
VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND
RESILIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA
WORKSHOP SERIES

Measuring and Building Resilience to Violent
Extremism

WORKSHOP REPORT

4 JUNE 2018



Acknowledgements

ALPS Resilience would like to thank the Australian High Commission in Pretoria, who have been a key partner in ALPS' mission to prevent violence in South Africa, specifically extremist violence.

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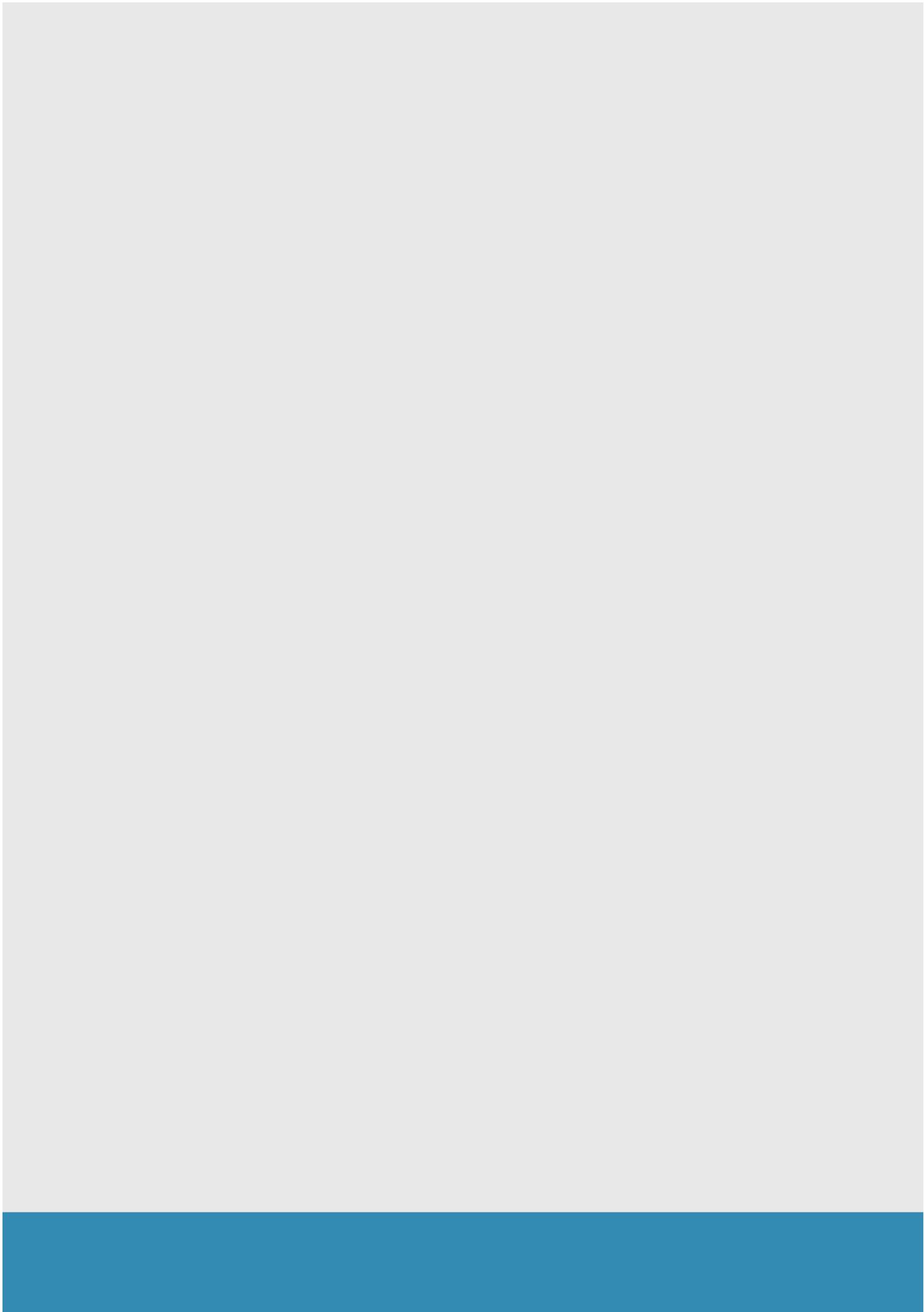
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About the Workshop

South Africa experiences high levels of criminal and inter-personal violence. While violent extremism is a small part of the country's violent context, it is a growing threat with potentially high impact. South Africa has yet to experience any significant acts of violent religiously motivated extremism, but experts agree that it is not immune to an attack. At this point, however, it is not well understood what would motivate an extremist attack on South African soil or from where the attack would originate. Comparatively little work is being done to understand the drivers of violent extremism in South Africa, map at-risk communities, conduct activities to prevent violent extremism or create response mechanisms outside of law enforcement and intelligence activities.

In May 2018, ALPS Resilience undertook a survey pilot that provided crucial empirical evidence on extremism in South Africa, which currently relies almost exclusively on anecdotal indicators, with the intention of laying the groundwork for future research and programs. Dr. Barend Prinsloo from North-West University presented the initial results of the pilot survey to the workshop participants. ALPS Resilience also welcomed Dr Michele Grossman, Professor and Research Chair in Diversity and Community Resilience from Deakin University in Australia, to share her collaborative research on measuring youth resilience to violence extremism. While the drivers of violent extremism have been well researched, sources of resilience are comparatively less understood (whereby resilience refers to building the capability of people, groups and communities to rebut and reject proponents of extremism and the ideology they promote). The workshop created an opportunity the keynote speakers to compare the Australian and South African experiences while sharing knowledge and lessons learned with academics, practitioners, government representatives and other key stakeholders on how to measure and build resilience to violent extremism.

Key Outcomes

- Participants learned about the social-ecological approach to building resilience, in which resilience is understood as an interactive process focused on resilience resources availability, access and competence which can be strengthened or eroded at different levels, rather than a fixed attribute of individuals or communities.
- Participants identified some of the existing and potential protective of individuals, families, communities and institutions that can be developed, strengthened or harnessed when designing PVE interventions.
- Participants provided ALPS Resilience with feedback on its pilot survey, which ALPS will fold into its survey report and use to improve upon its survey method and tool.

Key Messages

- Empirical evidence is vital to ensure an understanding of the complex nature of violent extremism and to ensure effective responses. There is a need for more research on extremisms in South Africa that cuts across sociocultural groups and ideological orientations in several different municipalities.
- It is important to identify both protective and risk factors. South Africa's social divisions and a culture of violence are vulnerabilities that must be addressed. The values of tolerance and pluralism articulated in its Constitution could be drawn upon.
- Building community resilience to violent extremism must adopt a multi-faceted approach grounded in understanding how different social resources and processes are dependent upon one another. Resilience is a social process that depends upon five key things: having meaningful resources available; understanding their interdependency; knowing how to access them; knowing how to use them; and distributing resource availability, access and competency across multi-level, multi-scalar dimensions of a society.
- Resilience emerges as a response to challenge and adversity. Building resilience must therefore occur in contexts where vulnerabilities and challenges are already present.



Welcome Remarks

Adam McCarthy Australian High Commissioner

The world is different place than what it was before 2016. In South Africa, there have been two recent events of concern: the kidnapping of two British tourists and the Mosque attack in Verulam, Durban. Australia has also experienced domestic terrorist attacks and has had over 100 citizens leave Australia to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Australia aims to adopt a countering violent extremism approach that engages civilians at the grassroots level and builds resilience. Australia hopes to share its experiences, lessons learnt and knowledge with others while building partnerships.

David Bax Programme Director of ALPS Resilience

ALPS Resilience thanks the Australian High Commission, whose staff worked for nearly a year to put this workshop together and bring Dr. Michele Grossman out from Melbourne. In late 2016, the popular sentiment seemed to be that South Africa – and all southern African countries – would be immune to extremist threats. However, this sentiment has changed. Despite recent events and the anecdotal evidence of extremism in South Africa, what was found to be missing was good empirical evidence on precisely how South Africans are vulnerable to radicalization and what sources of resilience or social capital exist for us to build preventive programs upon. This was ultimately our inspiration for the pilot survey that ALPS designed and implemented with financial support from the Australian High Commission. The workshop explores how South Africa aims to prevent violent extremism on domestic soil by engaging with current research and understanding of violent extremism.

Leigh Hamilton Programme Manager of ALPS Resilience

ALPS Resilience also thanks Dr. Michele Grossman for her input in the workshop program, and for traveling from Melbourne to share with us some lessons from her experience in measuring and building resilience, and Dr. Barend Prinsloo, who has participated in our workshop series from the beginning, and who has also been one the strongest advocates for prevention work in South Africa. The workshop compares two research sites, Australia and South Africa. There are two frameworks for comparing risk. The first is the UNDP framework for understanding national risk of violent extremism. This framework uses three categories: epicenter countries, spillover countries and at-risk countries. In epicenter countries, violent extremist groups are already present and enacting regular attacks against the government and civilian populations. Spillover countries suffer the regular effects of violent extremists operating in a neighboring country. “At-risk” countries have small populations exhibiting some signs of radicalization and isolated attacks or incidents. Even though South Africa does not neighbor an epicenter or spillover country, it displays the characteristics of an at-risk country.

The other framework uses “core” versus “periphery.” The rise in violent extremism over the last decade has been most acute in developing countries with weak national institutions and large swathes of ungoverned or alternatively governed spaces including Afghanistan, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia. These countries, which we may consider “core” countries, experience terrorism as entrenched insurgencies and the primary threat to the nation and its citizens. Most of the research, programming and advocacy work done on violent extremism focuses on these “core countries.”

In contrast, periphery countries may experience isolated inspired attacks, but overall they experience the negative impacts of terrorism including civilian victimization, the destruction of critical infrastructure and economic destabilization to a much lesser degree than core countries. Yet, they play incredibly important roles in combatting the global threat of violent extremism. First, they can contribute troops, funds or expertise to help extinguish extremist insurgencies in core countries. Second, they can limit their complicity in terrorist activities by better managing their borders, their communications infrastructure and their banking institutions. And third, they can ensure that extremist ideologies do not



gain traction amongst their own populations, who may decide to leave their homes to join a terrorist organization abroad or carry out inspired attacks on domestic soil.

With this framework, Australia and South Africa are both periphery countries. For this reason, we can learn from each other's experiences in understanding, measuring and building resilience. For this reason, the workshop brings together Australia and South Africa to learn from one another's experiences in understanding, measuring, and building resilience.



Messages from Panelists

Michele Grossman

Deakin University, Melbourne

“Understanding community resilience to violent extremism: from questions to measurement.”

Dr. Grossman and colleagues undertook a study in Australia and Canada that intended to understand community resilience to violent extremism as well as how to increase community resilience to violent extremism. They adopted the social-ecological approach for understanding how to build and define community resilience to violent extremism. The social-ecological model defines resilience as a broader social process to overcoming adversity that is not dependent upon individual traits. The social-ecological model departs from the definition of resilience as the ‘ability to bounce back’, instead defining resilience as the ability to positively adapt to challenges and adversity. Resilience becomes an active social process with the following characteristics: flexibility, adaptation, and the transformation of the surrounding environment. The social-ecological model resilience is dependent upon five key factors:

1. **having meaningful resources available;**
2. **understanding their interdependency;**
3. **knowing how to access them;**
4. **knowing how to use them; and**
5. **distributing resource availability, access and competency across multi-level, multi-scalar dimensions of a society.**

However, it is important to note that these are the same five factors which can result in maladaptive resilience or negative social transformation that may promote the use of violence. Therefore, the social ecology of resilience must reduce maladaptive resilience and develop and support healthy modes of coping and positive social transformation.

One of the premises of the research was the acknowledgement that regardless of maladaptive forms of resilience and negative coping mechanisms, many young people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation do not resort to violent extremism. By identifying the factors and resources of resilience these young people draw on, one can then think of countering and preventing violent extremism programmes. The Australian-Canadian study adopted an intercultural and interfaith approach to ensure that the results could be applicable to a broad range of circumstances. Earlier studies identified multiple protection mechanisms against violent extremism and radicalisation. These were the following:

- Faith-based networks
- Family and community social support networks
- Cultural pride, flexibility and adaptability
- Cultural security
- Avoidance of shame and preserving social status and approval

Cross-community resilience vulnerabilities and risks included:

- Culture influences attitudes toward violence more than religion
- Low community resilience in general may correlate with low community resilience for violent extremism in particular
- Some cultural forms of shame can disable resilience to violent extremism (but can also be protective)
- Cultural valorisation of violence in general weakens resilience to violent extremism
- Intra-family and community rejection and exclusion weakens resilience to violent extremism

Drawing on these earlier findings, Dr. Grossman and her colleagues were able to test and then validate a 5 factor, 14-item standardized measure to assess youth resilience to violent extremism in culturally diverse communities called the



BRAVE-14. The five factors are cultural identity and connectedness; bridging capital; linking capital; violence-related behaviours, and violence-related beliefs. The scores of BRAVE-14 can be used as a baseline and post-intervention measurement to identify what is working and what is not working in a community to prevent and counter violent extremism.

BRAVE-14 suggests that successful CVE and PVE programmes are those that help strengthen accessibility and mobilisation to key resources. One of the important lessons for future research from the BRAVE-14 is the importance of including factors that counter and prevent radicalisation on digital platforms, social networks and online environments and how this relates to social resilience. This is an important gap requiring further investigation and inclusion in education resources that help youth navigate social interactions online.

A key consideration for building resilience to violent extremism and radicalisation within communities is cultural context. Study findings have highlighted that many CVE and PVE programmes were taking a top down approach which limited the effectiveness of the programme. Programmes need to be flexible in their approaches and tailored to the specific social values, resources and needs of the community. One way of achieving this is through utilising already familiar resources and to co-design with communities who are wanting to strengthen their resilience.

Barend Prinsloo

North-West University

“The prevalence of drivers for violent extremism among the Muslim population in the Cape Town region.”

The pilot study that was designed and implemented by ALPS Resilience with funding from the Australian Commission in partnership with North-West University. The principal aim of the pilot study was to test the survey tool developed to measure the prevalence of the drivers of violent extremism across sociocultural groups in several South African municipalities. There is well-founded fear that targeting single groups leads to stigmatization. For example, the securitization of migration has led to mass arrests and extrajudicial killing of Somalis suspected of sympathizing with terrorists in countries like Kenya. The methodological decision to test the survey amongst the Muslim population in Cape Town was taken under considerations of limited time and resources and in light of the absence of empirical studies done on religiously motivated violent extremism in South Africa (in contrast to the large amount of good research done on other types of extremism in South Africa, including racially-motivated right-wing extremism and xenophobic violence). ALPS Resilience will use the lessons learned from the pilot study, along with feedback from the workshop participants and other key stakeholders, to revise the survey tool and implement it more broadly in South Africa.

There are multiple definitions of extremism and assumptions regarding radicalisation. One of the most important factors that needs to be taken into consideration regarding the extremism is that it is a social process that is based on decision making processes and a choice to engage in violent extremism. It is therefore important to understand what are the factors and social processes which lead people to engage in extremist activities. The study of the drivers of violent extremism in South Africa was undertaken in the Cape Town. In total 331 surveys were undertaken in public spaces such as shopping malls in the Cape Flats. The findings showed that the background factors that are normally significant in promoting violent extremist views are insignificant in South Africa. However, the global perception of Islam as a terrorist religion with discriminatory practices towards women was identified as a strong incentive to adopt violent extremism values and beliefs.



Intervention Planning

The objective of this session was to brainstorm interventions for the prevention of violent extremism in South Africa using the public health approach to violence prevention as a framework. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this framework has four steps:

1. Define the problem;
2. Identify risk and protective factors;
3. Develop and test prevention strategies; and
4. Assure widespread adoption.

Define the problem:

- Violent extremism is narrow problem within South Africa with it being characterised as criminal activity rather than ideological based activities of a marginalised group. Within South Africa, violent extremism is not taking place on a large scale but rather on an individual level which includes right wing, left wing and religious groups.

List protective and risk factors (both personal and systemic) in South Africa:

Risk Factors	Protective
Problem of criminality	Rule of law
High levels of marginalisation and exclusion	Constitution
Low threshold for violence	Free press
Mistrust of government and neighbours	Community
High levels of inequality	Family
Poor service delivery	Values of a 'rainbow society'
Organised crime	
History of oppression	



Design interventions around existing risk and protective factors:

Targeted Problem	Existing Protective Factors	Existing Risk Factors	Proposed Intervention	Level of Intervention	Key Stakeholders	Risk for Implementation/ Adoption
Disgruntled Youth	Resilience of youth, schools and traditional family values and beliefs	Youth unemployment, low education and access to basic services	Focus group on young people, curriculum in schools	Individuals, communities, national	Education department, students, families	VE is still not considered a relevant risk in SA and is not really on the government's agenda.
Community violence	Social networks and relationships, community leaders and pre-existing social programmes	Suspicion between neighbours, pre-existing divisions, history of violence, low threshold of violence	Strengthen community policing mechanisms	Community and national	Police department, community policing forums	Low threshold of violence, mistrust between community and government
Exposure to violence	Protective family structures and beliefs	Lack of role models, social media, social divisions in the society, violent culture	Adopt multifaceted approach to addressing culture of violence, include family and new narrative of peace	Grassroots, community, national and family, individual	Schools, social community organisations, police, government	Could cause more divisions though isolating those who do not fit into the new narrative. Pre-existing social and cultural narrative and identities cause violence.



Concluding Remarks

There is a need for research in South Africa that is not biased towards the Muslim population and includes other sociocultural groups and both right-wing and left-wing narratives of violence in South Africa. Even though South Africa can be identified as a low risk country for religiously-motivated violent extremism, there is a culture of violence that supports violence-related behaviours and violence-related beliefs, which are central in the degradation of resilience to violent extremism. Interventions need to include an in-depth analysis of the root causes of violence within the target communities and build upon already pre-existing community resilience.



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