Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Promoting education in post-conflict regions

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Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

I am Filippos Koutsodimitropoulos, currently in the 10th grade (A' Lykeiou) at Moraitis School in Psychiko. The ACGMUN is going to be my 5th MUN conference and my first one as a Student Officer, which is really exciting, as I will be given the chance to experience a MUN conference from a different perspective.

As a chair, I will try to be helpful and friendly and I will keep this positive attitude with me in the conference. In a nutshell this means that I will do my best so that your experience in the ECOSOC committee is pleasant and fun.

I would like to point out, that should you find yourselves in need of further explanations or guidance (for example guidelines on how to make resolutions or policy statements), feel free to ask me or my fellow chairs at any time. We will be glad to help you with your research and with any questions you may have regarding the procedures or the event itself.

As long as you do not do anything outrageous, I am sure we are going to get along well and co-operate effectively. And never forget that enjoying the event is what matters most. As Charlie Chaplin said, in a quote that is now my personal motto: *"A day without laughter is a day wasted"*.

Hope to see you all soon!

Filippos Koutsodimitropoulos

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The turmoil of war and conflict is catastrophic for society in many ways, including education. Institutions such as schools are demolished by bombings, many children are forced to relocate and miss out on their curriculum, and most importantly, human rights are unfortunately violated on a huge scale, making it difficult for a country or region to maintain and support an educational system. It is only natural therefore that even after peace is restored, there remain serious consequences on the level of education of each individual within those regions.[1]

This can definitely be challenging, especially since resources can often be scarce in a war torn region and there are usually little to no infrastructures. It is therefore the UN's duty to provide assistance in such cases, something which it does through institutions such as the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO]. Rebuilding an educational system is an important task and has a potential to be a system from which society commences its reconstruction if done correctly. As such the discussion is centered on providing a good level of education with limited time and resources.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Education

The Oxford Dictionary defines education as "the knowledge and abilities, development of character and mental powers, resulting from systematic training and instruction".[2] This means that while many people associate education with the transmission of information and skills, it is important to remember that it includes an establishing of a system of values and character. A correct educational system is one that provides a complete education by all senses.

Post-conflict Region[3]

At first glance defining a region described by the term "post-conflict" seems pretty straightforward: a region where war and conflict has been ceased and peace has been re-installed. However, in small scale intra-state conflicts, where there are no official surrenders, peace negotiations or treaties (and even if there are some they are often violated), defining where war ends and peace begins is more difficult

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[1] (Castle, Elder, Baxter, & Cornu, 2005)

[2] (Hornby, 1974)

[3] This part, including the proposed milestones, is entirely based on (Brown, Langer, & Stewart, 2011)

than it initially sounds. Since most fights these days are primarily of this form, one cannot simply ignore the post-conflict regions caused by them when discussing the issue of education.

A good approach, so as to understand what "post-conflict" means, would be to see it not as a period between two events, but as a process that goes on until certain milestones are reached. In a nutshell, this means that "post-conflict" could be seen as the process that would take a region from being "in conflict" to it being "at peace" and is not an absolute, but a continuum.

Some proposed milestones, that could mark when a region has peace and consequently leaves the "post-conflict" process, are:

a) Cessation of hostilities and violence;

b) Signing of political/peace agreements;

c) Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration;

d) Refugee repatriation;

e) Achieving reconciliation and societal integration;

f) Economic recovery;

g) Establishing of a functioning state (in case of a secession of a region).

Each of these milestones comes with its own indicators of progress that could assess whether a milestone could be reached in the near future. It would be safe to say that if less than half of these are reached, the region is in the "post-conflict" transition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While providing basic literacy and numeracy (cognitive development) is certainly rather challenging, the most difficult and perhaps most important aspect of a modern educational system is [as defined in the previous section] to provide a system of values that reflects the universal human rights and to help with the individual's social development.[4] In short, the education system has to promote the integration of individuals in a society and establish sound morals and ideals. There are many ways in which this can be done, but first of all, what needs to be done is to

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[4] (Castle, Elder, Baxter, & Cornu, 2005)

understand the problems that arise in post-conflict situations that prevent a solid educational system.

The Problems

Perhaps an important issue that should be dealt with all around the world is that of awareness. A great deal of people take education for granted. As such, it is often thought that after a conflict ends, society is quickly rebuilt and education is restored to what it was before. This is not the case, however, since educational system takes time and needs many resources to be fully restored, which are mostly unavailable. After a conflict, civil society is in disarray and often used to work against, rather than cooperate with governments. All of this creates is situation in which, though there may be will to create a new educational system, it is certainly a challenging process.[5]

There are quite a few problems arising in post-conflict societies that make establishing an educational system a difficult task. The first that comes to mind is a lack of resources. States have little to no ability to fund such a big project and outside help is required to sustain the most basic of systems. This extends to a lack of human resources, since many teachers have fled the region or have been killed during the war. As such, there is an oversupply of inexperienced teachers (perhaps suitable for an already established educational system) and a lack of experienced teachers that could provide insight into establishing that system from nearly scratch.

An important factor that also needs to be taken into consideration is the massive number of young people that has fallen behind on education due to the region being in conflict. The number increases the more years a conflict lasts and some may even lack basic education. This, along with poor record keeping that can be attributed to a society still finding its balance, creates a system where there are only estimates as to the number of students and teachers that it has.

Another issue is that often there is a lack of coordination in society, which may lead to skill developing workshops for those being neglected. This is a huge problem, since without skills to find themselves a proper place within the workforce, many youngsters favour a career in the military, or turn to crime. As such coordination between inhabitants and humanitarian organisations is of the utmost importance. Young people are not a threat to stability of the still unstable region; on the contrary if developed correctly they can provide additional support and help that society rise again.[6]

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[5] (Buckland, 2006)

[6] (Buckland, 2006)

Education and the Reconstruction of Society

When a society enters the post-conflict continuum, education is not just an ideal in which they invest. It is much more. A proper educational system is expected to help a society get back on its feet and become stable and safe once again.[7]

The most obvious purpose of education is to transmit knowledge and useful skills. And in doing so, it enables people from all backgrounds to enter the workforce and select a profession that suits them according to their talents. If the system established is of a good quality and encourages learning, there may well be an active workforce that will surely help combat unemployment and will provide a massive support to an unstable society.

 # 1: Education and development of society
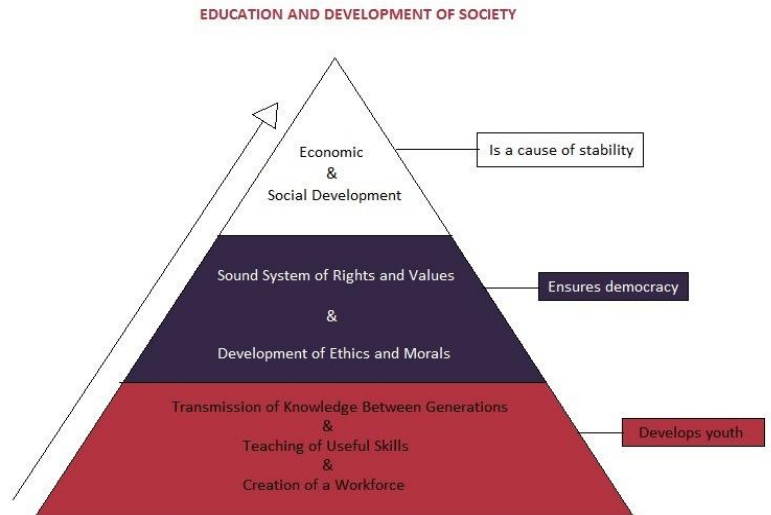
The second and equally, if not more important, purpose of education is to establish a sound system of values for society. This system should revolve around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and should prioritise values and rights that are more important to that particular society. However, thanks to discussions with teachers taking place in post-conflict settings, it has been found that some values that may be considered culturally specific are in fact universal and are recognised by the UDHR.[8] If the foundation laid by the encouragement of learning is built to support such values and rights, education can provide support to democracy and decentralisation, leading to an even more stable society that can function and promote equality and democracy. [9]

As such, these two factors will lead to development and a stable society. This development will be both an economic and social one. Exiting the post-conflict continuum and reaching the milestones of peace if obviously the priority. It is true,

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[7] (Buckland, 2006)

[8] (Castle, Elder, Baxter, & Cornu, 2005)

[9] The pyramid diagram was made by me, based on the aforementioned sources. As the arrow points upward, the quality of education is increased, allowing for more benefits.

however that an educational system can turn out to be a contributing factor in creating a prosperous society. Why then not include it in list of long-term goals?

Positive Factors

Though there are certainly many difficulties in establishing an educational system in post-conflict regions, some factors may provide support to such efforts and help set up a "breeding ground" for the system.

One such advantage is that after the conflict is over and the country/region enters the post-conflict transition, its new government is likely to want to see progress and the establishment of a solid educational system, potentially in order to differentiate itself from the pre-conflict government. This means, that while the onus is on humanitarian organisations and the UN to provide support and resources to promote educational progress, the government will also attempt to educate its own citizens and will utilise the given support in the best possible way.[10]

Unsurprisingly, it turns out that the better the effort at creating an educational system is, the more publicity it receives. Consequently, a good kick start effort can be conducive to additional support in the future and can also call for cooperation between the citizens, who will recognise the Importance of ensuring a better future for the country. Quite often, education is a sector that can unify the people of a country and call for a combined effort at reconstructing a crucial part of society.

And let us not forget that usually civil wars break out as a result of authoritarian regimes that constantly violate human rights. It is only natural therefore that after the conflict ends and a new regime is installed, the citizens will aim for a democratic system, and as the 7th principle of the Declaration of the rights of the Child states: "The child is entitled to receive education […]. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgment, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society".[11] As such the right to education is one of the most important and is to be defended even by unstable societies.

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[10] (Buckland, 2006)

[11] (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959)

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Egypt

Egypt still lies in unrest after the "Egyptian Crisis" of 2011-2014. It all began on the 25th of January with a surge of revolts and protest against the government and the president Hosni Mubarak, for issues such as a lack of freedom and extreme police brutality. This resulted in conflicts between protestors and the Egyptian Army and large cities such as Cairo, Alexandria and Suez (the main hubs of the revolution) being dubbed as warzones by some.

Though the casualties were fortunately not many, under a thousand, the unrest and instability caused by this conflict was significant. Even after President Mubarak's resignation on the 11th of February 2011, unrest continued with the implication of a military junta, led by Mohammed Hussein Tantawi. Mubarak was charged with a life imprisonment in 2012 with charges of complicity in murder and police brutality and though there were appeals for a death sentence, it was confirmed in 2014 that he would serve a prison sentence and carry out his verdict as originally planned.

After nearly a year of rule by the military, the Muslim Brotherhood (an Islamist group) gathered support and eventually came to power through an election in June 2012. This government was encountered by strong opposition (mostly from the military). Fear of the foreign policy that the new government would implement and potential violation of the alliances that Mubarak's government had formed had overrun the opposition.[12] In 2013 mass protests occurred once again in Egypt, this time against a different government. The Muslim Brotherhood's leader Mohammed Morsi was overthrown through a coup led by Abdel Fattah-El Sisi, who was eventually elected president in 2014.

Though the Egyptian revolution is now over and all conflict has ended, instability and political unrest still exist. Though a full-scale civil war, such as the ongoing one in Syria, has been avoided, Egypt still has not fully exited the conflict situation of the early 2010s. As such in 2017 it finds itself upon the post-conflict continuum and is among the countries that would require help in setting up an educational system to resolve its many problems.

Libya

Since 2014, Libya is engaged into a civil war, mainly between Anti-Islamist forces (both governmental and rebel ones) and members of the terrorist group

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[12] (Editors, 2016)

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, ISIL (sometimes referred to as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or ISIS). Recently, however, the situation has shown some positive signs. By December 2016 the last urban stronghold of ISIL had been cleared from its loyalists and a ceasefire between rebels and the government occurred. It would appear that Libya is slowly approaching an end to the war and heading towards the post-conflict continuum. As such, it would be an ideal country to test what benefits education can provide to a country that just exited war.

Sudan

South Sudan still is involved in a brutal civil war[13]. Sudan however is in a post-conflict situation. The Sudanese Civil war began in the 1980s and went on for a full 20 years until peace agreements were reached in 2005 and the country was temporarily separated into Sudan and South Sudan until the referendum in 2011 which made South Sudan's secession from Sudan official.

The war was partly caused due to a lack of coexistence between the two major ethnic groups: a group of Arabic origin and a group of African origin. As of 2017, the northern part of the once unified country, what is now Sudan, has a predominant Arabic population, whereas the southern part, eventually South Sudan, has a population of mostly African origin.

As of yet, there is still some tension in the once in conflict regions and the country resides within the post-conflict continuum. Help to set up an educational system would therefore be of importance and would help strengthen Sudan and help it develop more. The youth of a region that has been ravaged by war for nearly 20 years is definitely part of a post-conflict society and is in need of assistance.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

The United Nations Children's Fund was created by the General assembly of the United Nations on the 11th of December 1946, originally as International Children's

#2: UNICEF logo

Emergency Fund (ICEF) in order to help children affected by World War II. At its founding, it was stated that "aid is to be distributed to all children without discrimination". It became an official United Nations agency in 1953 and though the

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[13] On a personal note, while I was researching the situation in Sudan, I came across information about a currently ongoing civil war in South Sudan. I was extremely shocked by the lack of awareness (including my own) at the South Sudanese civil war and the atrocities that have been committed, especially against UN peacekeepers. Check "Suggested Reading" to find out more about the South Sudan Civil War.

words "International" and "Emergency" were dropped from the name, the acronym UNICEF was retained.

To this day UNICEF remains a leading force in protecting children's rights, following the ratification of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Its work with children is notable especially in areas of conflict and in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs). It is therefore an important organization to consider in the question of education in post-conflict areas, since children are the primary stakeholders on such an issue.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation was created on the 16th of November 1945 by the General Assembly. UNESCO's goal is to utilise Education, Social and Natural Sciences, as well as Civilisation and Communication to promote universal values and ensure mankind's prosperity in a peaceful world.[14] UNESCO is currently based in Paris, France

 # 3: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization logo

According to its own official webpage, UNESCO strives for solidarity by, among other things: "Mobilising for education: so that every child, boy or girl, has access to quality education as a fundamental human right and as a prerequisite for human development".[15] It also has dealt with educational issues in the past, having engaged in activities to help with the issue of education in Liberia, where its officials promoted discussions and helped find solutions to set up an educational system (see Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue).[16]

As of such, UNESCO is the United Nations organisation that is expected to deal with issues regarding education and holds great importance in an issue regarding it, especially in the sensitive post-conflict areas.

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[14] (UNESCO)

[15] (Introducing UNESCO)

[16] (Castle, Elder, Baxter, & Cornu, 2005)

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
24 October 1945	The United Nations are founded, originally with 51 member states.
16 November 1945	UNESCO is founded with its Constitution signed by 37 countries.
11 December 1946	UNICEF is created by the General Assembly, originally as ICEF.
06 Aplir 1985	A coup led by military officials occurs in Sudan ending a truce agreement and triggering the 2nd Sudanese Civil War.
March 1991	A new penal code, the Criminal Act of '91 is presented which includes brutal punishments such as stoning and amputations.
09 January 2005	A peace agreement is signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Front (SPLF) in Nairobi, Kenya.
17 December 2010	The Arab Spring begins with the Tunisian Revolution.
15 January 2011	The referendum concerning South Sudan's independence is concluded with 98,83% voting in favour.
25 January 2011	The Egyptian Revolution begins with a series of protest against the government.
11 February 2011	Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak resigns and power is handed to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces
25 April 2011	The Syrian civil war begins with attacks from the Syrian army towards its citizens after protest in the context of the Arab Spring (Syria is still in conflict).
02 June 2012	Hosni Mubarak is sentence to a lifetime prison sentence with charges of complying with murder and police brutality
24 June 2012	Islamist Mohammed Morsi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, is declared the new Egyptian president after a 2-day election race

03 July 2013	Former Minister of Defence Abdel Fattah-El-Sisi overthrows Morsi's government with a coup, following mass protests against it.
18 February 2014	Unrest in Ukraine commences with anti-government protests in the capital of Kyiv (Ukraine is still in conflict).
28 May 2014	The Egyptian presidential elections are concluded and Fattah-El-Sisi becomes the new president of Egypt.
03 December 2016	A ceasefire occurs in Libya after 6 months of conflict.

NOTE: Ukraine and Syria are countries still in conflict. They are mentioned as predominant examples of current conflicts that if resolved in the future would lead to post-conflict societies.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the one responsible for the rebuilding of societies in a post-conflict situation. It has therefore passed many resolutions concerning this reconstruction of society. It has stressed out the importance of communication with the Peacebuilding Commission and has constantly asked on reports on such regions so as to better carry out its role in this context.

United Nations resolutions:

a) Strengthening the Economic and Social Council: (20/11/2006), (61/16). In this resolution, affirmed by the General Assembly, the ECOSOC was strengthened and given power to engage in peacebuilding and to coordinate the United Nations humanitarian support in post-conflict areas

b) Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture: (29/10/2010), (65/7). In this resolution, affirmed by the General Assembly, the actions of the Peacebuilding Committee were reviewed and regular reviewing of peacebuilding activities was encouraged in order to better help conflict and post-conflict areas.

c) Support to the Republic of South Sudan: (29/7/2011), (2011/43). This resolution by the ECOSOC welcomed South Sudan into the UN and expressed its will to help the post-conflict country get back on its feet in any way possible.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Regarding the issue of education in post-conflict settings, some attempts have been made in the past to resolve the issue, the most notable of which is a course piloted in Monrovia, Liberia by UNESCO in early 2005.[17]

Liberia had as recently as 2002 exited a civil war and was, as such, still in a post-conflict continuum. The course involved discussion between 30 people, including government officials from the Ministry of Education and voluntaries from NGOs that were providing humanitarian relief in the area. The topics discussed ranged from what makes a good educational system to what values should be encouraged by it. The results are pretty interesting.

The course concluded that in a post-conflict environment, where there is a lack of an educational system, unofficial education, given by parents, relative and friends takes an even greater significance. Elements of learning were discussed in order to create an environment fully conducive to learning. They decided on a system centered on the learner, in order to make it easier for children. Most of the requirements of an educational system in a post-conflict context discussed in the "Background Information" section were also the conclusion of this course.

This is an example of an active discussion to find solutions to the problem. The efforts led by this discussion seemed to work and Liberia has –as of today- exited the post-conflict continuum. It has reached some sort of balance and stability and has a functioning educational system, which it mostly sustains.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As the results of the aforementioned course suggest, possible solutions would be to set up an educational system that follows the example of the one proposed in Liberia and analyzed and shown in the diagram (see Background Information). This essentially entails a system that encourages learning, creates opportunities for young people by teaching them valuable skills, but also is based upon human rights and democracy. If done correctly, the system will promote development on an economic and social level. This way a society will be self-sustainable after a few years of successful education and will be a model system to be employed in more post-conflict regions.

In order to establish such a system, possible solutions could range from the creation of a specialised force to establish educational systems, to funding other

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[17] (Castle, Elder, Baxter, & Cornu, 2005)

humanitarian organisations' efforts in educating children. One such idea is the establishment of a force made out of people with experience in education and social sciences such as teachers, sociologists and psychologists. This project could be launched by the UN and would be an effective method to provide help to humanitarian organisations already working on the area, relieving pressure off them. The UN force could deal with the issue of education, while humanitarian organisations help the post-conflict society on other levels

Above all though, an environment conducive to learning and supportive of students, regardless of hardships they may be facing, has to exist. No prejudices should be allowed and children should be treated with care. The Universal Declaration of the Human Rights should be at the centre of attention of students and teachers alike. Discrimination of various forms may occur in the aftermath of conflict, but it is of the utmost importance to avoid it and discourage it by all means. School discrimination is an immense problem even in More Economically Developed Countries and any solutions that could help avoid it pre-emptively would prevent post-conflict educational systems from "setting off on the wrong foot".

UNICEF and UNESCO both would play a key part in such a solution and should be called upon to help children. UNICEF could deal with some of the more practical aspects, such as direct support for the children and their families. It is important to remember that a great deal of children do not attend school due to their having to work for their families to make a living under horrendous economical conditions. Thus UNICEF could assist those families economically or otherwise, enabling them to pursue their education. UNESCO, as the UN's educational corps, could play a key part in establishing the aforementioned force and making its goals clear.

SUGGESTED READING

Helpful sources of even more background information are listed in the bibliography. However, there are some links to more potential online sources that could be helpful to creating a resolution or policy statement. Some of them are relevant to this topic, whereas others are useful to any and all delegates. Here are some of them:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):
http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child:
https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf

United Nations Paper "Post-Conflict Countries: Aid Effectiveness and Permanent Peace":

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess_bg_papers/bp_wess2008_panic.pdf

UNICEF's official website in Greek: https://www.unicef.gr/ and in English: https://www.unicef.org/

Interactive map of conflicts going on in the world right now: http://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=CLCc3f2tptECFQw8GwodHHgIRg#!/p32137?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=CLCc3f2tptECFQw8GwodHHgIRg

The CIA World Factbook (useful source of quick facts about any given country such as demographics, economics etc.): https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/#

A Model UN Glossary for beginner delegates (though not all words will be used in our sessions): http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/getting-started/model-un-glossary

BONUS: More info on the South Sudanese Civil War (a seriously under presented conflict with many atrocities and direct attacks against UN officials): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Sudanese_Civil_War#Violence_against_UN_and_foreign_workers, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/18/mass-atrocities-feared-in-south-sudan-as-ethnic-violence-is-stoked-by-hunger , https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/11/17/un-cannot-stop-south-sudans-civil-war-atrocities

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