TACTICAL COUNTERINSURGENCY DECISION TOOL FOR THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Tenuous political and economic times call for increased oversight and improved results from military counterinsurgency programs in Afghanistan, programs that provide agile non-kinetic weapons, critical for commanders fighting in today's asymmetric battle space. This paper proposes a decision tool for construction projects executed under the Commanders Emergency Response Program, designed to meet the changing demands of fighting an amorphous insurgency among dynamic systems of stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 the United States (U.S.) and allies invaded Afghanistan to seek justice, making no distinction between those responsible for the attacks people that harbored them. In the continuing effort to deny Al-Qaeda safe haven in Afghanistan, America would face a different type of war, a counterinsurgency (COIN) fight. In COIN operations, opponents battle for support of the population in order to create stability and deny the opposition a source of recruits and resources. The Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) has been a powerful weapon in this fight and "is an absolutely critical and flexible counterinsurgency tool," according to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Hon. Michele A. Flournoy. [3].

A decade after the initial forces deployed to Afghanistan, Usama Bin Laden is dead and U.S. political and military leaders face increasing challenges at home and abroad associated with justifying the ongoing engagement in Afghanistan. Among them are challenges to produce visible and quantifiable results, accounting for progress and justifying the cost of the burdensome conflict. Previous attempts have failed to provide sufficient results to satisfy America's insatiable appetite for answers. However, this paper outlines a new perspective and provides a decision tool to meet the need.

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion in Iraq, seized money funded rebuilding projects that repaired destroyed infrastructure and provided humanitarian assistance to aid affected Iraqis. While implementing these small-scale rebuilding projects, American Forces discovered reconstruction was a powerful non-kinetic weapon for winning the hearts and minds of local people. "CERP dollars have been of enormous value to the effort in Iraq (and in Afghanistan, to which the concept migrated in 2003 as well)" [4]. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), added "CERP provides an immediate and tangible impact on the people of Afghanistan, providing basic services such as water, energy and roads which in turn affect security and economic well-being" [3]. Since its expansion to Afghanistan, CERP has been used to build new infrastructure. Building new infrastructure illustrates the evolution of CERP from a rebuilding tool to an offensive counterinsurgency weapon. For 2011, CERP was funded up to $800M by U.S. National Defense

Authorization Act "for the purpose of enabling United States military commanders in [Afghanistan] to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that will immediately assist the [Afghan] people" [5]. This evolution led to questions about how "urgent humanitarian need" was being determined in CERP. Additionally, the U.S. Congress has questioned if money allocated under the program, for Afghanistan, has been effective at fulfilling its intended strategic purpose. It is important to note, under this appropriation CERP contracts are not subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and thus the process common to other federal contracts will be explained further.

RESEARCH

To demonstrate the process the following discussion will describe a common generic CERP reconstruction effort as outlined in Figure 1**.** CERP reconstruction project efforts are led by a military project manager (PM) most commonly, although not exclusively, of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), typically a Company Grade Officer. Ideally the driving force leading to project nomination would be the Afghan local government officials acting on the guidance and priorities of the provincial development council (PDC) in concert with the local provincial development plan (PDP) which supports the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) outlined by the government of Afghanistan. A nominated project must meet a series of checks for CERP funding outlined by the current Money As A Weapon System-Afghanistan (MAAWS-A) standard operating procedure. The PM then validates the requirement, and should the project meet the criteria, it will be placed in the cue to be programmed in accordance with a unit determined prioritization process.

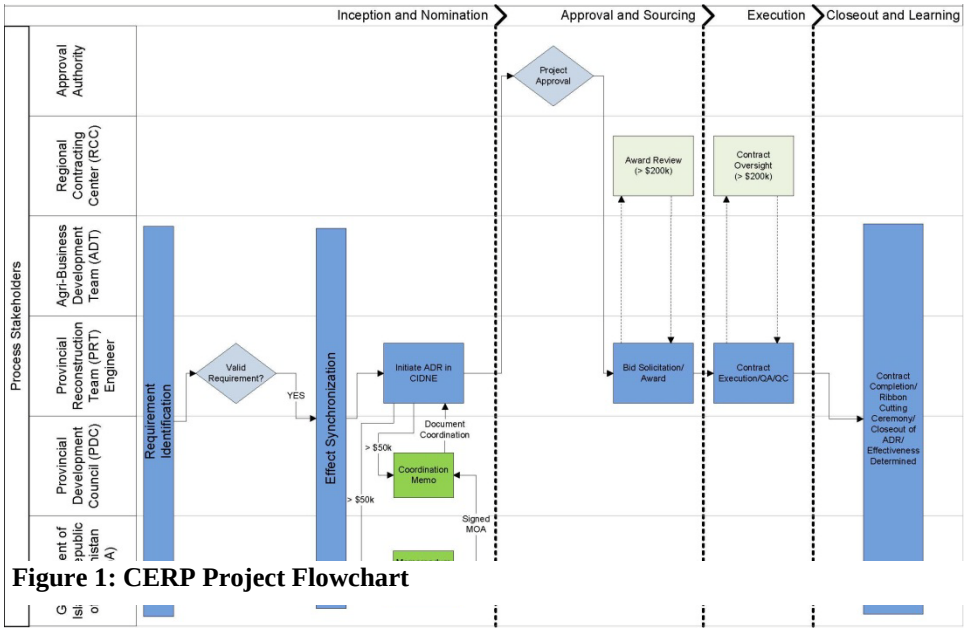

Figure 1: CERP Project Flowchart

In order to program a CERP project and nominate it for funding, several things are required to be documented. There must be a signed land use agreement demonstrating the legal allocation of the parcel of land to the project. A memorandum outlining the operations and maintenance (O&M) plan for the completed project must be included, documenting to whom it will be transferred within the host nation. A statement must be included that documents the sustainability of the project and must outline the measures taken to ensure the project will last. A letter of justification for the project is also included as a part of the package, and a statement about why Afghan Government funds were not available to fund the project. Finally, the PM compiles the documents along with a draft statement of work (SOW) in an Afghan Development Report (ADR) on the Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) server. The PM adds to the ADR, his own estimated project statistics including the project cost based on an independent government estimate (IGE), the number of people will be employed by and benefit from the project, and a statement of the anticipated executability of the project should it be funded. With the

above documents included, the compiled ADR must be signed by the unit commander and submitted to the approval chain for funding.

Remembering that CERP projects are not subject to the FAR, the approval authority reevaluates the nominated project and forwards the decision according to the cost of the project as outlined in Figure 2. After the appropriate approval for a project is granted, funding is allocated by the Resource Manager (RM) to the project. In order to obligate the allocated funds the PM must next work with the Contracting Officer (KO) to solicit bids from local contractors. Competitive bids are reviewed and commonly the contractor (KTR) with the lowest priced bid that is technically acceptable is awarded the contract. Generally, CERP construction contracts are firm fixed price, design-build contracts. After the KO awards the contract, the PM maintains day-to-day oversight over the obligated construction contract throughout the project execution. General tasks during project execution include frequent site visits, maintain quality control, assess contract compliance, review construction documents, maintain project schedule, and evaluate progress to authorize payments.

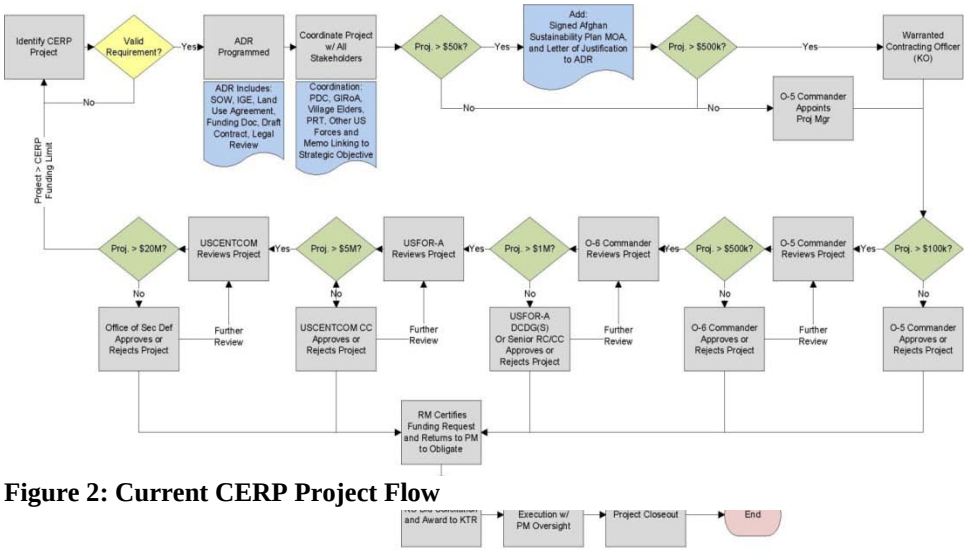

Figure 2: Current CERP Project Flow

Upon substantial completion of the project, the PM will perform a pre-final inspection in coordination with the local government appointed recipient to begin the process of acceptance and transfer. After U.S. acceptance of the project and transfer to the Afghan recipient, a one year warranty period begins during which the KTR remains liable for defects caused by negligence or poor craftsmanship. Finally, the PM closes out the project's ADR by reevaluating the anticipated project metrics of costs, schedule, Afghans employed and beneficiaries, and providing a statement documenting the project's outcome.

CERP Reconstruction Project Considerations

CERP project stakeholders, illustrated by the swim lanes in Figure 1 are the first critical contributor to consider in project evaluation. Project success is defined by the perspectives of each of these stakeholders, each with varying interests and motivations. Stakeholders often have very different ideas about how CERP projects should be implemented or what the projects should seek to achieve. Depending on the project, different interests are met and in some cases competing interests emerge. Also, projects do not take place in a vacuum; projects may conflict within a battle space and have competing objectives. In order to effectively achieve intended results through CERP reconstruction and development, the process must consider the perspectives of each stakeholder throughout the project.

The failure to consider stakeholders is evident in the case of some PRT projects that have been identified for performing tasks that properly belong to local governments, directly conflicting with the capacity development mission [1]. The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Development, Mark Ward, criticized the U.S. for pursuing small projects that provide services for the Afghan people that local governments are capable of providing thus undermining their authority. Overlapping lines of

authority and lanes of responsibility have weakened an otherwise capable government [8]. These indictments emphasize CERP's inability to plan projects that consider stakeholder interests, build sustainable capacity and maintain a horizon beyond immediate needs, leading to Afghan President Hamid Karzai calling for the withdrawal of PRTs from Afghanistan.

Common differences between perspectives of some CERP stakeholders were summarized in the United States Institute of Peace publication of three sets of "recurring tradeoffs."

> *Stability vs. Host Nation Legitimacy: This tradeoff refers to the conflict between the urgent need for international actors to secure the peace, and the possibility that these actions are not seen by the host nation population as connected to their local leaders or government and do not build the legitimacy or capacity of the host nation.*
>
> *Expediency vs. Sustainability: This tradeoff refers to differences between targeting short-term actions that show a peace dividend and signal that violent conflict is over, but are not sustainable by the host nation over time, and those actions that may not have an immediate impact on the perceptions of peace, but develop over time and establish conditions that can be sustained by the local population after the intervening party is gone.*
>
> *Meeting Needs vs. Building Capacity: This third tradeoff refers to the quandary faced by international actors- governmental and nongovernmental- when it is easier to fulfill needs directly than to build host nation capacity to deliver critical assistance [2].*

The tradeoffs illustrate commanders' differences about how to spend CERP funds. As an example, infantry units are likely to nominate projects that will aid in establishing stability, expediency, and basic needs in an area of operations to create peaceful conditions for their team and the local population. As a counter example, a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is more likely to use CERP to execute the host nation government's development plan that would develop the capacity of the local leaders and, over the long term, establish the host nation government's legitimacy creating a sustainable environment where international intervention is not needed to maintain peace and rule of law. In the two examples, neither position is wrong. The Infantry unit and the PRT have different missions and use the CERP to help to achieve their respective tactical objectives, but the tool is degraded when local nationals cannot distinguish between the motives of the coalition partner with whom they are working.

Additionally, there are complaints that CERP, despite proven usefulness for tactical commanders, has failed to address U.S. strategic objectives. Tactical units and local governments must align their actions with higher authority and plans. Tactical military units, for example, will not be relieved of additional responsibility and further action until strategic conditions for withdrawal have been satisfied. Similarly, local governments must not implement independent strategies from their national government from whom they seek funding and support. Local actions must be within the bounds of larger strategic plans so that coordinated response can be achieved across multiple tactical spaces.

In order to provide the kind of results Congress and the American public are seeking, tactical CERP implementers must reconcile the interests of process stakeholders and Cole's tradeoffs during project execution. This research utilizes a Causal Chain to illustrate the impact of key events on the CERP process across a spectrum of program perspectives.

Causal Chain

The Causal Chain is a tool that has been adapted from the Emergency Management field that is used to show how events, exposures and consequences are connected through causal sequences, and how incident prevention and mitigation can be attained through interruption of the path [7]. Figure 3 shows a Causal Chain relating to the current CERP process that identifies the key stages of the chain. At its center, the "Incident" refers to a particular event along CERP's chain with major implications for the outcome of projects, the decision point where a project is approved and funded. It is this incident that links the causes of failed projects to the outcomes of the failures that have been previously identified from the literature.

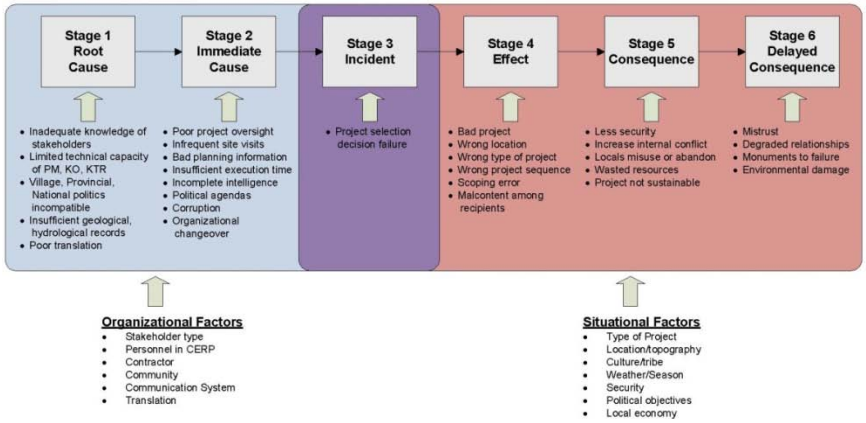

Figure 3: Causal Chain

The first link, including stages one to three, is moderated by organizational factors that contribute to the cause of the incident. Moderating the second link, including stages three to six, are situational factors that impact the outcomes of the incident. In each case the factors have been identified from previous reports, testimonies, SIGAR inspections and personal experience as sources that have likely contributed to project failures. The two links are connected by the project decision to create the causal chain.

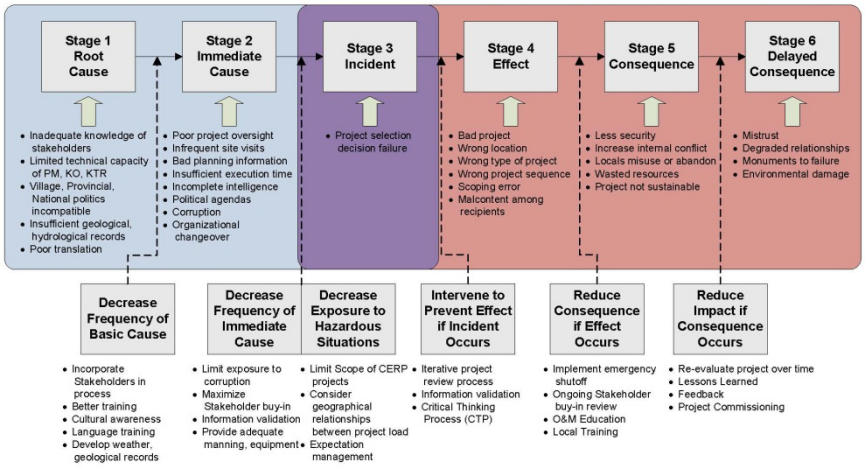

Figure 4: Causal Chain Interventions

The purpose for outlining the Causal Chain is to identify how the links can be broken to prevent the negative outcomes identified in past projects. Figure 4 provides interventions that can be implemented in the CERP process in order to break the chain of events leading to projects of questionable outcomes or inconclusive results identified in congressional testimony and inspection reports. The Causal Chain provides the decision maker a tool to break down previous projects and target programmatic changes at critical points that contribute to the outcome they desire to change. Modifying the CERP process flow in Figure 4, the proposed interventions and identified new process steps for CERP have been incorporated and are presented in Figure 5. The addition of Critical Thinking Processes (CTP) at each approval level provides a framework by which the approval authority can consider the merits of a project that they are otherwise unfamiliar with and may be geographically separated from with different political, cultural and social norms the project may impact and the reviewer should understand. By driving the evaluation criteria, the nomination package must also adapt to provide the requisite information. Additionally, the Causal Chain identified a need for lessons learned and feedback from previous projects and is incorporated in the updated flow.

"Increasing the number of stakeholders is critical to success" [4]. Stakeholder buy-in is a key change from Figure 1 in the proposed future system state in Figure 6 (changes denoted in red). The proposed future state process diagram highlights key stakeholders and incorporates a broader analysis of nominated projects by each stakeholder and a shift to Afghan centered nomination and execution to address the incident cause link findings. As an example, note the addition of the Local Land Owner (shaded in grey) as an addition as a stakeholder.

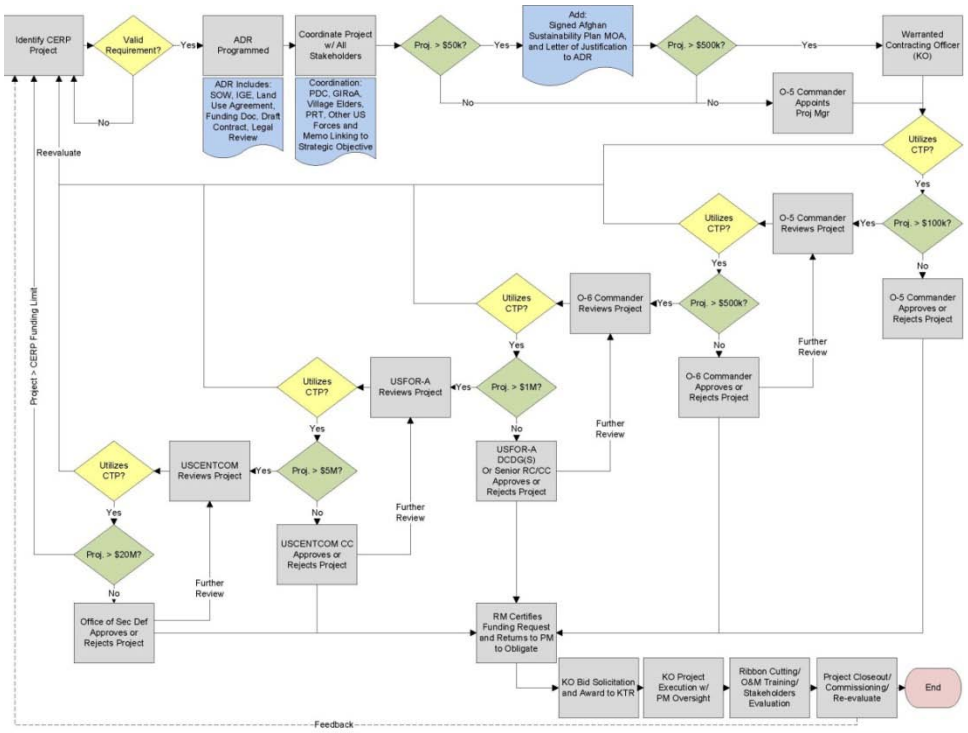

Figure 5: Future CERP Project Flow

Another important change is the delay (represented by the red line) between ribbon cutting of the completed project and when project evaluation occurs. The contract performance period extends to include commissioning a facility, where the KTR must show that the facility is performing to the specifications of the contract rather than just providing the items required by the contract. This is a fundamental change from delivery of a project output toward CERP delivering desired outcomes. Finally, as an input to future projects the learning and feedback information return provides important lessons learned by formalizing knowledge sharing and decreases the impact of unit changeover.

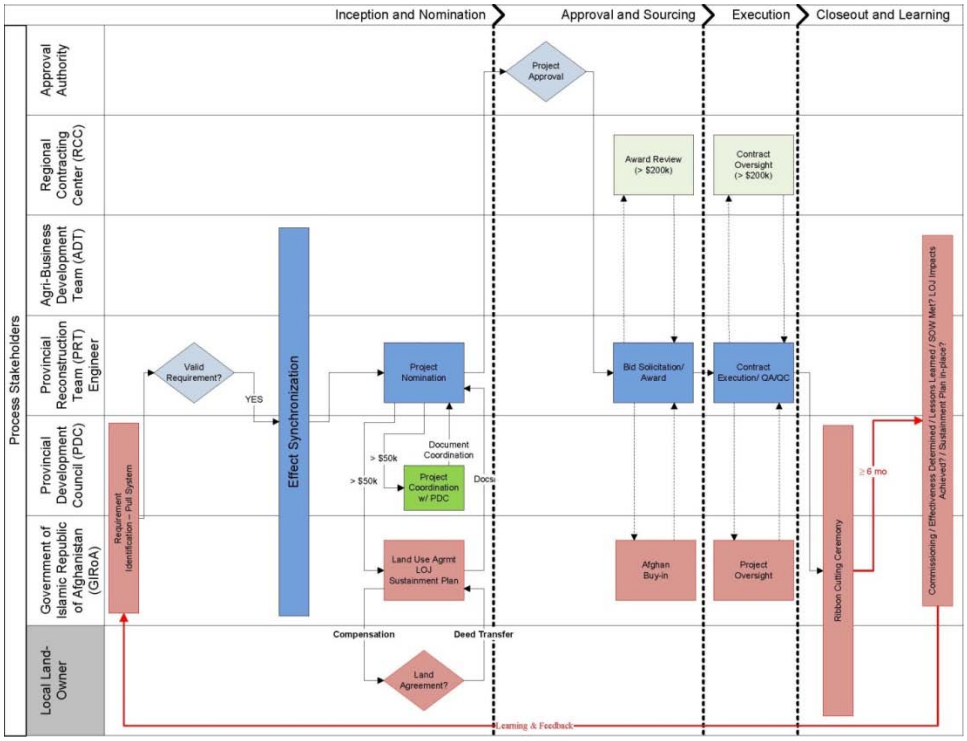

Figure 6: Future CERP Flow Chart

DISCUSSION

Considering the stages of the Causal Chain can help illuminate the effect of process adjustments on project outcomes. The Causal Chain presented above highlights the importance of different considerations within project nomination and how they contribute to the eventual project outcome. These considerations must continually be addressed and reevaluated within each project to minimize the likelihood of a negative incident. Implementing the tools presented here can help decision makers evaluate CERP project nomination packages, increase the effectiveness of resources allocated to the effort, and aid interested parties in evaluation of CERP project outcomes.

Additionally, to meet the call for outcome measurement and accountability for CERP, policy makers should seek to incorporate changes to guidance that encourages cooperative stakeholder planning and a partnership for project success. Through flexible guidance that allows for an iterative process of SOP changes, the CERP program will be better equipped to bridge the gap between the program's historical tradeoffs: strategic-tactical, stability-legitimacy, expediency-sustainability, and addressing needs-building capacity. Implementing the change will help to ensure CERP remains relevant and targeted at combating the insurgency as it reacts and continues to evolve in the future.

Finally, this paper describes the evaluation, reflection and learning process that can accompany the Causal Chain method when applied to the CERP process in Afghanistan. The utility of the method is not limited to military decisions regarding COIN efforts. This paper is but one example of how the tool can be applied across a spectrum of applications as a means for process evaluation and improvement.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

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