



**The Climate-Security Nexus in South Asia: Pakistan at the Crossroads of Environmental Degradation and Regional Insecurity, A Pakistan-Centric Analysis of Realism, Social Constructivism, and Green Perspective**

**Mohsin Mahmood<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> MS Security and Strategic Studies Scholar, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan,  
Email: [mohsin156119@yahoo.com](mailto:mohsin156119@yahoo.com)

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**Abstract**

Climate change poses significant challenges to global security, particularly in South Asia, where rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events are worsening existing tensions over resources such as water and land. This region, home to nearly a quarter of the world's population, is highly susceptible to climate change, with far-reaching insinuations for human migration, conflict, and regional stability. Pakistan, ranked among the top ten countries most vulnerable to climate change, is a critical case study. The country's geography, economy, and population make it highly disposed to climate-related disasters, including floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Climate change is altering the hydrology of the Indus River Basin, a critical source of water for Pakistan and India, further complicating their complex relationship. This research employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a multi-theoretical framework that integrates Realism, Constructivism, and the Green Perspective. The study is based on a comprehensive analysis of secondary data sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and reports from international organizations. The data collection process involved a thorough review of existing literature on climate change, security, and South Asia. The sources included Academic journals and books, Policy documents and reports from international organizations. Finally, Government reports and data. The findings of this study highlight the importance of national interests, security concerns, and power dynamics in shaping Pakistan's response to climate change. The study stresses the need for a comprehensive approach to address the climate change-security nexus in South Asia, including regional cooperation, improved water management practices, and sustainable development. Ultimately, addressing the climate change-security interconnection in South Asia requires a sustained commitment to cooperation, diplomacy, and sustainable development. By working together to address the shared challenges posed by climate change, the countries of South Asia can build a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

**Key words:** Climate Change, Global Security, South Asia, Pakistan

**Introduction:**

South Asia, a region characterized by intricate geopolitical dynamics and significant environmental susceptibilities, is increasingly dealing with the multidimensional impacts of climate change (IPCC, 2013). Climate change is one of the critical problems of our time, with far-

reaching consequences on ecosystems, economies, and societies (Stern, 2007). Among South Asian countries, Pakistan is highly vulnerable to these impacts due to its geographical location, demographic characteristics, and economic conditions (Germanwatch, 2020). Beyond the physical manifestations of climate change, this study will scrutinize how different actors – states, international organizations, civil society, and the media – construct narratives around climate change, framing it as a security threat, an environmental issue, or a development concern (Hulme, 2009). This paper will also examine the relationship between climate change and resource inadequacy with a focus on the impacts of environmental changes on human security (Barnett & Adger, 2007). This research will employ a Realist framework, which postulates that international relations are determined by the pursuit of supremacy, security, and national benefits. Through this lens, we will investigate how climate change affects the national security of South Asia, particularly Pakistan, and how diverse actors, including states, international organizations, and non-state actors, respond to these challenges. The research will examine the ways in which climate change effects the regional security dynamics, including the impact on resource struggle, border clashes, and human migration. We will also gauge the efficiency of prevailing strategies and alliances in addressing the region's climate-related security challenges. This research will add to a deeper understanding of the influence of climate change on regional security in South Asia, and the ways in which national interests and power dynamics form the responses to these challenges. The findings will have important insinuations for policymakers and experts pursuing to address these challenges.

### **Literature Review:**

Pakistan is categorized among the top ten countries most vulnerable to climate change (Germanwatch, 2020). The country's susceptibility to climate change is intensified by its limited capacity to adapt to climate-related stresses (IPCC, 2013). Climate change is projected to exacerbate resource scarcity in Pakistan, particularly in terms of water, food, and energy (World Bank, 2020). Pakistan is already facing significant water scarcity challenges, with per capita water availability decreasing from 5,600 cubic meters in 1947 to 1,000 cubic meters in 2019 (Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority, 2020). Climate change is estimated to further worsen water shortage, particularly in the Indus River Basin, which is the primary source of water for agriculture, industry, and human consumption in Pakistan (World Bank, 2020). Changes in rainfall patterns and increased evaporation due to rising temperatures are expected to reduce water availability, affecting agriculture, industry, and human intake (Pakistan Meteorological Department, 2020). Similarly, climate-related meddling to agricultural productivity and changing growing seasons threaten food security, predominantly for at-risk populations (Pakistan Meteorological Department, 2020). Pakistan is highly dependent on agriculture, with the sector accounting for approximately 20% of the country's GDP (Government of Pakistan, 2020). Climate change is estimated to lessen crop revenues, particularly for wheat, rice, and maize, which are the chief crops grown in Pakistan (World Bank, 2020). These turbulences related to agriculture, industry, and infrastructure can lead to economic instability, possibly stimulating conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Significant relocation of populations can lead to social, financial, and cultural strains, possibly igniting encounters (UNHCR, 2020). Inadequacy of assets, such as water and land, can lead to clashes between communities, ethnic groups, or countries (Barnett & Adger, 2007). Climate change is likely to displace and migrate people in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan (UNHCR, 2020). Rising sea levels, increased flooding, and decreased source of revenue opportunities are expected to force people to migrate, often to urban areas, straining local resources and infrastructure (World Bank, 2020). Climate-related migration and displacement can lead to social, economic, and cultural tensions, potentially sparking conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999). In

South Asia, diverse stakeholders shape climate change narratives in distinct ways, influencing public opinion and swaying policy choices (Hulme, 2009). Government Narratives often emphasize on climate change as a developmental issue, highlighting the need for economic growth and poverty reduction (Agarwal et al., 2021). In contrast, Civil Society Organizations frame climate change as a human rights issue, stressing its influence on endangered communities and advocating for climate justice (World Bank Group, 2021). Media Narratives play a vital role in influencing public opinion, with some channels emphasizing the economic benefits of climate action, while others focus on the security repercussions of climate change (Ashraf et al., 2020). International Organizations, such as the World Bank, construct narratives around climate change as a global security threat, emphasizing the need for mutual action and collaboration (World Bank Group, 2021). The consequences of these narratives for global security are substantial (Barnett & Adger, 2007). Climate change has increasingly acknowledged as a security threat, with poised to intensify and complicate regional conflicts, displacement, and social unrest (IPCC, 2013). The way different actors construct narratives around climate change can either worsen or alleviate these security risks. For instance, narratives that highlight the security associations of climate change can help raise mindfulness and galvanize actions among governments and international organizations (Hulme, 2009). On the other hand, narratives that confine the security risks of climate change can obstruct efforts to deal with this mounting menace.

### **Research Questions:**

1. How do environmental changes impact resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan?
2. How do state and non-state actors in the region construct and utilize climate change narratives to advance their national interests and security agendas?
3. What policies or coalitions emerge in response to the perceived threats of climate change in South Asia, and how effective are they in addressing the region's climate-related security challenges?

### **Analysis of Theories:**

There are various theories that can explain the questions under consideration. In this paper, the most relevant theories of Realism, Social constructivism and Green perspective will be explained and a comparison will be made among these theories to analyze and justify different aspects of the research. Being a researcher, I personally believe in Realism. By examining the impact of climate change on regional security through a Realist lens, this research will provide an understanding of the intricate interactions between climate change, national security, and international relations in South Asia, focusing Pakistan.

**Realism** is a theoretical framework in international relations that accentuates the role of state power and security in modelling global politics. Realists debate that the international system is anarchistic, meaning that there is no central authority to impose laws or maintain order. As a result, states must trust on their own power and military strength to protect their interests and safeguard their existence. Realism is a prominent theoretical framework in international relations, emphasizing the role of state power and security in shaping global politics (Waltz, 1979). From a realist perspective, climate change is seen as a threat to national security, particularly in terms of resource scarcity, border disputes, and humanitarian crises (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Realists claim that states must take a self-interested tactic to deal with environmental evolution. This means that states should prioritize their own national security interests over global cooperation or collective action. Realists also argue that states should concentrate on adjusting to the influences of climate

change, rather than trying to alleviate its causes. This perception on climate change has been condemned for several reasons. Realists prioritize state power and security over other factors, such as human well-being or environmental sustainability. They reason that states should prioritize their own interests over global cooperation, which can make it difficult to address global challenges like climate change. They also tend to focus on short-term security interests, rather than long-term sustainability or environmental protection. Overall, the realist perspective on climate change emphasizes the importance of state power and security in shaping global politics. While this perspective can provide perceptions into the security implications of climate change, it has also been disapproved for its restrictions and prejudices.

***Social constructivism*** is a theoretical context that stresses the role of social and cultural norms, values, and beliefs in shaping international relations and global security (Wendt, 1999). Climate change is a social paradigm, shaped by human perceptions, values, and beliefs (Hulme, 2009). The social constructivist perspective highlights the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which climate change is qualified and answered to. This means that our understanding of climate change is predisposed by our social and cultural frameworks, including our values, norms, and beliefs about the environment, science, and politics. Social and cultural norms play a crucial role in determining our understanding of climate change. For example, in some cultures, climate change is seen as a moral issue, requiring individual and collective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Shue, 2014). In other cultures, climate change is realized as a economic issue, necessitating the development of new technologies and economic systems to alleviate its impacts (Stern, 2007). This requires analyzing the social and cultural norms, values, and beliefs that outline our acceptance of climate change, as well as the power dynamics and interests that stimulates climate change policy and practice (Foucault, 1980). The social constructivist perspective offers valuable insights for climate change programming and preparation. Understanding that social and cultural contexts significantly shape climate change experiences and responses, and developing context-specific climate change policies and practices to ensure successful implementation and meaningful outcomes. Viewing climate change policy and practice as a social and cultural paradigm, recognizing that they are shaped by human ethics, philosophies, and power dynamics, rather than exclusively by technical or scientific deliberations (Jasanoff, 2010). By embracing these suggestions, climate change initiatives can become operational, justifiable, and unbiased, ultimately leading to better conclusions for communities and ecosystems.

***Green Perspective*** refers to a holistic approach that considers the environmental, social, and economic influences of human activities and decisions. It involves assessing policies, practices, and technologies from an environmental sustainability perception, with the goal of curtailing injury to the environment and encouraging ecological balance. A Green Perspective is steered by several key principles, including the precautionary principle, which shuns actions that may harm the environment, even if the outcomes are ambiguous. The polluter pays principal holds individuals and organizations accountable for environmental destruction and pollution. Intergenerational justice guarantees that decisions made today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Environmental stewardship recognizes the importance of protective natural resources and ecosystems for their inherent significance and for the welfare they provide to humans. Applying a Green Perspective comprises assessing policies, practices, and technologies for their environmental sustainability and potential impacts on ecosystems. It also reassures sustainable development that balances economic, social, and environmental considerations. This perspective inspires individuals, organizations, and governments to adopt environmentally sustainable behaviors and practices. Furthermore, it nurtures international cooperation to address

environmental challenges and promote sustainable development. The benefits of a Green Perspective are abundant. It helps preserve natural resources and ecosystems for future generations, reducing pollution and environmental degradation to protect human health. A Green Perspective also creates jobs and stimulates innovation in the green economy, promoting economic benefits. Additionally, it encourages environmental justice and equity, particularly for vulnerable populations. To summarize the above discussion, the impact of environmental changes associated with climate change on resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, is a persistent anguish. As realist theory suggests, climate change can intensify resource insufficiency, leading to rivalry and struggle over limited capitals such as water and land. This is predominantly evident in Pakistan, where climate change is likely to diminish water accessibility, disturbing agriculture and industry. The subsequent insufficiency can fuel social unrest and conflict, particularly in areas where resources are already limited. Furthermore, climate change can lead to population displacement, as people are forced to migrate due to rising sea levels, increased flooding, and decreased sources of revenue and opportunities. This can set a pressure on local resources and infrastructure, leading to social and economic tensions. As migration systems theory suggests, understanding the complex factors that shape human migration patterns is crucial for developing effective policies and practices. Keeping in view the above discussion, different actors, including governments, NGOs, and local communities, construct narratives around climate change that mirror their benefits, ideals, and opinions. This theory holds true in the context of Pakistan, where addressing the root causes of migration is vital to resolve issues, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. The strategies and alliances that develop in response to the perceived threats of climate change in South Asia will be crucial in addressing the region's climate-related security challenges, particularly for Pakistan. As a country highly at risk to climate change, Pakistan's security and stability are intensely interwoven with the regional response to this global threat. From Pakistan's viewpoint, regional institutions such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) can play a dynamic role in encouraging cooperation and synchronization on climate change issues. SAARC provides a platform for Pakistan to be involve with its regional allies, share knowledge and expertise, and cultivate mutual strategies to address the influences of climate change. However, the efficiency of SAARC and other regional institutions in addressing climate change will be determined by the willingness of member states, including Pakistan, to work together and pledge to united action. Pakistan must work meticulously with its regional partners to develop and implement effective climate change policies and strategies, leveraging SAARC and other regional platforms to promote cooperation and advance its national interests. Eventually, a harmonized regional response to climate change is essential for Pakistan's security, stability, and prosperity. By working together with its regional partners, Pakistan can help make a more effective and sustainable response.

## **Methodology:**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research design, combining a blend of theoretical analysis and case study research to investigate the complex relationships between environmental changes, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, with a specific focus on Pakistan. By employing a qualitative approach, this study targets to provide an in-depth understanding of context-specific dynamics at play in Pakistan, where climate change is worsening prevailing environmental, social, and economic challenges. The study's theoretical analysis will draw on pertinent literature from fields such as environmental studies, geography, politics, and sociology to develop a widespread framework for understanding the intersections between climate change, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict. This framework will be applied

to a case study of Pakistan, where the impacts of climate change are already being felt, from rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns to increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Through this case study, the research will explore the specific ways in which environmental changes associated with climate change are contributing to resource inadequacy, population displacement, and conflicts affecting Pakistan. The study will examine the complex and interrelated factors driving these dynamics, including the role of government policies, institutional capacities, and social and economic inequalities. By providing a detailed understanding of the climate change-security nexus in Pakistan, this research aims to inform the development of effective policies and strategies for moderating the impacts of climate change and upholding viable peace and security in the region.

### **Data collection**

This study employs a comprehensive literature review approach to collect data from existing research on climate change, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, with a specific focus on Pakistan. The data is gathered from a wide range of sources, including academic articles, reports, and books, to provide a thorough understanding of the complex relationships between these variables. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, the study utilizes triangulation, a methodological technique that involves comparing and contrasting data from multiple sources. This approach allows the researcher to verify the consistency and validity of the findings, increasing the confidence in the results. By triangulating data from different sources, the study can identify patterns, themes, and relationships that may not be apparent from a single source, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic. The literature review is structured around key themes and concepts related to climate change, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan. The study examines the existing research on these topics, including the causes and consequences of climate change, the impacts of resource scarcity on human security, the dynamics of population displacement and migration, and the relationships between climate change, conflict, and security. Through this comprehensive literature review, the study aims to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between climate change, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on these topics, providing valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working to address the challenges posed by climate change in the region.

### **Case Study Selection**

Pakistan is designated as a case study country for this research due to its life-threatening vulnerability to climate change. The country is ranked among the top ten countries in the world in terms of climate susceptibility, with its geography, economy, and population making it highly predisposed to the impacts of climate change. Pakistan's strategic location in South Asia further compounds its climate vulnerability. The country is located in a region where the influences of climate change are already being sensed. Pakistan's climate vulnerability is also aggravated by its limited capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, due to factors such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, and weak institutional frameworks.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employs a multi-theoretical approach, integrating four distinct theoretical frameworks to analyze the data and provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between climate change, resource scarcity, population displacement, and conflict in the region of Pakistan. The study uses realism to scrutinize the role of state interests, power dynamics, and security concerns in modelling Pakistan's response to climate change. Realism provides a useful lens for

understanding how Pakistan's government and military institutions perceive and respond to climate-related security threats, and how these responses are influenced by the country's geopolitical context and strategic interests.

### **Discussion model:**

The discussion model for this article is intended to facilitate a complex and multi-faceted investigation of the intricate relationships between climate change, global security, and human migration. The model is based on a critical analysis of existing literature on the topic. The discussion begins by examining the primary drivers of climate change and their impact on global security. The literature suggests that climate change is driven by a range of factors, including greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and population growth (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Homer-Dixon, 1999). These factors contribute to climate-related security challenges, such as resource scarcity, conflict, and human migration. The relationship between climate change and global security is complex. The impacts of climate change on global security are significant. Climate change can lead to conflict over resources, such as water and land. Climate change can also have significant economic impacts, including damage to infrastructure, loss of productivity, and increased poverty. The potential consequences of climate change for global security are also significant. Climate change can lead to conflict, as states and non-state actors compete for resources and territory. It can also lead to migration, as people are forced to leave their homes due to rising sea levels, increased flooding, and decreased livelihood opportunities. Climate change can also have significant economic impacts, including damage to infrastructure, loss of productivity, and increased poverty. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of climate change on Pakistan's security, using multiple theoretical frameworks. This discussion will compare and contrast the realist, constructivist, and green perspective theories in the context of Pakistan's strategic importance and security issues. From a realist perspective, Pakistan's exposure to climate change is closely tangled to its geopolitical context and strategic interests. The country's location in a region prone to climate-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, makes it highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Realism suggests that its national interests, security concerns, and power dynamics will influence Pakistan's response to climate change, both domestically and internationally. In contrast, a constructivist perspective highlights the role of social constructs, norms, and values in constructing Pakistan's response to climate change. This approach emphasizes that climate change is not just a physical phenomenon, but also a socially constructed reality that is result of cultural, economic, and political factors. In Pakistan, the constructivist perspective tells that climate change is often framed as a security threat, rather than an environmental or humanitarian issue. The green perspective theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of environmental conservation and protection in addressing climate change. From this perspective, Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change is closely tied to its environmental degradation and unsustainable development practices. The country's reliance on fossil fuels, deforestation, and land-use changes have contributed significantly to its greenhouse gas emissions and climate vulnerability. Comparing these theories in the context of Pakistan's strategic importance and security issues reveals several key insights. Firstly, its national interests and security concerns drive Pakistan's realist approach to climate change. The country's military and strategic establishments view climate change as a security threat, and this perspective shapes its response. However, this approach neglects the human security dimensions of climate change, such as the impacts on livelihoods, health, and human rights. In contrast, the constructivist perspective highlights the importance of social constructs and norms in shaping Pakistan's response to climate change. This approach emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of climate change, one that takes into account the cultural, economic, and political factors that

shape public discourse and policy debates. However, this approach may overlook the material and structural factors that drive climate change, such as greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. The green perspective theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of environmental conservation and protection in addressing climate change. This approach highlights the need for sustainable development practices, such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-friendly infrastructure. However, this approach may neglect the security and strategic dimensions of climate change, such as the impacts on national security, regional stability, and global governance.

### **Conclusion:**

The relationship between climate change and global security is characterized by a complex interplay of environmental, social, economic, and political factors. Climate change poses significant challenges to global security, including the potential for conflict, migration, and economic instability. It is important to understand the theoretical frameworks that change our understanding of the relationships between climate change and global security. The three theoretical frameworks offer discrete comprehensions into the composite relationships between climate change, global security, and human migration. Furthermore, the need for effective international cooperation and coordination to address the challenges posed by climate change has been stressed. This will require the development of effective international institutions and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. Finally, the importance of developing effective policies and practices at the national and local levels to address the challenges postured by climate change has been emphasized. This will require the development of effective policies and practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and promoting sustainable development. In conclusion, through a critical analysis of the realist, constructivist, and green perspective theories, this research has established that realism provides the most compelling explanation for Pakistan's response to climate change. The realist approach emphasizes the importance of national interests, security concerns, and power dynamics in shaping Pakistan's climate change policy. The findings of this research support the realist perspective, highlighting the ways in which Pakistan's military and strategic establishments view climate change as a security threat. Its national interests and security concerns, rather than a genuine concern for environmental protection or human well-being drive the country's response to climate change. This is evident in Pakistan's climate change policy, which prioritizes adaptation and resilience over mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the realist approach helps to explain why Pakistan has been reluctant to adopt more ambitious climate change policies, despite its vulnerability to climate-related disasters. The country's strategic interests and security concerns take precedence over environmental protection, and its climate change policy is constructed by these considerations. This is manifested in Pakistan's participation in international climate change negotiations, where it has consistently prioritized its national interests and security concerns over more ambitious climate change goals. In contrast, the constructivist and green perspective theories, while providing valuable insights into the social and environmental dimensions of climate change, fail to fully capture the complexity of Pakistan's response to climate change. The constructivist approach overlooks the material and structural factors that drive climate change, while the green perspective theory neglects the security and strategic dimensions of climate change. The findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers and practitioners, emphasizing the need for a profound understanding of the complex relationships between climate change, national security, and international relations. Pakistan and India have a long-standing rivalry that is intensified by climate change. The two countries have a shared border and a disputed territory in Kashmir, which is a key factor in their complex relationship. Climate change is altering the



hydrology of the Indus River Basin, which is a critical source of water for both countries. This has led to increased competition over water resources, particularly in the context of India's construction of dams on the Indus River. The Indus Water Treaty, signed in 1960, is a key agreement governing the sharing of water resources between the two countries. However, climate change is putting pressure on this treaty, with Pakistan accusing India of violating the treaty by constructing dams on the Indus River. This has led to increased tensions between the two countries, with climate change becoming a key factor in their complex relationship. Climate change is also having a distressing impact on both countries, with heat waves, floods, and droughts becoming more frequent and intense. In 2022, a severe heat wave hit India and Pakistan, causing widespread damage and loss of life. Climate change made this heat wave 30 times more likely, and it is estimated that the heat wave would have been 1°C cooler in a pre-industrial climate. To address these challenges, Pakistan needs a comprehensive approach to tackle climate change, including a whole-of-government approach and international cooperation. The country has taken some steps in this direction, including the establishment of a climate change task force and the allocation of funds for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

### **Recommendations:**

More needs to be done to address the climate change challenges facing Pakistan and India. This includes strengthening regional cooperation, improving water management practices, and promoting sustainable development. Only through collective action can we hope to mitigate the impacts of climate change and promote a more peaceful and prosperous future for both countries. To address these challenges, a comprehensive approach is required that takes into account the complex interplay between climate change, global security, and human migration. This requires cooperation and collaboration between governments, international organizations, and civil society actors. It also necessitates a shift in mindset, from viewing climate change as a purely environmental issue to recognizing its far-reaching implications for global security and human well-being.

Ultimately, addressing the climate change-security interconnection in South Asia requires a sustained commitment to cooperation, diplomacy, and sustainable development. By working together to address the shared challenges posed by climate change, the countries of South Asia can build a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

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