

Conflict Weekly

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Africa's Sahel region threaten Niger's security forces on a regular basis. (Image Source: AFP)

Rising security threats after the coup in Niger



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



Niger: Rising security threats after the coup

Jerry Franklin

In the news

On 2 October, BBC Africa reported that 29 soldiers were killed in a suspected jihadist attack that happened on 29 September. Niger's Ministry of Defence stated that more than a hundred terrorists utilised "improvised explosive devices and kamikaze vehicles" during the attack in the town of Kandadji in western Niger. The attack occurred during a military operation near the Mali border aiming at eradicating the potential threat by a terrorist group linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Niger's Minister of Defence Lt General Salifou Mody reported that a counteroffensive killed over 100 insurgents. Mody stated: "A search and sweep operation is now underway to track down the enemy."

The attack comes along the sidelines of rising Niger-French tensions post-coup. On 1 October, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that French troops will withdraw from Niger by the end of the year. On 27 September, the French ambassador to Niger left the country a month after coup leaders ordered his expulsion. The tension had increased after France refused to recognise the coup government.

Issues at large

First, the threat posed by extremist groups. Since 2012, the Sahel region of Africa has been ravaged by armed group attacks linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. These attacks began in northern Mali and quickly spread to Niger and Burkina Faso by 2015. Niger is combating two jihadist insurgencies. One stems from the insurgency in Nigeria towards its southeast, the other from militants infiltrating from the west through Mali and Burkina Faso. The region of Liptako-Gourma, where Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger converge, has been affected by Islamic State and al-Qaeda-linked insurgency. The latest attack is the deadliest since the military assumed control in Niger. The security situation in the Liptako-Gourma has become significantly more challenging due to a surge in organised crime, banditry and violent intercommunal clashes.

Second, ECOWAS' threat of military intervention and military alliance with Mali and Burkina Faso. On 16 September, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed a mutual defence pact in Bamako, Mali to create a system of mutual aid and collective defence. Additionally, the alliance between the three countries would be reinforced through the combined efforts of both economic and military means. The backing of neighbouring countries encouraged the Niger junta to take firm measures against France, ordering the withdrawal of 1500 French soldiers stationed in Niger as part of counter-insurgency operations. Previously, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) threatened military intervention in Niger aiming to reverse the coup in July. However, it met with opposition from Mali and Burkina Faso juntas, both of whom came to power through coups in 2021 and 2022 respectively and expressed support for the coup in Niger.

Third, tensions with the West and isolating military regimes. Insurgent groups have increased their attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso following the withdrawal of Western and UN forces. Niger has become yet another example of escalating extremist assaults following a coup and the announcement of the departure of foreign forces. Mali and Burkina Faso are going through a similar trajectory after the French withdrawal that happened in August 2022 and February 2023 respectively. Around 1200 French troops and 1000 US troops are stationed in

Niger fighting insurgency. The weakened military cooperation with the West following the coup has threatened the security situation.

In perspective

First, the deteriorating security situation. Since the military takeover, the security situation in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso has deteriorated. The extremist groups are gaining control of the Liptako-Gourma region.

Second, a setback to Niger's junta. The increasing attacks by the extremist groups would create a setback for the coup leaders, who deposed President Mohamed Bazoum blaming the country's deteriorating security situation as the reason. The junta promised to improve security while seizing power and received substantial support from the people. The junta may lose support if the attack by extremist groups continues on this scale.



Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Rishika Yadav, Anu Maria Joseph, Padmashree Ananadhan and Shamini Velayutham

East and Southeast Asia

Taiwan: Urges the US to boost weapon deliveries

On 3 October, Taiwanese Vice-Minister of Defence, Hsu Yen-pu, urged the US to boost weapon deliveries to address the military threat posed by China. Hsu also called on the US to assist the country in setting up its own Total Life Cycle Systems Management (TLCSM) for the weapons it has bought from the US. The system is a US military project that implements, administers and supervises functions associated with the development, acquisition, production, maintenance and disposal of a weapon throughout its life cycle. Hsu stated: “Given the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, Taiwan and the US have recognised the importance of speeding up the delivery of weapons systems to Taiwan to urgently beef up its defence capabilities.” He made the comments during the annual US-Taiwan Defence Industry Conference held in the US state of Virginia on 2 October.

South Korea: North Korean hackers target shipbuilders for warship data

On 4 October, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) revealed that North Korean hackers conducted cyberattacks. The attacks were conducted against multiple South Korean shipbuilders in August and September which is suspected to be an attempt to steal technical data that could strengthen the North's navy. The South Korean shipbuilder industry that came under the attack constructed naval destroyers and submarines and developed next-generation vessels. The attack comes after Kim attended the launch of a “tactical nuclear attack submarine” and expressed determination to enhance North Korea’s naval capabilities in September. The NIS warned that such cyberattacks are likely to persist and advised shipbuilders and parts makers to strengthen their online security measures.

Japan: France deploys patrol aircraft to monitor North Korean vessels

On 2 October, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that France had deployed a patrol aircraft, F-200, to Japan. It is to assist in monitoring illegal ship-to-ship transfers by North Korean vessels in compliance with UN Security Council sanctions for developing nuclear weapons. The ministry stated: “Japan welcomes these activities from the viewpoint of ensuring effective implementation of the relevant [UN Security Council resolutions] in solidarity with the international community toward the realisation of North Korea’s dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.” The ministry announced that this mission will utilise aircraft from Japan’s Futenma Air Base in Okinawa. It marked the fourth time France has participated in similar activities since 2019.

The Philippines: Three fishermen killed near disputed Scarborough Shoal

On 4 October, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported that three Filipino fishermen were killed after their boat was hit by an oil tanker while crossing the South China Sea on 2 October. The Philippine Coast Guard stated that the incident occurred while the boat was passing waters 85 nautical miles away from the disputed Scarborough Shoal. On 3 October, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr stated that the incident was under investigation and promised to “exert every effort to hold accountable those who are responsible for this unfortunate maritime incident.” Meanwhile, on 29 September, President Marcos Jr stated that the country will enhance the strong defence of its territory and the rights of its fishermen and that the country is not searching for trouble. He stated: “What we will do is to continue defending the Philippines, the maritime territory of the Philippines, the rights of our fishermen to catch fish in areas where they... (have been) doing for hundreds of years already.” The statement came after the Philippine Coast Guard cut a 300-metre floating barrier installed by China blocking access to the Scarborough Shoal. China and the Philippines have been tussling over the sovereignty of Scarborough Shoal since 2012. The Philippines continues to claim fishing rights over the disputed region as it is part of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The Philippines: Naval drills in the South China Sea

On 2 October, naval forces from Manila, the UK, Canada, Japan and the US began joint exercises in Philippine waters. The 2023 “Sama Sama,” meaning together, drills are being held in the southern part of the island of Luzon. According to the Philippine Navy, the exercise focuses on the sectors of anti-submarine warfare, air defence and search and rescue operations. Philippine Navy chief Rear-Admiral Toribio Adaci stated: “With this show of force and active engagement of our allies and partners, ‘Sama Sama’ transcends mere military exercises; It is a symbol of our enduring partnerships and our shared commitment to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.” Commander of the US Navy’s Seventh Fleet, Vice-Admiral Karl Thomas stated: “It is important that all nations have a right to sail and operate in the West Philippine Sea, free from... being coerced, free from being intimidated.” Five vessels, two from the US and one each from the UK, Canada and Japan have joined the drills. Additionally, the navies of Australia, France, Indonesia and New Zealand joined by sending observers and experts.

Thailand: Two women killed in gun violence

On 3 October, The Strait Times reported that a teenage gunman killed two women and injured five others in a shooting spree at Siam Paragon Mall in Bangkok. The women killed were Chinese and Myanmar citizens. National police chief Torsak Sukvimol stated that the teenager has been receiving psychiatric treatment. Gun violence is not uncommon in Thailand. The country has one of the highest rates of gun ownership and gun violence in Asia. According to gunpolicy.org, an organisation that tracks weapons worldwide, among Thailand’s 7.2 million privately owned guns, only six million are registered. A member of Parliament from the opposition Move Forward Party, Parit Wacharasindhu, stated: “Even though the gun used to commit yesterday’s incident was a modified gun since Thailand has the third-highest gun-related deaths in Asia, this sends a clear signal that it might be necessary for us to reconsider the whole gun ownership system.”



Malaysia: Haze crisis caused by fires in Indonesia

On 30 September, The Strait Times quoted the Malaysian Department of Environment under the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change reporting on the unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) in Malaysian federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya and the state of Negeri Sembilan since 29 September. According to the department, the API in Kuala Lumpur recorded an average of 154.5 and Putrajaya recorded an average API of 117. API levels between 101 and 200 are considered to be unhealthy. According to the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC), the haze is being caused by smoke created by the forest fires in the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan. According to the ASMC's assessment, the forest fires are causing transboundary haze towards Malaysia's west coast of the Malay Peninsula and the eastern state of Sarawak.

Myanmar: Junta forces torch village in eastern Bago region

On 4 October, Myanmar Now reported that a column of junta forces and its allies set fire to the village of Pu Zun Myaung on 2 October during an ongoing operation in the Nyaunglebin Township in the Bago region. According to the People's Defence Forces (PDF) spokesperson, Wai Yan, the junta forces along with pro-junta, Pyu Saw Htee militia, members of the fire services department and soldiers torched the village. Since mid-September, the junta troops have been fighting the anti-junta PDF in the Bago region. Resistance forces, including Battalion 3702 and the Royal Peacock Column joined the PDF in attacking the junta column in the village of Pu Zun Myaung. Meanwhile, the acting leader of Myanmar's exiled National Unity Government (NUG), Duwa Lashi La, stated that several resistance forces are in control of nearly 60 per cent of the country's territory. He stated: "It has been more than two years since we started the people's defence war. Now, cooperation between PDF and ethnic revolutionary forces is yielding good results" and that "We are now in a position to even threaten Naypyitaw." Violence in Myanmar has intensified as the Myanmar junta led by General Min Aung Hlaing is challenged by the collapsing economy, mounting dissent within his regime and multi-front fighting involving multiple armed ethnic groups.

South Asia

India: Floods in Sikkim

On 4 October, The Hindu reported that at least five people had died and 23 Indian Army personnel went missing after a cloudburst that led to flash floods in the Indian state of Sikkim. The Indian Army stated that the flooding occurred in the Teesta River in the Lachen valley where the water levels rose abruptly around 15-20 feet higher than normal. According to the government of the state of Sikkim, the search and rescue operations are ongoing; three bridges have reportedly collapsed and nearly 420 people were forced to be displaced.

Nepal: Communal clashes in Nepalgunj

On 4 October, The Hindu reported that a lockdown was imposed and security heightened in the city of Nepalgunj in Nepal after clashes erupted between the Hindu and Muslim religious communities. The tensions began after a boy belonging to the Hindu community posted against the Muslim community on social media. People belonging to the Muslim community protested against the social media post inside the city's administrator's office, burned tires and blocked roads. Clashes erupted after the protesters threw stones and bottles at a rally conducted by the Hindu community on 3 October. Communal violence is uncommon in Nepal which is a Hindu-majority secular country and the Muslim community constitutes only one-third of Nepalgunj's population.

Afghanistan: Pakistan's eviction of refugees "unacceptable" says Taliban

On 4 October, Afghanistan's de facto Taliban authorities stated that Pakistan's plan to evict thousands of Afghan migrants is "unacceptable," denying the allegations by Islamabad that Afghan migrants are responsible for the series of suicide attacks in Pakistan. Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid stated: "The behaviour of Pakistan against Afghan refugees is unacceptable; Afghan refugees are not involved in Pakistan's security problems. As long as they leave Pakistan voluntarily, that country should tolerate them." According to the UN, nearly 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees are residing in Pakistan. However, Pakistan's caretaker Minister of Interior, Sarfraz Bugti, stated on 3 October that around 1.7 million Afghans are residing in the country illegally, ordering them to return to

their country or face deportation by 1 November. The development comes after on 29 September at least 57 people were killed in suicide bomb attacks in two mosques in the provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan.

Pakistan: Two suicide attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

On 29 September, two suicide attacks in two provinces - Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killed more than 60 people. The first attack took place in the Mastung district of Balochistan, where a suicide bomber targeted a gathering to celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad. The second suicide attack involved two bombers and took place in the neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, targeting a mosque in Hangu. Dawn, a leading daily in Pakistan quoted the army chief saying: "These terrorists and their facilitators, having no link to religion and ideology, are proxies of the enemies of Pakistan and its people."

Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: UN to send humanitarian mission Nagorno Karabakh

On 29 September, the UN announced sending a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh to address the humanitarian requirements after Azerbaijan retook the territory on 28 September, triggering a mass exodus. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric stated: "The government of Azerbaijan and the UN have agreed on a mission to the region. The mission will take place over the weekend." The announcement came after the government of Armenia requested the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Azerbaijan to withdraw its troops from the civilian regions in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ethnic Armenians have left Nagorno-Karabakh after the Azerbaijan government called on the Armenian ethnic forces in the region to disarm following the reclaim of the region. According to Al Jazeera, nearly 100,417 people have arrived in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh as of 30 September. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has alleged the mass exodus is attributed to "a direct act of an ethnic cleansing and depriving people of their motherland." Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the allegations stating that "their personal and individual decision and has nothing to do with forced relocation."



Iran: Iranian girl in severe condition after suspected hijab encounter

On 4 October, Al Jazeera reported that Iranian police confronted a 16-year-old girl, Armita Geravand, for violating the country's conservative dress code which requires women to wear a head covering. The Iranian-Kurdish rights group, Hengaw, stated that the security forces arrested the victim's mother, Shahin Ahmadi, after the incident. The Iranian authorities have refuted assertions made by the human rights groups that the victim fell into a coma following the incident. The incident comes a year after the death of Mahsa Amini while was in the custody of the morality police which sparked weeks of anti-government protests in the country in September 2022.

Egypt: 400 people arrested over Egypt's protested presidential bid

On 4 October, BBC Africa reported that at least 400 people were arrested over "riot incidents" after President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi announced his decision to run for a third term. The protests were reported in the city of Marsa Matrouh. The protesters were chanting "Sisi out" and calling for the end of his decade-long regime. Sisi, the former army chief, came to power in 2013 after assisting in ousting the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Morsi. Sisi's government has been criticised for its suppression of opposition and economic crisis. Egypt's presidential elections are scheduled in December.

South Sudan: WFP warns of food crisis and malnutrition among people fleeing conflict in Sudan

On 3 October, the World Food Programme warned of a soaring food crisis and child malnutrition among the people fleeing the fighting in Sudan to South Sudan. WFP's South Sudan country director Mary-Ellen McGroarty stated: "We are seeing families leave one disaster for another as they flee danger in Sudan only to find despair in South Sudan." She added: "The humanitarian situation for returnees is unacceptable and WFP is struggling to meet the mounting humanitarian needs at the border. We simply do not have the resources to provide life-saving assistance to those who need it most." According to the WFP, 90 per cent of the people fleeing Sudan are experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity; 20 per cent of children under five and more than a quarter of pregnant and breastfeeding women are malnourished. WFP has assessed that it requires more than USD 120 million to increase assistance for the people fleeing the conflict in Sudan between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) that began in April.

Europe and the Americas

EU: Azerbaijan says no to the invitation to discuss Nagorno Karabakh

On 4 October, Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, refused to take part in a meeting arranged by the EU with Nikol Pashinyan, the Prime Minister of Armenia. According to news reports, President Charles Michel, the President of the European Council had invited both leaders to Granada in Spain, where a summit of the European Political Community was taking place. France 24 referred to the AFP quoting an official from Azerbaijan: "Azerbaijan did not consider it necessary to participate in negotiations in this format." The reason, according to the same source: "pro-Armenian statements by French officials... and statements on the supply of weapons and ammunition (to Yerevan), on military cooperation."

Ukraine: Russian attacks on brigades in Kupyansk

On 2 October, the Russian Ministry of Defence claimed attacks on the manpower and material of Ukrainian forces in the Kupyansk region. The ministry stated: "In the Kupyansk area, manpower and material of the 14th and the 32nd mechanised and the 25th airborne brigades of the Ukrainian armed forces were engaged by aviation strikes and artillery fire of the Battlegroup West in the vicinity of Zagoruikovka and Ivanovka settlements of the Kharkov Region and Novoselovskoe settlement of the Lugansk People's Republic. Up to twenty five Ukrainian servicemen and two vehicles were destroyed." Msta-B and D-30 howitzers and a Grad Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) combat vehicle were damaged in the counter-battery fire.

Europe: Germany, Poland and Czech Republic forms task force to combat human smuggling

On 29 September, Germany along with Poland and the Czech Republic created a joint task force. It is aimed at combating human smuggling and illegal immigration. German Minister of Interior Nancy Faeser stated: "Together, we want to smash the cruel business of smuggling gangs that make maximum profit from the plight of people and smuggle them across borders in a life-threatening way." The task force, led by Europol's European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) program, will involve the German, Czech and Polish police working together across borders. It is to identify smuggling routes and curb illegal immigration.

Europe: EU agrees on migration policy amid crisis

On 29 September, leaders from nine Mediterranean and southern European countries gathered in Malta to address the ongoing migration crisis. The EU's failure to agree on changes to migration laws has heightened political pressure on countries including Italy, Greece and Malta which are bearing the brunt of the crisis. Disagreements persist among the nine countries on how to handle the situation. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen held separate talks with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron on expanding naval missions in the Mediterranean Sea. On 4 October, the EU member states reached an agreement to deal with emergencies and unexpected events related to migration and asylum. The regulation is a part of the "New Pact on Migration and Asylum" proposed by the Commission in 2020. The regulation allows member states to adjust rules in the field of asylum and migration during crises. It includes rules such as the registration of asylum applications and the asylum border procedure. Additionally, solidarity measures between the EU countries in scenarios of crises are outlined.

Haiti: UN approves multinational mission against gang violence

On 2 October, the UN Security Council approved a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to assist Haiti in its fight against gang violence. Out of 15 members, 13 approved the Kenya-led mission. Russia and China abstained citing Haiti's troubled history with foreign involvement. Haitian Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus welcomed the vote calling for countries to begin the mission "as quickly as possible." He stated: "More than just a simple vote, this is an expression of solidarity with a population in distress. It's a glimmer of hope for the people that have for too long been suffering." Kenya's ambassador to the UN, Martin Kimani applauded the vote as an "exemplary spirit of cooperation." Kimani stated: "With this action, the Security Council has ignited a beacon of hope for the beleaguered people of Haiti." Meanwhile, human rights groups including Amnesty International have expressed concern in terms of Kenya's "continued unlawful use of force against protesters" in Nairobi.



Mexico: Ten migrants killed in truck accident

On 1 October, Al Jazeera reported that at least ten illegal migrants were killed and 15 others were injured after a cargo truck carrying them overturned on a highway in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. An unknown spokesperson from the prosecutor's office told Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency that the victims were all women including one minor from Cuba. The incident occurred along the Pacific coast between the towns of Pijijiapan and Tonala, a route which migrants often use to reach the US. Crowded vehicles carrying migrants to the US often get into accidents on the highways in Mexico. Previously, on 28 September, two migrants died when a truck overturned in Mezcalapa in the state of Chiapas. In August, at least 15 Venezuelan migrants were killed after their bus collided with a trailer on the highway that connects the states of Puebla and Oaxaca.

The US: Health workers on a strike

On 4 October, a section of health workers including nurses and technicians working at the Kaiser hospitals in various states of the US kicked off a strike demanding better pay and addressing the shortage of staff. According to a New York Times report, “more than 75,000 Kaiser Permanente health care workers began a three-day strike Wednesday, a job action that could delay medical appointments, lab results and prescriptions for thousands of patients, especially in California.”

The US: Speaker of the House voted out by his party

On 3 October, the US House of Representatives voted against the Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a Republican. While the Democrats voted against him, it was the votes from his party led by a small group of Republican representatives led by Matt Gaetz that led to McCarthy's downfall. A pro tem speaker has been elected. However, given the differences between the two parties, and the divide within the Republicans, electing the next speaker will not be an easy task for the House.

Canada: India calls on Toronto to withdraw 40 diplomats

On 4 October, the Indian government called on the Canadian government to withdraw nearly 40 of its diplomatic staff from India after an escalation of weeks-long tensions. The development comes after the Canadian government stated that India may have been behind the killing of a Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in June. India had denied the allegations. On 21 September, India halted issuing visas to Canadian citizens citing “security threats.”

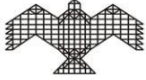
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of
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The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

About Conflict Weekly



The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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