S. Army Learning Concept to fill this need. The Concept envisions the CLIO to “have the authority and responsibility to direct, track and manage actions to initiate and sustain the Army’s learning system adaptation...[and] establish organizational level metrics to

routinely evaluate success and provide periodic progress updates.”⁹³ The Army must adjust the concept because it deals almost exclusively with individual learning, not organizational learning, which are two very different concepts. The Army should amend the headquarters Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOEs) to add personnel, like a CLIO, who have the knowledge and skills to accomplish these tasks.

However, in a resource-constrained environment adding personnel to the MTOE may be unfeasible. Nevertheless, commanders can build and empower *ad-hoc* teams with personnel already on-hand. Scholars and experts in change management call this technique “adhocracy” which is a method used by organizations to operate in an environment which changes rapidly.⁹⁴ When picking members of this team, commanders should look for leaders who took courses at professional military education (PME) or graduate school in Organizational Learning, Change Management, Knowledge Management or Systems Engineering. The Army offers classes that include some of these desired skills, such as change management, knowledge management, mission command information systems, and systems engineering at various PME such as the War College, Command and General Staff College, Functional Area 53 (Systems Engineering) and Functional Area 57 (Simulations and Knowledge Management) courses. Commanders can establish their own internal courses by leveraging those who have education in these areas. Then regardless of the presence or absence of a formal CLIO, commanders can normalize and monitor organizational learning in the organization.

Normative Actions

Normative actions must also be changed to support the new culture. These actions build on and reinforce the regulative changes. They must be established and reinforced by senior leaders to become part of the culture.

Change Senior Leader Emphasis

Army senior leaders contribute to the CTE culture through the heightened emphasis on CTE events, including personally attending, monitoring, and tracking them.⁹⁵ Cultural change theories, such as those proposed by Edgar H. Schein, point to the influence and importance of senior leaders to the cultural change processes.⁹⁶ In an inherently hierarchical organization like the Army, we can assume that senior leaders can provide the examples to change the expectations and norms of the culture.⁹⁷

Inattention to the post-event learning process leads to the common belief and shared understanding that sustaining readiness is not important during this period. This is another cause of the readiness cliff after a major exercise or deployment.⁹⁸ Army senior leaders *must* provide at least equal attention and apply metrics to the learning tasks and events that occur after a major training event.

Killing the CTE Culture will not happen unless service members believe in the Sustainable Readiness Culture. This takes more than senior leader emphasis. It requires tangible proof of senior leader commitment to the new culture. Put another way, service members want leaders to *show* them the right way, not just *tell* them. Therefore, the Army must reinforce the Sustainable Readiness Culture by changing doctrine.

Change Training and Exercises Schedules

Training and exercise schedules end abruptly at the execution of the CTE, as shown earlier. The unit has little time to conduct events focused on learning after the CTC rotation, which would enable the unit to embed and reinforce organizational changes. Under SRM, CTC rotations are better placed in the middle of the training schedule to allow units the time and resources to conduct learning and change actions after the exercise.

Removing the culminating nature of CTC rotations requires other actions to instill organizational learning processes and long-term perspectives. The readiness cycle should feature a period of intense organizational learning and adaptation after a CTC event to create conditions for long-term change. Unlike the aforementioned Band of Excellence, the desired readiness cycle should show units increasing readiness over time despite personnel turnover and change of mission periods.

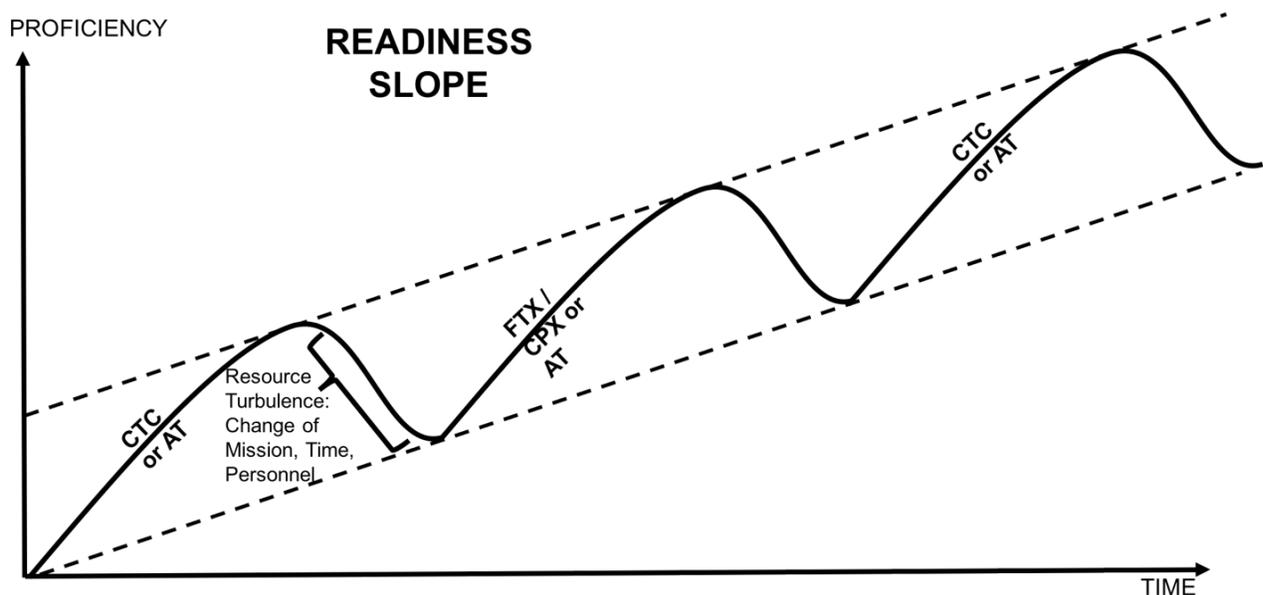


Figure 6. Readiness Slope⁹⁹

The CTC event is no longer considered the end of the training and readiness cycle, but the middle. This desired readiness curve is less steep in the short-term, but an over-all higher readiness in the long-term when compared to the Band of Excellence.

Change the Army Learning Concept

The Army must update the Army Learning Concept and the Army Training Concept to include emphasis on organizational learning. The Army Learning Concept should expand its focus from individual learning to organizational learning. The concept explains, “We have to learn faster and better than our future adversaries.”¹⁰⁰ Stated a bit differently, we must prevail in the competitive learning environment. The Army Learning Concept speaks at length about individual learning and how to change to improve it. It alludes to the need for learning organizations, but does not state it, nor does it give specifics.¹⁰¹ The Army Training Concept goes a bit further by defining learning organizations as “skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring and retaining organizational knowledge.”¹⁰² The document mentions this concept briefly in an annex and does not offer details on how and with what resources. Army concept documents drive future operational doctrine; therefore, emphasis on organizational learning in these will help the Sustainable Readiness Culture grow.

Change Personnel Evaluation and Counseling

Personnel counseling, evaluations and promotions are a vehicle for leaders to emphasize obligations, expectations and priorities. The previous generation of evaluations emphasized Army Values, the one before, knowledge, skills and attributes, the current has mandatory comments on Sexual Harassment and Prevention.¹⁰³ Aspects like a leader’s ability to lead organizational learning and change to increase readiness are not required in counseling and evaluations. The Army should change

counseling and evaluations guidance and forms to account for these important skills and develop new norms to increase readiness. Once counseling statements and evaluations reinforce these important skills they will become assumed and expected as part of the Sustainable Readiness Culture.

Change Education and Certification

The current Army Learning Concept focuses only on individuals, not organizations.¹⁰⁴ The Army's Capstone Concept alludes to learning organizations, but does not define what they are and how to develop them. It only refers to the need for versatile organizations and units that exhibit operational adaptability.¹⁰⁵ To add emphasis and reinforce change, the Army should add organizational learning and change management to curriculums at PME for officers and non-commissioned officers. An example of this is the Change Management Area of Concentration at the U.S. Army War College.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, the Army can emphasize these disciplines in its advanced civil schooling programs to provide skilled and knowledgeable officers to lead change management and organizational learning and propagate cultural changes.

Cultural-Cognitive Actions

The cultural-cognitive aspects of the culture are the invisible, more elusive traits. New sustainable readiness regulations, organizational structures, schedules, rewards and education slowly build strong group assumptions and expectations. Personnel turnover is more consistent over the entire training cycle; replacements are expected to overlap with outgoing personnel. The CTC rotation is viewed as the beginning of a learning cycle, not the end. Leaders expect rewards for how much their organizations learn, change and adapt.

The regulative and normative attributes of the culture must be maintained consistently over time to enable the culture-cognitive aspects to form and grow. The strength of these attributes of the culture can be a measure of its success. However, these traits can be difficult to quantify and measure. The Army should implement sustainable readiness-focused organizational climate surveys as well as exit interviews with outgoing organization members. Senior leaders must make this a formalized process for it become a regular practice, part of the culture.

Conclusion

The CTE culture is a problem in the US Army that prevents units from reaching higher states of readiness. It is also hampering units from executing mission command in today's complex and ambiguous environment and will hinder implementation of the new Sustainable Readiness Model.

The CTE Culture is causing units to show repeated challenges with mission command, shared understanding, mission command information systems, and knowledge management at the Combat Training Centers. The finality of the CTC rotation is the hallmark of the CTE Culture. This creates a readiness cliff after units expend all resources toward the CTE, leaving little time, personnel and funding to make lasting change that endures. This shows that organizations are not learning from their mistakes and cannot, therefore, increase readiness.

The Chief of Staff of the Army aims to implement a new Sustainable Readiness Model that will eradicate the readiness cliff.¹⁰⁷ To execute the Sustainable Readiness Model, increase readiness and avoid the readiness cliff, the Army should be comprised of learning organizations. Learning organizations can learn from their mistakes at

exercises, and avoid the readiness cliff even if personnel turn-over, lack of funding and other challenges persist.

Institution theory proved a useful tool to analyze the CTE Culture. It showed the artifacts and rituals of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars of the CTE Culture. The artifacts and rituals were targeted and recommendations were then made to eliminate and replace them. The targets and recommendations were:

- 1) Changing training and personnel regulations,
- 2) Changing organizational structures,
- 3) Changing senior leaders' emphasis,
- 4) Changing readiness and exercise doctrine,
- 5) Changing personnel evaluation and counseling, and
- 6) Changing personnel training and education.

By attacking these targets and sustaining the recommended actions the Army can kill the Culminating Training Event Culture, fulfill the SRM, and begin to build a new Sustainable Readiness Culture that enables increased readiness.

Endnotes

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