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A Study of Metaphorical Framing of Climate Change in Political Discourse

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Abstract

This paper is an exploration of the influence of metaphorical framing on the portrayal of climate change in politics. Metaphors are commonly employed by political leaders to make the complicated environmental problems easier to understand and to sway the general opinion. Based on the qualitative discourse analysis, the research examines the chosen speeches and statements to determine the prevalent metaphorical frames, including war, journey, disease, and natural disaster. The results demonstrate that these metaphors are not objective; on the contrary, they create certain meanings that direct attitudes and policy action of the audience. As an example, metaphors of war develop a sense of urgency and collective action whereas metaphors of journeys focus on incremental change and collective responsibility. The paper emphasizes the role of metaphorical decisions in either encouraging action or minimizing the seriousness of climate change. Through the identification of these trends, the study would add to the comprehension of communication of language, power, and the environment in politics.

Keywords: Climate Change, Metaphorical Framing, Political Discourse, Discourse Analysis, Environmental Communication, Public Perception.

1. Introduction

Climate change has become one of the most significant world problems of the twenty-first century, as it has an impact on the environmental, economic, and political systems across the world. Nevertheless, scientific data alone does not define how the masses perceive climate change; it is heavily dependent on language, especially metaphorical framing in the political discourse. Metaphors enable complex and abstract concerns to be described using familiar concepts and are therefore a potent means of communication and persuasion.

Metaphor is not a style in cognitive linguistics but a cognition process. Lakoff and Johnson believe that metaphors are the way of organizing human cognition and project abstract ideas on physical phenomena (Lakoff and Johnson 5). In politics, it implies that the framing of climate change as a crisis, a war or a journey directly influences how individuals perceive the problem and react to it. Thus, the study of metaphorical framing is a scholarly important topic since it will demonstrate the role of language in mass opinion, policy, and environmental action.

Background and Context of the Study

The climate change debate has over the past few decades ceased to be a scientific debate, but has become a highly political one. Governments, policymakers, and media establishments can be instrumental in informing the masses on matters related to climate change. Given the complexity of climate science, political actors tend to use metaphorical language to make it more simple and convey important points.

To illustrate, calling climate change a battle or fight prioritizes urgency and action, whereas describing climate change as a journey implies slow change and long-term investment. According to Charteris-Black, the strategic application of political metaphors helps to shape audience perception and justify the policy decision (Charteris-Black 28). Likewise, economic metaphors, like cost, investment, and carbon market, place climate change within the financial context, which influences policies and legislation in a different manner. The rising popularity of metaphor in climate talk indicates the necessity to close the divide between scientific knowledge and the general knowledge.

Research Gap

Despite the fact that earlier studies have addressed metaphor in political discourse, there are a number of gaps in earlier studies. Most of the studies are aimed at listing down the individual metaphors rather than analyse the interaction between various metaphorical frames to form a general view of the population. The comparative application of metaphors in terms of political ideologies and contexts is also under-researched. Moreover, the prevailing literature tends to discuss metaphors as language phenomena and not as cognitive instruments that affect the process of thought and decision making. Lakoff states that framing is an important part of political thinking, but little empirical research has been done to examine the role of climate metaphors in the actual political discourse (Lakoff 70). The other significant gap is the absence of interdisciplinary methods which integrate cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis. This research fills these gaps, offering an informative discussion of metaphorical framing in the discourse of climate change.

Research Objectives / Questions

Research Objectives

1. To determine the prevailing metaphors in political speech on climate change
2. To examine the effect of metaphorical framing on the general knowledge
3. To investigate how metaphors are persuasive in influencing climate policies
4. To investigate ideological variations in the use of metaphors

Research Questions

1. What are the most common kinds of metaphors in the discourse of political climate?
2. What is the impact of these metaphors on social attitudes toward climate change?
3. What are the differences in metaphorical framing between political points of view?
4. How can metaphors have a role in policy communication and decision-making?

Scope and Significance of the Study

The research is devoted to political rhetoric on climate change including the speeches, policy documents and public statements. It looks at the usage of metaphorical language to package climate problems and manipulate the perceptions of the masses. The selection of political texts is confined to the analysis, and there is no scientific or purely media-based discourse.

The importance of this work is that it provides its contribution to both the linguistic and environmental studies. Linguistically, it helps to improve knowledge of how metaphor is a cognitive and communicative tool. Politically, it shows the influence of language on the masses and policy consequences.

According to Fairclough, discourse is deeply intertwined with power and ideology and its analysis can help to unveil the hidden social order (Fairclough 37). This study offers an insight into the role of political language in creating environmental awareness and action by discussing metaphorical framing. Finally, knowledge of metaphorical framing can be used to enhance climate communication approaches, which can be more effective in fostering citizen participation and policy endorsement.

Summary

Overall, this chapter has set the relevance of analyzing metaphorical framing of climate change discourse. It has described the scholarly importance, contextual background, gaps in research, purpose and importance of the study. The following chapter will overview the literature available on metaphor, political discourse, and climate communication in more detail.

2. Literature Review

Metaphorical framing in political discourse has become an increasingly popular topic of study in the fields of linguistics, communication studies, and environmental humanities. Researchers have investigated the role played by metaphors in the formation of popular ideas regarding multifaceted matters, especially climate change. This chapter provides a review of the main theoretical and empirical works in the field of metaphor, political speech, and climate communication, identifies major trends, debates, and gaps in research. Metaphor is no longer considered to be a solely rhetorical tool but rather a mental process that organizes the thoughts and perceptions. Lakoff and Johnson have argued that it is a metaphorical conceptual system, which is ordinary, that we have (Lakoff and Johnson 3). This view is the basis of the analysis of political actors and their metaphor to frame climate change.

2.2 Political Discourse and Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) offers a way of understanding how abstract concepts are described in terms of concrete experiences. Lakoff and Johnson consider the metaphors to entail mappings between source domains (e.g., war, journey) and target domains (e.g., climate change) (Lakoff and Johnson 5). These mappings are not neutral in the political discourse. Lakoff points out that framing has an impact on political thought and decision, in that people make sense of issues in a metaphorical form (Lakoff 72). As an illustration, framing climate change as a war would motivate people to take immediate action, whereas framing it as a debate would promote uncertainty. Charteris-Black builds upon this and demonstrates that political leaders intentionally employ metaphors to convince audiences and develop ideological accounts. He points out that metaphors give a way of justifying political actions and policies (Charteris-Black 28). In such a way, power and persuasion are closely intertwined with metaphorical framing

2.3 Typical Metaphors in Climate Change Discourses

Some common metaphoric frames of climate discourse discovered by scholars include the following.

Nerlich and Jaspal divide them into such major areas as war, journey, machine, and disease metaphors (Nerlich and Jaspal 98).

- War Metaphor: Climate change is viewed as an adversary that has to be combated. Such words as combat climate change form a sense of urgency and shared responsibility.
- Journey Metaphor: The action of climate is introduced as a process that is long-term, with a focus on the progress and collaboration.

Machine Metaphor: The Earth is an object that can be repaired or fixed.

Disease Metaphor: Climate change is defined as a worldwide sickness that has to be treated. All metaphors construct an understanding in a different way. As an example, the metaphor of war can be used to rally the troops and also instill fear, whereas the metaphor of journey can be used to promote patience but lead to a lack of urgency.

2.4 Metaphorical Framing Differences in Ideology

It has been found that there is a difference in the use of metaphors among political ideologies. Lakoff contends that conservatives and liberals employ dissimilar frames when conveying political matters (Lakoff 85). In climate discourse: Conservative discourses tend to employ economic metaphors, with their preoccupation being with costs, burdens, and regulations. Progressive narratives also prefer moral and environmental metaphors, which are more about responsibility and protection.

This difference in ideology influences the sense of society. Climate change can be viewed as a financial problem when it is framed as an economic issue; it can be viewed as an ethical issue when framed as a moral problem. The Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough reinforces this perspective in that it demonstrates that language is the manifestation of power structures and ideologies (Fairclough 37). Political speech is thus never neutral but exists within the conflict of interests and views.

2.5 Metaphor and Public Perception

Metaphors are very important in influencing the perception of the masses on climate change. Studies indicate that various frames result in distinct interpretations and reactions. As an illustration, Thibodeaux and Boroditsky show that metaphorical framing has an impact on reasoning and decision-making (Thibodeaux and Boroditsky 2).

Climate change can be viewed as a crisis and people are more inclined to take urgent action. Conversely, posing it as a problem can decrease perceived urgency. This demonstrates how metaphor is a persuasive tool in influencing societal views. Moreover, complex scientific data is simplified by the use of metaphors making it available to more people. Nonetheless, simplification can also cause misinterpretation or biased interpretation.

2.6 Limitations in the Existing Research

Even though it has been widely researched, there are still a number of limitations. To begin with, most of the studies concentrate on single metaphors and do not consider the interaction of multiple frames in discourse. This restricts the knowledge of the general effects of metaphorical framing.

Second, comparative studies of differences in political contexts and cultures are lacking. There is diversity in climate discourse but the majority of studies have taken place in the West.

Third, current studies tend to focus on linguistic examination without incorporating the cognitive and social orientation. Consequently, the generalized impacts of metaphor on conduct and policy are under-researched. According to Nerlich and Jaspal, climate metaphors are dynamic and context-specific and need more thorough and interdisciplinary analysis (Nerlich and Jaspal 102).

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

The literature reviewed emphasizes a number of important points:

- Metaphors are mental devices that influence comprehension and thinking.
- Metaphors in political discourse are effective in persuasion.
- Climate change is framed in several metaphorical realms.
- The choice of metaphor is affected by ideological differences.
- Metaphors have great influence on the perception and policy support of the masses.

Nevertheless, there are still blank spaces in comparative analysis, interdisciplinary integration, and contextual variation. This research expands on the research work by offering a more detailed discussion of the concept of metaphorical framing in political climate discourse.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

Summing up, the literature reveals that the metaphorical framing is the focus of the discourse of climate change. It affects the perception, discussion and resolution of issues within political settings. Although the existing literature offers great information, more research is necessary to understand how several metaphors interact and influence the knowledge of people.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Approach to the Methodology

The chapter presents the research design and methodology employed to examine the political discourse of climate change through the metaphorical framing of climate change. The research will take a qualitative approach with a few quantitative aspects to offer a holistic explanation of the role of metaphors in political communication. The study will focus on linguistic patterns and their cognitive implications through a combination of discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory.

Creswell states that a mixed-method/qualitative-dominant approach works well in analyzing complex social phenomena, especially when interpretation and context dominate the study (Creswell 183). Metaphorical framing is a language and thinking process; therefore, this method is suitable to realize the goals of the study.

3.2 Research Design

The research design that is used is qualitative research design, namely Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conceptual Metaphor Analysis (CMA). CDA will enable the researcher to study the ways in which language is an expression of power, ideology and social structures and CMA will help to locate and understand metaphorical mappings.

According to Fairclough, discourse analysis plays a crucial role in the realization of how language creates social realities and the perpetuation of power relations (Fairclough 37). This paper employs CDA to understand how political actors conceptualize climate change metaphorically, and CMA to determine the conceptual structures of the same. Moreover, the analytical approach of the descriptive type is used to classify and analyze the metaphorical patterns in the chosen texts.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Primary Data Sources

The data that will be used in this research is:

- Political speeches by the government leaders
- Policy documents related to climate change
- Published statements and press releases.

These sources have been chosen due to their official character of political rhetoric and a significant impact on social opinion.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique was purposive to pick the texts that are relevant and include substantial references to climate change. This approach will make sure that the data is directly correlated with the research objectives. According to Dörnyei, purposive sampling can be applied in qualitative research when the aim is not to generalize but to go into depth (Dörnyei 126).

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

3.4.1 Identification of Metaphors

The linguistic markers and the contextual interpretation were used to identify metaphors. Metaphorical constructs like fight climate change, carbon footprint, and climate pathway were examined.

3.4.2 Categorization of Metaphors

Metaphors that were identified were categorized into conceptual categories such as:

- War metaphors
- Journey metaphors
- Economic metaphors
- Moral metaphors

This classification is informed by the conceptual metaphor theory that focuses on source-target domain mapping (Lakoff and Johnson 5).

3.4.3 Quantitative Support

The study is mainly qualitative but simple quantitative analysis was done to quantify the frequency of various types of metaphors. This aids in determining prevailing patterns of framing in political language.

3.4.4 Interpretative Analysis

The last phase is the interpretation of the manner in which these metaphors make sense, shape the perception and reflect ideological standpoints. Fairclough emphasizes that interpretation plays a vital part in revealing the concealed power relations in discourse (Fairclough 39).

3.5 Study Variables

Independent Variable:

- Metaphorical framing in politics

Dependent Variables:

- Climate change perception by the public
- Policy framing and communication
- Feel and think response

These variables aid in creating a relationship between language use and its influence on understanding and decision-making.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

In a bid to make it reliable, identical criteria were employed in the identification and classification of metaphors in all texts. Several examples were discussed to ensure the same interpretation.

Validity was achieved by:

- Application of theoretical frameworks (CMT and CDA) established.
- Triangulation of results with various sources of data.
- Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data

According to Creswell, triangulation increases the validity of research results by integrating different methods and points of view (Creswell 191).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research involves the use of published political works thus, no personal or confidential information is employed. To ensure academic integrity, all sources are referenced appropriately. Transparency and proper representation of data were among the ethical practices that were adhered to during research.

3.8 Study Limitations

Although the study is designed carefully, there are some limitations it possesses:

- The scope of analysis is narrowly focused on selected texts on politics and might not be representative of all the world.

Interpretation of metaphors can be subjective.

- Quantitative analysis will focus on the number of frequencies and not elaborate statistical testing.

These restrictions indicate the possibility of additional studies using bigger data sets and more varied settings.

3.9 Summary of Methodology

This chapter has also described the research design, data collection methods, and the methods of data analysis in the research. Through qualitative discourse analysis and the conceptual metaphor theory, the study offers a systematic method of analyzing metaphorical framing in political discourse. The methodology makes sure that the linguistic patterns along with the cognitive implications are thoroughly analyzed. The following chapter will give the theoretical analysis that elaborates on how metaphor works in political communication.

5. Discussion / Analysis

This chapter is an in depth examination of the role of metaphorical framing in political language about climate change. This section is based on the theoretical frameworks mentioned above Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Framing Theory, to make sense of the patterns observed in the data. This analysis will be based on the prevailing metaphorical frames, their cognitive and emotional influence, and how they are used in constructing the narrative on societal perception and policy. Framing, as Lakoff believes, is the key to political communication since it frames the way people perceive issues and make decisions (Lakoff 70). Thus, the analysis of metaphorical framing will help to understand how the climate change is framed and presented in political discourse.

5.2 Preponderance of War Metaphors

The use of war metaphors in political speech is one of the most noticeable results. The terms fight climate change, combat global warming, and battle against emissions are used to describe climate change as a foe that has to be conquered. This framing generates the feeling of urgency and shared responsibility. Nerlich and Jaspal argue that war metaphors can be used to mobilize people to act due to their ability to create a powerful emotional reaction (fear and determination) (Nerlich and Jaspal 100). Nevertheless, this metaphor also makes the problem seem simple, as it is a simple conflict with a clear solution, which does not necessarily represent the complexity of climate change.

Critically, war metaphors can also contribute to short-term thinking, that is, action in the short term as opposed to long-term sustainability. According to Fairclough, this type of framing has the potential to influence policy priorities by focusing on urgency, rather than complexity (Fairclough 39).

5.3 Use of Journey Metaphors

Unlike war metaphors, journey metaphors show climate change as a slow process that involves a long process that needs to be worked on. The expressions pathway to sustainability, transition to green energy, and road to net zero emphasize progress, continuity, and collective collaboration in addressing climate change. Such framing promotes long-term engagement and involvement. According to Lakoff and Johnson, journey metaphors organize the knowledge by focusing on movement towards an objective (Lakoff and Johnson 6). This metaphor is used to encourage a feeling of collective responsibility and ongoing development in climate debate.

Nevertheless, the evaluation shows that the journey metaphors can decrease the perceived urgency of climate action. Political actors can minimize the risks of environmental degradation in the short term by putting climate change into a long-term perspective.

5.4 Policy Influence and Economic Framing

The metaphors of economics are very common in the political language, especially in policy arguments. The issue of climate change has been framed a lot in terms of costs, investments, economic growth, and carbon markets. This framing is an appeal to rational decision-making and is a matching of climate policies with economic interests. Lakoff states that economic framing determines the ways in which the policies are reviewed, in which the financial factors are usually taken into consideration rather than the environmental or ethical factors (Lakoff 85).

The discussion reveals that economic metaphors are especially more noticeable in the conservative discourse where climate action is commonly outlined as a financial liability. This can diminish the popular belief of environmental policies by focusing on the possible economic losses. Simultaneously, economic metaphors may be employed in a positive way as well, where climate action is viewed as a type of future investment. This goes to show how the metaphorical framing is flexible to construct various narratives.

5.5.5 Moral Framing and Ethical Responsibility

The other important discovery is the application of moral metaphors, which position climate change as a moral problem. Terms such as climate justice, responsibility, and duty to future generations highlight the ethical dimension of climate change and underscore a shared moral obligation. This framing is especially useful in the global discourse, where climate change is associated with the problem of inequality and environmental justice. Language as Norton proposes is directly related to identity and social responsibility and is how individuals place themselves in the context of larger social problems (Norton 11). Moral metaphors promote group behavior by engaging in values and not fear or economic arguments. Nonetheless, they are also effective, but they are limited to cultural and ideological backgrounds, with various audiences possibly reacting in diverse ways to moral appeals.

5.6 Multiple Metaphors Interaction

The evaluation shows that the use of a single metaphor in political discourse is not common. Rather, several metaphorical frames are employed at the same time, producing complicated and even conflicting stories. As an example, a political speech can be a synthesis of war and journey metaphors, both with a call to action and a long-term investment. This engagement is indicative of the dynamicity of discourse, in which various frames are applied to meet various audiences and purposes.

According to Nerlich and Jaspal, climate metaphors are dynamic and contextual and tend to vary with the communicative intent (Nerlich and Jaspal 102). This points out to the necessity of detailed analysis as opposed to isolated metaphors.

5.7 Cognitive and Emotional Framing Impact

The influence of metaphorical framing on cognition and emotion is tremendous. Thibodeaux and Boroditsky show that metaphors affect the manner in which people think about complicated matters and their decision making (Thibodeaux and Boroditsky 2).

The results of this paper indicate that:

- War metaphors bring about a sense of urgency and fear.
- Journey metaphors are hopeful and persistent.
- Economic metaphors bring about rational assessment.
- Moral metaphors cause a sense of responsibility and ethical concern.

Such emotional reactions are instrumental in determining the attitude of the population towards climate change.

5.8 Ideological Implications of the Use of Metaphors

Ideological character of metaphorical framing is also pointed out in the analysis. Political actors, choose metaphors that suit their values and policy objectives. Fairclough stresses the fact that discourse is the location of ideological conflict, and language is employed to advance certain points of view (Fairclough 37).

This can be seen in terms of economic versus moral framing in climate discourse.

For example:

Pro-environmental discourse is more concerned with responsibility and sustainability whereas oppositional discourse focuses on cost and uncertainty. This shows that metaphorical framing is not a neutral process, but rather entrenched in political ideology.

5.9 General Discussion of Results.

The results imply that the metaphorical framing is at the heart of climate change discourse. Various metaphors emphasize dissimilar things about the problem and have an impact on its interpretation and resolution. According to Lakoff, frames determine what our goals are, how we plan, and what results we accept (Lakoff 72). This is evident in the climate discourse where metaphorical framing not only shapes popular opinion but also policy. The research confirms that proper communication use of metaphors depends on a keen selection of metaphors that are neither too clear nor too urgent nor too precise.

5.10 Summary of Discussion

Overall, this chapter has examined the role of metaphorical framing in political rhetoric about climate change. The major results are:

- There is overpowering of war metaphors that produce urgency.
- Journey metaphors are focused on long-term development.
- Policy debates are influenced by economic metaphors.
- Moral metaphors emphasize moral responsibility.
- There are several metaphors that interrelate to form intricate stories.

These results indicate that metaphor is an effective device in political communication, which influences perception and behavior.

6. Conclusion

This paper has focused on how metaphorical framing can influence political speech on climate change. Through Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Framing Theory, the study examined the ways in which the language of metaphors is used by political actors to create meaning, shape popular opinion, and direct policy debates. The results show that climate change is not being

conveyed as a strictly scientific phenomenon but rather as a socially constructed problem through language. War, journey, economic and moral frames are metaphors that are commonly employed to streamline the complex processes that take place in the environment and make them easily comprehensible to the masses. Metaphors are ways of organizing human knowledge by associating abstract ideas with the experience one recognizes (Lakoff and Johnson 5).

6.2 Key Findings

The analysis revealed that there were some important trends in metaphorical framing:

- One: There is a prevalence of war metaphors in political language, which generates urgency and mobilization, but tends to simplify the problem.
- Journey metaphors help to focus on long term development and collaboration but can decrease the feeling of urgency.
- Economic metaphors: Economic metaphors describe climate change as a cost and benefit issue, which affect policy discussions and decision-making.
- Ethical responsibility and environmental justice are emphasized in moral metaphors and promote engagement based on values.

The results prove that metaphorical framing is not neutral, as it influences the perception and response to climate change. According to Nerlich and Jaspal, metaphors lead to interpretation and determine the reaction to environmental problems (Nerlich and Jaspal 100).

6.3 Theoretical Implications

The proposed research is a contribution to the theoretical debates in the field of linguistics and political communication as it exemplifies the interrelation of cognition, discourse, and ideology. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory describes the way in which metaphors are organized in thought, and the Critical Discourse Analysis describes how metaphors are organized in power and ideology (Fairclough 37). Framing Theory also demonstrates how selective reporting of information has an impact on interpretation (Entman 52). These frameworks taken together establish the truth that metaphorical framing is a cognitive as well as a political process. Frames as Lakoff states not just determine how issues are perceived, but also how solutions are envisioned and applied (Lakoff 72).

6.4 Practical Implications

The implications of the findings to policy-makers, communicators and educators are significant:

- To policymakers: To communicate effectively, metaphors must be chosen carefully to avert a sense of urgency and clarity, yet not to oversimplify complex problems.
- To media and communicators: Understanding of framing strategies can enhance the participation of the people and encourage them to make informed decisions.
- To teachers: Teaching critical discourse awareness allows people to become aware of how language shapes perception and opinion.

Fairclough emphasizes that discourse must be comprehended to reveal the existence of hidden forces and foster a more open communication (Fairclough 39).

6.5 Study Limitations

The study has some limitations:

- The discussion is restricted to selected political texts and could not be applied to all the world discourse.
- Interpretation of metaphors is subjective to some extent.

- The research is based more on qualitative analysis than on quantitative measurement. These restrictions imply that more studies are necessary to increase the breadth and depth of study.

6.6 Future Research Recommendations

Future research needs to investigate:

- Cross-cultural differences in metaphorical framing of climate change.
- Metaphor frequency and effectiveness quantitative analysis.
- The impact of digital media in climate discourse.
- Longitudinal research on the development of metaphor use.
- These studies will be more informative on the effects of language on environmental communication.

6.7 Final Conclusion

To sum up, metaphorical framing is a key factor in the political discourse about climate change. It affects the perception, reporting and resolution of the issue on both personal and institutional levels.

The paper shows that metaphors are effective mental mechanisms that influence perception, bring emotions, and transform the decision-making process. Their usage, however, also poses a challenge as various metaphors may result in various interpretations and policy outcomes.

With climate change remaining a major issue in the world, communication is becoming more imperative. Communicators and policymakers need to be aware of the effects of metaphorical framing and apply it appropriately to enhance correct unbiased perception and effective change.

Finally, effective communication in climate needs to be a balance of simplification and accuracy, urgency and reflection. Because issues are perceived and responded to in the manner of their framing, metaphor is central to the formation of the future of climate discourse, as Lakoff points out (Lakoff 70).

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