Volume 17 Issue 28
Originally issued as C4

Global Journal of human-social science: C
Sociology & Culture
Volume 17 Issue 4 Version 1.0 Year 2017
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Counterterrorism in Public Opinion: A Cross Sectional Research in Punjab, Pakistan

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GJHSS-C Classification: *FOR Code: 160899*



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Counterterrorism in Public Opinion: A Cross Sectional Research in Punjab, Pakistan

Majid Ali Tahir [α], Yasir Aftab Khan [σ] & Ahmad Hassan [ρ]

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I. Introduction

Contemporary forms of terrorism have direct and cataclysmic complications for mass society. Not only the sufferers of terrorism but the people tied socially also effected by concepts associated with terrorism. All the states are in continuous struggle to shield security of their nationals by taking effective measures to counterterrorism. Law enforcement agencies and legislation bodies work closely together to address the severity of issue in their respective areas. Complex structure of terrorism often requires multidimensional approach which may be effective in eliminate terrorism.

As Pakistan amalgamated with United States (US henceforth) in war on terror in 2001, the security condition of Pakistan seeks destabilization due to a series of terrorist storm. Pakistan is multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian and a mixture of sub cultural entity. Struggle between different sub cultures and ethnicities exist same as in all other states having cultural diversity (Waseem, 1996). Due to presence of afghan refugees from 1980s in Pakistan, many of Afghan nationals have close linkages with general population in Pakistan. Initially, terrorist used existing shelters of Afghan refugees within Pakistan for terrorism in Pakistan (Alimia, 2016).

Tehrik-e-Talban Pakistan was a merger of 13 extremist groups who were organized by BaitullahMehsud in 2007 (Ahsan, 2015). It started to recruitextremists and radicals for terrorism operations. Most of the militants in this umbrella were among the victims of US drone attacks, their relatives, warriors from indigenous groups, Afghan nationals, other nationality holders, and wanted criminal of Pakistan, hidden in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA henceforth). This alliance has carried out 1290 diverse type of terrorist attacks on different targets (START, 2017). In the meanwhile, they targeted civil population, educational institutions, policemen and religious opponent who sermonized against terrorist activities. Along with loss of 70'000 lives, social, economic, security and international position of Pakistan suffered because of terrorism and extremism.

Modern tact of terrorism has been introduced by al Qaida and Talban, and now spread through cultural diffusion in number of states. Some of the scholars consider that extremist behavior exists in different societies but it alters into terrorist actions due to significance and support form society (Liebman, 1983; Angus, 2015& Kennedy, 1993). Religious, political and ethnic motivation for conflicts is gradually surging different states. Protection of people from terrorism and preemptive measures from existence of terrorists are two main present objectives for sovereign states. Literature reveals that the societies with ethno-religious diversity could indulge in radicalization and extremism (PIPS, 2010). Radicalization can be a force for positive or negative social change. It is considered that the radical approaches can be alarming for a society and must be analyzed scientifically (Noor, 2009).

Terrorism and response to terrorism in Pakistan has life lasting impact of human minds and shaped public behavior in a certain way. Literature indicates that most of discussion regarding political and development policies are replaced by discussion of terrorism and counterterrorism policies in public domain (Abbas, 2008). Family, peers, social, economic, entertainment and residential patterns are distressed due to security concerns. Radical attitude of individuals mainly reflects in religious, ethnic and political matters. Public profiles built on stereotypical assumptions based on religion,

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race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, etc. which are not only discriminatory but are also conflictive (Malik, 2002). All states firmly reject the identification of terrorism with any nationality, religion or ethnicity. But at the same time, literate reveals that there is enormous debate regarding involvement of religious, ethnic and political devices in terrorism (Jalalzai, 2011). The terrorists manipulate religious, ethnic and political feelings of people to get shelter in society (Rifat, 2015).

Nawaz (2016) claimed that counterterrorism policy of Pakistan remains reactive in nature most of times. Literature reveals that operation Zarb-e-Azb backed by operation Rad-ul-Fasad achieved their goal significantly in last three years (Chawla, 2017). Event-response based counter mechanism has decreased incidents, but multidimensional approach presumed for prevention from terrorism. It is also considered that population is still uncertain about sustainable peace and security (Chawla, 2017). Literature suggests that National Counterterrorism policy of Pakistan contains many other sustainable peacekeeping variables to be addressed, but its seems that government is could not addressed as it were required (Parvez, 2015).

Some states peruse for reconciliation with militant groups and other go far offensive action. Political leadership of Pakistan also tried to negotiate with religious, ethnic and some political motivated extremist for promotion of peace (Zaidi, 1991). Status of negotiation with militant groups mostly remained unsuccessful. Quests for peace were considered in launching a country wide armed operation against terrorist. Law enforcement agencies of Pakistan are trying to eliminate terrorism with tight rein. Pakistan army conducted a series of offensive operations which left very positive impacts in short run. The frequency of terrorist attack has been decreased. Despite all, still in Pakistan, there are some people who perceive terrorism as determining by policies formed by the government (Hussain, 2009).

Terrorism can never be sustained where there no internal facilitation for terrorism. Comprehensive counterterrorism policies seek support from the general public of any state. Some of the segments of population have sympathies with substantial marginal groups who use the way of militancy. Many of scholars perused that sympathies for terrorists and extremists are still existing in the Pakistan (Synnott, 2009; Ahmed, 2014&Saffee, 2015). In Pakistan, there is very little mechanism to mainstream the behavior of general public in way to bring conformity among different social groups regarding terrorism phenomenon.

Literature reveals that in Pakistan there was no comprehensive political, ethnic, religious and racial information which may depict the picture of social groupings and their attitude regarding terrorism (Boutellis, 2016). Thereof, it needs to explore the religious, ethnic, and political support for terrorist related aspects. The study intents to provide basic discernments of individuals and social categories about terrorism and counterterrorism in Pakistan. It is also to be inspected which type of counterterrorism policies are demanded by the people of Pakistan.

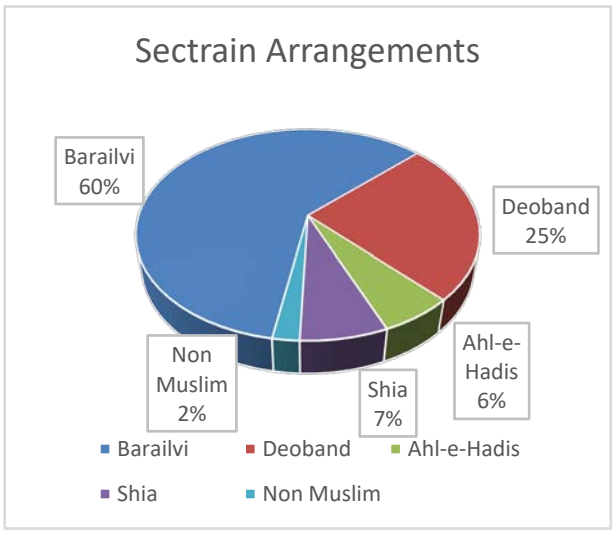
II. Materials & Methods

Existing literature suggests that it was basic need to gather information from different segments of society regarding issue. A survey for this research was conducted in Lahore and Rawalpindi of province Punjab, Pakistan. These two cities have been mistreated by large number of terrorist attacks so far. Self-administrated question was developed as data collection tool. Questionnaire included close-ended and open-ended questions. The male category in population was universe and target population for the study ranged from 15 years to 50 years inclusive. Time Location sampling technique was used to locate respondents in Bus stands and railway station of the two cities. These venues were rich in multiethnic, multi-religious and diverse population in all respects. Data was collected from 372 respondents who were recruited for the study. Respondents were recruited with predefined conditions, i.e. every third respondent sitting in locality or in a travel vehicle, belonged to province Punjab, knew Urdu, Punjabi or Saraiki etc. (local languages) and was a traveler. In case of non-feasibility or non-willingness for response within defined criteria, the research moved for the very next one to recruit. Descriptive and Inferential data analysis was performed in SPSS 17. The researchers used Central Tendency, Odds ratio and Chi Square tests for illustration of results.

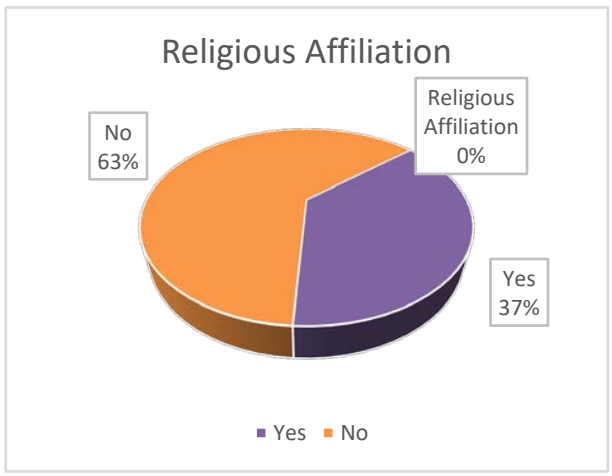
III. General Findings

Data was collected from 372 respondents. It was found that were 97.8 % of the people were Muslim and 2.2% indicated as non-Muslim. Among Muslim population sectarian arrangements, there were 60% Bralavi Sunni, 25 % belongs to Deobandi sect, Shia were 7 % and 6 % were Ahl-e-Hadis. All these sects are integrated with long established school of thought and have strong feeling of loyalty and devotedness. There are many Religious organizations in Pakistan who connect the people in a certain way of life.

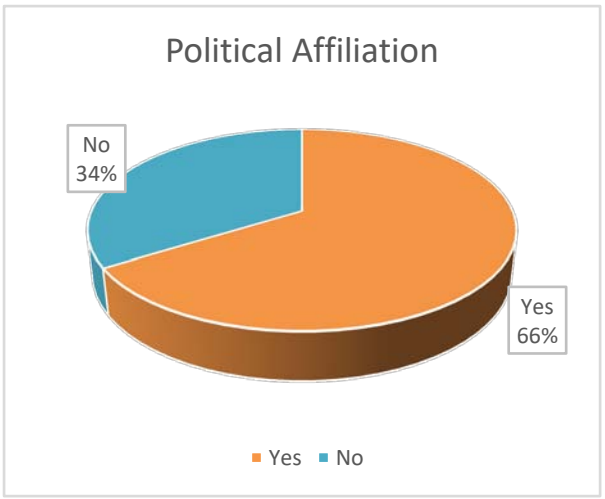
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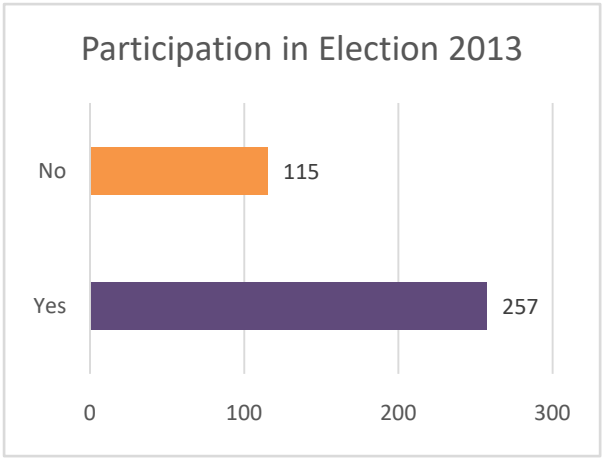
All respondents were asked about their affiliation with different religious organizations established in Pakistan. It was found that 37 % of the sampled respondents claimed that they have attachment with religious organizations and they follow collective thoughts of such organization. In defiance of the attachment, 63 % were not be follower of any organization which proliferate religious agenda in social life.



Along with religious attachment, political affiliation was also taken into account. It was found that majority of the respondents claimed to be a part of someone political organization. Form 372 respondents there were 66% of the people have association with political parties and 34% urged that they were not supporters of any of the political party.



Political affiliation with different political organization regulate political life of people. In Pakistan it is considered the people mostly respond according to vision of their leaders. The people who might have no affiliation with political process mostly consider political rebels who peruse their self-perceived way to attain power. Political participation confer power to general masses of a state. The respondents were asked about their participation in election 2013. It was found that 69% of the respondents voted in election 2013 whereas 31% did not casted their vote in election 2013. Regardless religious affiliation, participation in democratic process in Pakistan has social objectives.



Religious leaders and clerics broadcast imperative impacts on human minds. People differ in their meanings attached to different social phenomenon due to socialization and interpretation passed by religious leadership. Pakistan like regional states is diverse in sectarian thoughts. Shia and Sunni sects are mainly defined as opposed sectarian devices in Pakistani culture. It has already been noticed by different scholars that Shia and Sunni sects have deep rivalries in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and sometimes both sects favor some banned militant organizations (Jalalzai, 2011; Niazi, 2014& Khan, 2005). Differences between religious sects are foreseeable and sometime sectarian

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leaders manipulates situation in incitement of followers for violence. Terrorism opportunistic to come close with one another sect for their operation to disturb larger set of society. Ultimately the followers of certain sect develop sympathies for such organized terrorist groups and oppose the counterterrorism efforts.

There are large number of political parties in Pakistan. Due to greater provincial influence political process sentiments of national cohesion is less rather than provincial centrism. It is also a fact that political affiliation of people in Pakistan vary in different times. But a certain time it may have a strong influence on follower's minds regarding national and international perception. Like religious thoughts people respond towards political leaders' vision in different social and political phenomena.

Table 1.1

Q#	Questions/Statements	Attributes	Frequency	%
01	Opinion about action of Pakistani forces in Tribal Areas	Fight Against Terrorism	342	91.9
		Killing Muslim People	30	8.1
02	Military Operations in different areas of Pakistan Army are mainly against	Foreign Agents	125	33.6
		Organized Contract Terrorists	121	32.5
		Pakistani Extremists	94	25.3
		Tribal People who want to live according to their own culture	32	8.6
03	US Drone attacks in FATA	Increase Terrorism	261	70.2
		Decrease Terrorism	111	29.8

Table 1.1 shows the frequencies and percentage of opinion regarding operation of Pakistan army in different areas. It was found that a clear majority 91.9% of the respondents approved that Pakistani forces are fighting against terrorist in Tribal areas of Pakistan. And only 8.1 % people were of the view that the action in tribal areas is against Muslim innocent people. Respondents were given choice about the specification of military operation and it was pointed out 33.6% of the respondents saw the military operations as against foreign agents, 32.6% thought that these were against organized contract terrorist, 25.3% said against Pakistani militants and only 8.6% of the respondents considered the military operations against tribal people who wanted to live their lives according to their own culture.

The respondents were asked about their feeling towards role of Pakistan military actions in different areas. Significant majority in multiethnic and multi sectarian population above 90%, supports the operation of Pakistan army in different areas as response to terrorism. There is very little fraction among the respondents who believe that innocent people are being attacked by Pakistan law enforcement agencies. As Hussain (2009) indicates that with somewhere, religiopolitical adjustment of Pakistan consider the terrorist as Muslim bothers and dealt with conciliation.

The respondents also asked about their opinion US drone attacks in FATA, Pakistan. It was found that a clear majority 70.2% of the respondents believe that drone attacks are responsible for increment of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. People seek drone attacks as a tool for killing of innocent tribal people in Pakistan.

Table 1.2

Q#	Questions/Statements	Attributes	Frequency	%
04	Do you think political leaderships is working for sustainable peace in Pakistan	Yes	214	57.5
		No	158	42.5
05	Government has planned a comprehensive counterterrorism policy	Yes	223	59.9
		No	149	40.1
03	Recent Decrease in Terrorism related incidents are due to effectiveness of	Armed Forces	260	69.9
		Political Leadership	112	30.1
03	International Assistance is required to control terrorism in Pakistan	Yes	73	19.6
		No	299	80.4

Table 1.2 describes the public perception about effectiveness of political leadership in establishing sustainable peace. it was found that 57.5% of the respondents think that political leadership has worked for sustainable peace in Pakistan but at the same time 42.5 % of respondents contradicted the statement. Response of 59.9 % affirms that government has made comprehensive counterterrorism policy but 40.1%did not perceive that is there comprehensive counterterrorism policy. Table 1.2 also contains information regarding

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recent decline in terrorist attacks and 69.9% thought that it was only due to armed forces and 30.1% viewed this as the effectiveness of political leadership and its policies of counterterrorism. It seems that majority of the respondents have more trust in Pakistan armed forces as compared with political leadership in the matter of peace and terrorism.

In Pakistan there are many of forms and motivations of terrorism. Sometimes it is visualized that different states are financing and sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan. It has been evident that in some cases external elements are also involved and arrested by law enforcement agencies. Viewing this assumption, it was asked by the people of Pakistan about international assistance to counterterrorism. Most of the respondents did not wanted to have international assistance. They believed Pakistan army is enough to tackle this issue as the frequency of terrorist's attacks has been decreased significantly. Only 19.6% respondents feel that Pakistan needs international assistance to eliminate terrorism.

Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no association between public attitude regarding religious affiliation and thinking about Pakistan army should be given full authority to control terrorism related issues.

H1: There is association between public attitude regarding religious affiliation and thinking about Pakistan army should be given full authority to control terrorism related issues

Religious Affiliation * Pakistan Army should be given full authority to control terrorism related issues			Pakistan Army should be given full authority to control terrorism related issues		
			Yes	No	Total
Religious Affiliation	Yes	Count	74	64	138
		%	53.6%	46.4%	100.0%
	No	Count	198	36	234
		%	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	272	100	372
		%	73.1%	26.9%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square Value	42.420[a]
P value	.001
Cramer's V	.338
Odds Ratio	.210
RR for Religious Affiliation: (Yes)	.634
RR for Religious Affiliation: (No)	3.014

IV. Results

From the given sample, test p value (.000) is a lesser amount of α (0.05), and study null hypothesis is rejected on the bases of given sample data. Results conclude that a noteworthy association exists between the two variables. The strength of relationship is significant between the two, as Cramer's V test value (.338), which is positive. It can be visualized how likely religious affiliation does not support Pakistan army in their full authority in terrorism related matters. Odds connections with religious organizations (.210) for support for Pakistan army are very less as compare with the odds of not affiliation with religious organizations (4.761) and consider Pakistan army as fully legitimate to counterterrorism related matters. Furthermore, if there is no affiliation with religious organization there will be greater level of approval (RR 3.014) for Pakistan army's authorization to control terrorism related issues. Whereas religious affiliation has lower (RR 0.634) support for Pakistan army's authorization in terrorism related issues. The negative causal relationship exists in hypothesis one, it describes that as religious attachment become higher results in less confidence over military leadership for elimination of terrorism in Pakistan.

Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no association between public attitude regarding political bonding and claiming for negotiation with militants for peace.

H1: There is association between public attitude regarding political bonding and claiming for negotiation.

Political Affiliation * Negotiation with different militant leaders is best policy to promote peace			Negotiation with different militant leaders is best policy to promote peace		
			Yes	No	Total
Political Affiliation	Yes	Count	16	230	246
		%	6.5%	93.5%	100.0%
	No	Count	70	56	126
		%	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	86	286	372
		%	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square Value	1.128E2[a]
P value	.000
Cramer's V	.551
Odds Ratio	.056
RR for Political Affiliation: (Yes)	.117
RR for Political Affiliation: (No)	2.104

V. Results

Because the p value of chi squire (.000) less than α (0.05), so study null hypothesis is rejected and conclude that there is significant association between political affiliation and demand for negotiation with militants. Association is negative because as political association is increases the demand for negotiation with militant decreases. Cramer's V test value (.338) value show strength of relationship between the two. How likely political bounding not affirms the negotiation with militant to promote peace in Pakistan.

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Odds ratio of political affiliation and consideration of negotiation with militants for peace (.056) is very less as compared with the odds of not political affiliation (17.857) and demand for negotiation with militant to promote peace. Hence it can be said that the people who have political affiliation are less likely to support (RR .117) negotiation process with militants for peace. On the other side, the people who are not affiliated with political organization have greater demand(RR 2.104) for negotiation with militants for peace purpose. The study hypothesis reveals negative causal relationship and claims that as political attachment increases the demand for negotiation with militant to achieve peace significantly decreases.

VI. Conclusion

The present study arranged public opinion regarding counterterrorism measures in Pakistan. Religion, political consideration and ethnicity have important impact on social brought up of population. Due to this diversity, there is very diverse opinion of the people of Punjab and their fishing the phenomenon. Religio-political consideration of the respondents mainly accessed in the relation to discernment of counter-terrorism. Majority of people like democracy and political participation in Punjab, Pakistan. Political and religious affiliation shaped the lives of people to behave in a certain way. Wilkinson (2006) claimed that religious affiliation has lasting impact on the minds of people as compared with political affiliation which is transitory and may change with small point of time. In Pakistan trend of being follower from religious to political organizations is changing. Most of the respondent have political connection rather than religious bonding.

Pakistan opted various of counterterrorism schemes since last decade mainly based on offensive measures. Pakistan started military operations to evacuate terrorists from Pakistan and many of features achieved success in this regard. Although, there were some segments of society criticized offensive action against terrorist (Hussain, 2009; Synnott, 2009& Nawaz, 2016) but opinion of public (91.9%) significantly favor military operations in different areas of Pakistan. High proportion of Pakistani consider that Pakistan is under attack by foreign terrorists. People are of the view that Pakistan army is capable to eradicate terrorism without international assistance. Moreover, it is general perception that external invention in the name of counterterrorism, like drone attacks are promoting cause of terrorism in Pakistan. So, the need of bilateral or multilateral counterterrorism agreements with other states are not pleased by the people of Pakistan.

As affiliations of the people in different affairs depict their behavior, that is why, people respond differently in discernment of terrorism and counterterrorism affairs. Facilitation of terrorism exist in every society where terrorism is continuous or episodic. In all those societies counterterrorism policies face resistance in different forms. In Pakistan, most often resistance from religious clerics can be seen in different cases of counterterrorism action. They perceive that militants are annoyed Muslim groups so they might be dealt with negotiation. Present study hypothesis (1) also support this supposition that increasing religious association contains less support for offensive action against terrorist by Pakistan army.

People from Pakistan are not much please with the policies of political leadership of Pakistan. National action plan for counterterrorism is not being exercised in its original sprit. Around half of people consider that government of Pakistan is not taking terrorism as main national interest. The policies and statements made by political personnel are not much pleased by the people of Pakistan. On the other side the present reduce in terrorist activities are mainly regarded as the struggle of armed forces. Government policies and their execution processes are pleased by less a half of people consider that it is not compatible for sustainable peace. People perceive legitimation of power, attached to democracy mostly support all actions taken by the state. Relationship between political attachment in people and their demand for negotiation with militants to peruse peace was accessed. Study hypothesis (2) concludes that political bonded people reject the idea of negotiation with any kind of militants. As Richardson (2006) claims that in democracies some segments tend to go for negotiation and reconciliation means to prevent terrorism but at the same time other owing for coercive and offensive program. It is perceived by a considerable amount of people that response to terrorism in Pakistan lack social adjustments for discouraging extremist behavior in Pakistan. It is scholarly perceived that counterterrorism strategies contain different approaches which may also include the public feelings and thinking to address the phenomenon efficaciously.

Participatory democratic behavior support for aggressive action to discourage terrorism and militancy. Terrorism is a political problem which needs assistance of armed forces to be solved. But in case of Pakistan it seems that solution of terrorism is beyond the politicians. Due to long standing military operation it has been witnessed that frequency of terrorist attacks scaled down. At present, this is principal objective for the political leadership and government administrators to practice a unitary policy which may address all interlinked dimensions of terrorism to ensure sustainable peace in Pakistan.

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