# Chapter Thirteen

## Conflict and Forced Migration Crises in Nigeria

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### Introduction

Internally displaced persons, either directly or indirectly have become a significant problem in developing nations like Nigeria in the past few decades, most of which is due to crises caused by non-state actors, such as Boko Haram, insurgency, herders-farmers, armed groups bandits, and various forms of local tribal militias have forced many people to flee their home and become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Reports have shown that from 2000 to 2020 the number of IDPs associated with armed conflicts increased from 21 million to 41 million (World Migration Report, 2020). The gravity of the recent violent disruption and destruction of lives and property violent insurgents in North Eastern Nigeria have internally displaced over 3.3 million people drained many over the border into neighbouring countries being perpetrated by Boko Haram (BH) attacks, have resulted in the mass displacement of people with serious consequences in the security, economic, social, political, humanitarian conditions of the people (Tajudeem and Adebayo, 2013). In Nigeria, there are more than 3 million IDPS, 82,000 refugees and 1,600 asylum–seekers due to armed conflicts. (UNHCR 2022b).

Nevertheless, the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency has posed a lot of challenges in Nigeria, as there is a major deficit in already depleted infrastructure, including housing, hospitals and schools, high levels of poverty, and unemployment which has a significant impact on the lives of forced migrants in Nigeria. For instance, Musa, et al (2019) posit that the main obstacles to IDPs integration in camps in Borno State, Nigeria were diminishing sources of livelihood, and lack of shelter, food, water and access to schools and adequate healthcare facilities. In the north–central and northwest, IDPs live in communities that are not socially and economically closed. For example, 84 per cent of IDPs, inhabited host communities, while 16 per cent lived outside of them in situations like camps (IOM DTM 2021).

Although, there are significant pieces of literature on conflict and forced migration and its devastating effects in Nigeria, within the framework of political and economic development weak states, and severe societal fragmentation (Birchall, 2019). However, these literatures fall short of fully addressing the problems with internationally displaced populations/people and the suffering faced by them as a result of conflict and failing to provide adequate safety measures and assistance to vulnerable people in need of protection. Apart from focusing on

resettlement and integration as a means of solution to displacements of people, research in Nigeria reveals significant gaps in our understanding of how sustainable solutions can be achieved (Kuwali, 2014). It is against this backdrop that the paper seeks to examine the consequences of conflict and the forced migration crisis in Nigeria.

## The Problem

Conflict often leads to heightened tensions, divisions among residents and breakdown in relationships. Conflicts also result in the displacement of the population, violation of human rights and forced migration crisis. Displaced persons often suffer from homelessness, loss of livelihoods and access to essential services such as healthcare and education (Agiboa, 2018). Conflict and forced migration crises are critical issues that have gained significant attention in recent years. Conflict has become a persuasive feature in Nigeria, the consequences of conflict and forced migration crises are multifaceted, affecting not only the social and economic fabric of Nigeria but also the environment. In Nigeria, north east central is one of the areas that have experienced conflict and forced migration crises, which had a devastating consequence on the area. It is against this backdrop, that this study aims to examine the consequences of conflict and forced migration crises in Nigeria.

The broad objectives of this study are, to, examine conflict and forced migration crises and their consequences in Nigeria; explain the causes of conflict and forced migration crises in Nigeria; analyze the consequences of conflict and forced migration crises; and ascertain the effect of IDPS crises as a result of conflict and forced migration in Nigeria. The pertinent questions raised are: What are the causes of conflict and forced migration crisis in Nigeria? What are the consequences of conflict and forced migration crisis in Nigeria? What are the crises faced by IDSPs as a result of conflict and forced migration?

## Conceptual Clarification/Literature Review

### *Conflict*

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, conflict means a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. It is also seen as a situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes, which is difficult to choose. Conflict is derived from the Latin word “configure” which means “to strike together”. It is clear from the ethnology of the word conflict that there must be a kind of contact for conflict to take place. In order words, two things' ideas, feelings, persons, beliefs, goals, interests, and attitudes, must come in contact or must be struck together for conflict to manifest. In the simplest terms, conflict is a state of opposition between a person's ideas or interests, conflicts could also mean a violent manifestation of disagreement and disappointments, often arising from unfulfilled goals (Targba, 2023).

Conflict does not just occur but happens due to differences in perception beliefs, attitudes, culture, background, goals interdependence, struggle over scarce resources and communication (Okoli, 2017). Nevertheless, it is pertinent to point out that conflict in all exits ramifications may not be destructive, but the ones in Nigeria have been characterized by violence and brutality. Annan (2014) conflicts specifically occur between states, or between government authorities and non-state actors. Common article 3 of the Geneva Convention defines armed conflict as a situation that occurs within the territory of a contracting party or state and assumes that a situation has reached a level that distinguishes it from other forms of violence such as riots, and sporadic and isolated forms of violence.

***Forced Migration***

Forced migration involves the movement of people from their original home to another place due to human actions such as wars, conflicts, natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, and drought and people are forced to move because of economic hardship and hunger. Forced migration means an unintended population movement through conflict, persecution, or developmental factors including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (wikipedia.org) e.g movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural disasters famine etc. however, the major causes of forced migration include; wars, conflicts, environmental or climate change social and economic circumstances.

***Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)***

An internally displaced person is someone who is forced to leave home but who remains within their country's borders. They are referred to as refugees Wikipedia UNHCR Nigeria. According to the UN's guiding principles on Internal Displacement (1998) internally displaced persons are "people who have been forced or obliged to flee their home or place of habitual residence as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, violence, and violations of human rights, natural or man-made disasters, and have not crossed an internationally recognized state in order (UNCHR, 2021b).

***Refugee***

Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their home country due to war, violence, persecution, or armed conflict. Refugees often face death or severe harm if they return home. They may have lost everything they own, including their homes, possessions, and loved ones. According to the 1951 Convention, refugees are persons "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinions". Previous studies

have found that there is a major deficit in already dilapidated infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and housing which has significant consequences on the lives of forced migrants and has led to crises in Nigeria. For example, Musa et al (2019) discovered that the main problems with IDP integration in Camps in the North-central and North-West areas of Nigeria were inadequate sources of livelihood and lack of shelter, food, water and access to schools and healthcare. In addition, it was discovered that the IDPs lived in communities where they were socially and economically cut off. For example, about 80 per cent of IDPs, inhabited host communities, while 20 per cent lived outside of them in situations like camps. (IOM DTM,2021).

Furthermore, several theories seek to explain conflict and forced migration within the framework of political, economic, environmental and ecological aspects by focusing on economic and social underdevelopment. However, these theories fall short of fully addressing the problems with the crises of forced migration which has led to displacement of persons. Besides, it is a good suggestion to focus on resettlement and integration of IDPs, research in Nigeria shows significant gaps in our understanding of how stainable solutions can be achieved. However, the paper seeks to examine conflict and forced migration crises in Nigeria. The study therefore offers a framework for understanding how conflict Led to forced migration and the crises after mind as people fled their original home. It also, proffers solutions as forced migrants are allowed to be integrated into society.

**Theoretical Framework**

Forced Migration Theory as propounded by Aristide Zolberg (1983) and Leonard Weiss (1985) was adopted for the study. Forced Migration (FMT) Theory explains the complex factors driving forced migration, focusing on conceive factors such as conflict, human rights violations, and environmental degradation (Turton, 2023). The key component of forced migration theory results from threats, such as conflict-induced migration as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency; due to violence, persecution, human rights abuses, ethnic and religious conflicts, farmers-herders clashes; conflict over resources, drives forced migration, environmental factors, climate change environmental degradation and desertification forced migration in Nigeria's arid regions, natural disasters flooding and landslides displace communities.

Forced migration theory explains the implications of conflict such as the humanitarian consequence of having IDP camps, overcrowding, poor living conditions, and limited access to services and conflicts generating refugees in neighbouring countries. The theory is therefore relevant to the study as the forced migration theory (FMT) emphasises and recognizes that conflict causes forced migration crises in Nigeria due to conflict-induced migration as a result of the Boko

Haram insurgency, which has far-reaching effects. Furthermore, FMT understands migration patterns, identifies push factors driving forced migration, informing humanitarian consequences. However, FMT seeks to address root causes of conflict and conflict resolution strategies, developing protection strategies and informing policies addressing human rights and environmental degradation.

According to the theory, forced migrants were compelled to leave their original homes where they previously had social cohesion, and solidarity with friends, family and neighbours. It is of utmost importance to note that forced migrants face the challenge of access to farmlands in the host community. The lack of basic needs leads many IDPs to become victims of dehumanizing circumstances such as sexual exploitation as rape forced marriage and other detrimental situations in the hands of armed militants (lnwalomhe, 2021).

**Causes of conflict and forced migration crises in Nigeria**

The armed conflicts in Nigeria have forced an estimated two million people to flee from their homes, many of them are now internally displaced while others have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The ICRC is working to respond to the most urgent needs of the affected families. Nigeria is a country in West Africa with a population of 218 million persons (National Population Commission, 2022). It borders the Gulf of Guinea on its Western border with the Benin Republic, to the East with, Cameroon to the north with Chad; and to the South with Niger. Nigeria is one of the largest producers of crude oil in the world. Nigeria has a high poverty rate with 53.5 per cent of the population living on less than $'.Fl.90 a day rate (defined along the dimensions of monetary, poverty, education and basic infrastructure) of26.8 per cent (UNDP, 2020).

Fundamentally, the internal conflicts that had occurred in Northern Nigeria are attributed to Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, banditry and killing in the North-West, and farmer-herder conflict in the north-central parts of the country. Attacks and insecurity, particularly in the northeast, have displaced millions of people, devastated agricultural production and other livelihoods, cut off essential services and resulted in food insecurity and the outbreak of diseases such as Cholera etc (OCHA, 2022b). The 1OM Global Crises Response platform Nigeria (2022b) also reported that non-state armed groups in the north-east have perpetrated, violence, causing a major humanitarian crisis, heightened insecurity, and waves of forced displacement and human rights violations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the unhealthy living conditions and vulnerability of displaced populations. The forced migration crises in north-central and north-west Nigeria result from tension and violence between farmers and herders due to competition over natural resources,

increasing population and expanding human settlement, environmental degradation, and climate change (l0M 2022b). Conflicts over livestock theft, crop damage, increased competition over land use and other multifaceted dimensions of poverty and kidnapping have worsened human security in the north-central and north-west regions of Nigeria. The conflict persists due to weak systems of conflict resolution and perceived bias and inaction from authorities have made the conflict linger on (1OM 2022b).

Benue State in the North-central state alone accounts for over one million of the IDPs in the country (Duru et al, 2021). In Northwest Nigeria, a committee set up by the governments of Zamfara, Sokoto and Kastina states, in 2019 headed by Muhammad Abubakar, a former inspector-general of Police, estimated that between 2011 and 2019 a total of 4,983 women were widows, 25,050 children orphaned, and over 190,340 people displaced in Zamfara state due to armed banditry (WANEP, 2020) About 210,354 people have been internally displaced in 171 villages in the north-west out of which 144,496 people were from 77 villages in Zamfara state (UNHCR 2020).

The Nigeria National Commission for Refugees, migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMIDO) has begun construction of settlement cities for IDPs in Nigeria 3.2 million IDPs only 84, 803 have registered and only 17,334 are ready to return home. The states of Bornno, Kano, Kastina, Zamfara, Nassarawa and Edo were selected for the pilot scheme for the construction of the settlement cities (Suleiman - Ibrahim 2022).

## The Consequences of Conflict and Forced Migration Crises in Nigeria

Having examined the causes of conflicts and forced migration in Nigeria, it is important to have a glimpse of its consequences economically, politically and socially on the Nigerian society.

### *Conflict and demographics - mortality*

One of the most notable effects of a war is its death toll. Conflict events directly lead to the deaths of combatants and civilians, who make up the direct mortality. As of 31 July 2020, the conflict has directly resulted in 34,457 deaths in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states since the beginning of 2009 (Raleigh et al, 2010). Conflict can also increase mortality indirectly. For example, destroyed health infrastructure and degraded living conditions can lead to increased deaths from disease and hunger. To our knowledge, there have been no prior efforts to estimate the number of indirect deaths from this conflict. However, many sources suggest that indirect mortality has been considerable, as evidenced by increased child mortality and famine-related deaths.

### *Migration and displacement*

Violence is the primary cause of forced migration globally. In many cases, wars create more refugees (those who are forced to flee the country) than Internally Displaced People (Moore& Stephen, 2004) Forced migration patterns are often determined by a complex web of factors, including policy, ease of movement, and economic considerations. Out of **all** refugees, 90 per cent go to a neighbouring country," Often, forced migration can be prolonged or even permanent. Today, two-thirds of refugees are in 'protracted situations' in which a large population ofrefugees have been in a given asylum country for at least five years (UNHCR).

Boko Haram attacks have led to massive internal displacement. More than 1.8 million Nigerians are displaced in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states with the vast majority (nearly 1.5 million) located in Bomo. In camps and host communities, IDPs often live in poor conditions and lack access to adequate food and services. While some IGPs prefer to stay within Nigeria, others cite cost and a lack of a social network in destination countries as barriers to leaving". More than 280,000 Nigerians are registered as refugees in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, with the majority having fled violence in Nigeria's northeast Conditions for refugees in these bordering countries are often worse than those of IDPs. While many of the displaced would like to return home, insecurity remains a major barrier. Many of the displaced have been displaced more than once. The return of over 1.6 million IDPs and refugees has been recorded. However, many are returning to damaged homes and have no access to education, health services, or nearby markets.

### *Economic production*

Conflict can severely disrupt economic activity through the destruction of productive assets, diversion of resources, death and injury to the population, and damage to health and education systems. Many studies have found that political instability and conflict have a dampening effect on economic growth. (Alsen & Veiga, 2010). In north-eastern Nigeria, the conflict has further damaged an economy that was already strained by inequality low agricultural productivity, Kimeniyi et al (2014) and high unemployment, especially among youth. Agricultural production, the dominant economic sector in the region, has been severely cut. Buildings and transportation infrastructure have been destroyed, while road closures and military bans have impeded the movement and sale of certain goods. *(ICG)* Many businesses are fully or partially closed investment is reduced and market activity is suppressed. A World Bank assessment estimated cumulative GDP losses from 2011 to 2015 at $6.21 billion ($3.54 billion in

Borno, $1.5/ billion in Adamawa, and **$1.1** billion in Yobe). The 2011 World Investment Report of the UNCTAD noted that Nigeria's economy lost over six billion dollars Nl.3 trillion as a result of attacks by Boko Haram and other insurgents (Erne et al., 2010).

***Agricultural production***

Conflict reduces agricultural production and productivity. Land is often abandoned by agricultural workers who are killed or displaced and those who stay may shift to lower-risk crops or cut back investment.Conflict also makes it harder to do business as farmers deal with labour shortages rising prices of farming inputs and disruptions throughout the agricultural value chain. Agriculture is the main economic activity in north-eastern Nigeria, employing between 65 and 30 per cent of the populations of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe and contributing over half of the regional GDP. Conflict over the past decade has only exacerbated a situation characterized by environmental degradation, low productivity, and high sensitivity to climatic factors. Boko Haram activity has been associated with reductions in crop production and productivity as well as declines in hired agricultural labour and wages. Mass displacement has led to land abandonment. Many farmers are unable to carry out agricultural activities and lack access to land in some areas, farmers face restrictions limiting the types of crops that can be planted and how far they can travel for farming activities ((Fglie & Nicloes, 2013).

***Infrastructure***

Along with human casualties, the destruction of infrastructure is one of the most visible effects of violent conflict. Damage to infrastructure affects various aspects of economic and human development by raising the cost of production, delaying the movement of goods and aid, in the case of the water and sanitation infrastructure, and fermenting the spread of communicable diseases. Conflict also diverts investment and increases the cost of new infrastructure development (Cellier et al, 2015). Infrastructure in north-eastern Nigeria has been historically underdeveloped, due to both poor economic growth and low levels of investment (Hoffeman, 2014). In 2003, three per cent of the population had access to safe sanitation and 30 per cent to electricity, while 90 per cent reported difficulty accessing water.'" (UNDP) Since 2009, the conflict has both damaged existing infrastructure and disrupted new development by raising the cost of production, delaying the movement of goods and aid, in the case of water and infrastructure, and fomenting the spread of communicable diseases.

The conflict has also damaged houses, roads, bridges schools, health facilities, and public buildings. An estimated 75 per cent of all water and

sanitation infrastructure was destroyed. (UNDP) A World Bank assessment estimated the cost of conflict's damage to infrastructure and social services across north-eastern Nigeria at nearly $9 billion ($6.9 billion in Bomo. $1.2 billion in Yobe and $829 million in Adamawa. Though reconstruction has already begun in some areas, progress has been uneven.

***Poverty***

Since conflict curbs economic growth, it often leads to heightened levels of poverty. Poverty has been pervasive and growing in northeastern Nigeria for decades (Aigbothan, 2000).Growing poverty and deprivation are often cited as drivers ó the Boko Haram insurgency. All evidence suggests that conflict has only further impoverished the population. Many have lost their income and livelihoods due to displacement, cuts in agricultural production and trade, and economic destruction , leaving them vulnerable and reliant on humanitarian assistance.

***Health and morbidity***

By destroying crucial health infrastructure and degrading living conditions for the population, war leads to a significant decline in the parameters of a healthy life, especially among children (Gchobarah, 2003). Conflict results in reduced access to health services and often disrupts prevention and treatment programs Systems of food production and distribution are often disrupted at the same time as families' livelihoods are destroyed and incomes reduced, resulting in food insecurity, malnutrition and even famine. In north-eastern Nigeria, physical and economic destruction wrought by the insurgency has dismantled already fragile health and food systems. Less than 60 per cent of health facilities in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states are functional , while a quarter is either destroyed or non-functional. Access to healthcare is further reduced due to shortages in skilled health personnel, lack of adequate medicine and supplies and the high cost, of treatment. Displaced populations are at heightened risk due to overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions.The conflict has also led to a food crisis, over 920.000 children in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe are estimated to have acute malnutrition while over 288,000 have severe acute malnutrition.

***Education***

The education system in northeastern Nigeria was strained even before the escalation of conflict. Over half of the children in the North-East Zone were out of school in 2008, including 32.9 per cent of children in Adamawa, 63.5 per cent in Yobe, and 73.4 per cent in Borno. Education has been an important target of direct attack by Boko Haram, a group whose name is frequently translated as

"Western education is forbidden". Between 2014 and early 2017, Boko Haram destroyed roughly 1,500 schools while claiming over 1,200 students and teachers as casualties. Over 1,000 children have been abducted since 2013 including the 2014 abduction of 276 girls from a school in Chibok and another incident six months later, when more than 300 children were abducted from a primary school in Damasak. Also, the Baptist School children were attacked in Kaduna in 2023 and many more.

***Conflict and gender***

Conflict in north-eastern Nigeria has affected men and women in different ways and worsened pre-existing gender inequalities. Men make up the majority of direct conflict deaths and have been subjected to abduction and forced recruitment by Boko Haram as well as mass arrests (Segue et al, 2014). Human rights abuses, and extrajudicial killings.Women and children make up 80 per cent of the displaced population. Displaced women have limited options for work and survival and have difficulties accessing resources. (ICG) Widows often struggle to retain access to property and savings that may be claimed by a deceased husband's relatives. Women especially, have been targets of abduction by Boko Haram. Abducted women have been subjected to violence, rape and abuse and used as spies, fighters: and suicide bombers.

**Challenges of IDPs as a result of Conflict and Forced Migration in Nigeria**

IDPs face numerous challenges, which can be broadly categorized into:

***Physical and material challenges***

1. Shortages in shelter and accommodation
11. Limited access to food, water, and sanitation
111. Inadequate healthcare services
1v. Lack of essential items (clothing, blankets, etc.)
v. Poor living conditions

***Emotional and psychological challenges***

1. Trauma and stress from displacement
11. Anxiety and uncertainty about the future
111. Loss oflivelihoods and income
1v. Separation from family members
v. Stigma and social exclusion

***Protection and security challenges***

1. Exposure to violence, exploitation, and abuse
11. Limited access to justice and protection
111. Risk of kidnapping, trafficking, and forced recruitment
1v. Restrictions on movement and freedom

v. Lack of documentation and identity papers

***Social and economic challenges***

1. Disruption of social networks and community ties
11. Limited access to education and employment
111. Loss of property and assets
1v. Stigma and discrimination
v. Dependence on humanitarian aid

**Specific challenges for vulnerable groups**

1. Women: sexual violence, exploitation, and reproductive health issues
11. Children: child labour, trafficking, and lack of education
m. Elderly: limited access to healthcare and social services
1v. Persons with disabilities: inaccessible shelters and services
v. Minority groups: discrimination and targeted violence

**Nigerian Context**

In Nigeria, IDPs face additional challenges due to:

1. Ongoing conflicts (Boko Haram, farmer-herder clashes)
11. Limited government resources and capacity
111. Corruption and diversion of humanitarian aid
1v. Cultural and social stigma
v. Environmental degradation and climate change

**Discussion of findings**

Based on the findings of the study, forced migration in Nigeria is caused by violent crises spearheaded by non-state actors such as Boko Haram, farmer - herders conflict, and banditry in Nigeria. Religion's extremism has played a pivotal role in escalating conflicts in Nigeria as evident in the operation of Boko Haram and other religiously affiliated armed groups in Nigeria (Targbe, 2017). Secondly, the finding revealed that there is a large-scale humanitarian crisis occasioned by forced migration in Nigeria. The crisis devastated agricultural production and other livelihoods and cut off essential services,resulting in unhealthy living conditions such as shelters, health care, education physical and mental well-being food insecurity and shelter, healthcare and education an outbreak of diseases such as cholera with no end in sight. Many IDP camps are often, overcrowded and lack adequate infrastructure. This has led to heightened vulnerability to diseases, malnutrition and limited educational opportunities. There is also the loss of livelihoods due to forced migration which has caused financial hardships.

Statistics show that over 2.5million IDPs in Nigeria, 80% are women and children and 60%lack access to healthcare.Furthermore, there is heightened insecurity which has affected the overall peace in the country. IDP camps became breeding grounds for criminal activities and radicalization. Lastly, the perceived inability of the leadership to solve important issues impacting the nations, such as employment creation, resource allocation, and infrastructure development, exacerbates insecurity in Nigeria (Mukhta et al, 2017). From the reports by various organizations as highlighted above, the armed conflicts in Nigeria may not be contained unless the root causes of conflicts such as high levels of poverty are addressed.

**Conclusion**

The chapter concludes that the immediate cause of the forced migration in Nigeria is Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping and other form of political violence. Where there is conflict no meaningful development can take place. Armed conflict damages societies in clear and striking ways, killing both combatants and civilians and destroying critical infrastructure. Its effects are also felt directly as economic production, food, education and health system breakdown, income, and generation strategies force people into crowded and unsanitary conditions. The responses of national governments concerning the forced migration crisis have been very slow and viable to meet the demands of IDPs in Nigeria. The efforts of the government and other internal humanitarian agencies are inadequate in light of the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government should provide adequate security for forced migrants who are willing to return to their ancestral homes. Also improve access to education, healthcare and economic development in areas affected by conflict.The government should make adequate efforts to empower IDPs through entrepreneurial skill acquisition programs and the provision of startup capital to improve their economic status and standard of living.The government should make spirited efforts to tackle the root causes of armed conflicts such as poverty. The government should ensure that those found guilty of perpetrating violence when caught should be dealt with following the provision of the law to serve as a deterrent to others. Government and international authorities should come together to provide for their protection by giving them the same status as refugees despite not having crossed internationally recognized boundaries. Moreover, the government should focus on resettlement and integration ofIDPs.

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