

# Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards The Islamic World: An Analysis

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## Abstract

The majority population of Pakistan is Muslim, and Pakistan claims that Pakistan is the Islamic Republic. That's why an article in the chapter of Public Policy of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 says that Pakistan will maintain its relationship with Muslim Ummah and establish peace for the Muslim community. The determinant of Pakistan's foreign policy also moves around the building relationship with the Muslim world. The following article evaluates and discusses the relationship of Pakistan with the Muslim states and their leadership. Although the Muslim world consists of almost 57 states, this article mainly deals with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Libya, Afghanistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, UAE and Central Asia. The article discusses the historical relationship status and evaluates the current relationship of the states mentioned above with Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Pakistan, Muslim, Relationship.

## Introduction

The Muslim world is spread from Indonesia to Morocco and consists of four continents, i.e. Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. Every fourth person in the world is Muslim. So, the Muslim world is a significant part of the world because of its population, geography, military competence and natural resources. The Islamic world consists of more than 50 states around the Mediterranean Sea, Oceans of Africa and Asia. All of these states have sufficient agricultural, natural and technological resources. The population of these states is well-educated and charismatic and can change the world order. Many Middle Eastern and Central Asian Muslim states are rich in Black Gold (Oil), Gas and Coal. The total trade of the Muslim world is more than

110 Billion dollars around the globe and 14 Billion dollars within the Islamic World. Muslim states spend 0.5% of the GDP on education. Muslim World also has enough defensive technology and resources but focuses on peaceful methods of conflict resolution. The Muslim world also has many issues where non-Muslim states are suppressed and torture Muslims, such as in Afghanistan, Palestine, Kashmir, Rohingya, Syria, Yemen and Chechnya. Unfortunately, Muslim states only have verbal unity. Corruption and incompetent political leadership are the main issues of the Muslim world that affect the unity of the Muslim world. The Muslim population is also divided on sect bases and interpretation of Islamic laws and Sharia (Ali & Abideen, 2015).

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of the most vigorous state of the Islamic world. Pakistan is a state of more than 96% Muslim population and Islam as the state religion. In the creation of Pakistan, Islam played a vital role; even before the creation of Pakistan, Muslim leaders of the Subcontinent stood with the ottoman empire and raised funds for the empire. So, Muslim brotherhood is in the DNA of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan. Article 40 in Chapter 2, "Principles of Policy" of the Constitution of 1973 of Pakistan entitled "Strengthening bonds with the Muslim world and promoting international peace" states that "The state shall endeavour to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic unity, support, the common interests of the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, promote international peace and security, foster goodwill and friendly relations among all nations and encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973)."

Since the creation of Pakistan, the state has been working for the unity of the Muslim world and has emerged as a leader of the Muslim world. To gain this title, the state invested and organized many unofficial meetings between Muslim states and faced many hurdles from the world. The international society was divided on forming a robust Islamic world and a forum for the Islamic world where Muslim states unite and talk about their issues. Even the Muslim states like Egypt and Indonesia had some questions about Pakistan's efforts for Islamic unity. Because of the Pak-afghan issues, Afghanistan was also against the idea of Pakistan as leader of the Islamic world. After all these efforts, Pakistan finally cultivated brotherly relations with Iran, Turkey and Saudia Arabia. And now Pakistan has normal foreign and diplomatic relations with the rest of the Islamic world (Rizvi, 2004).

Pakistan is the only Muslim nuclear state in the world, and its nukes are also famous as the "Islamic Bomb." Pakistan's nuclear strategy consists of being the most rigid Muslim state and protecting the Islamic world. In 1978, Pakistan's

former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave the "Islamic Bomb" idea in his speeches. Later on, his successor General Zia-ul-Haq also claims that "around the world, only Non-Muslim states have Atomic Power. If Pakistan creates its own nukes, it boosts up the power of Muslim states worldwide" (Pattanaik, 2003). Because of these claims, Pakistan received the attention and support of the Islamic for collective deterrence or "Islamic Deterrence."

After all these efforts, Pakistan rightfully claims the leadership of the Muslim world. Pakistan continuously tries to fill the bridge between Islamic states and have delightful relations with Shitti states and Sunni states. The Prime Ministers of Pakistan always speak up for Kashmir and Palestine on international forums such as UNO and other platforms, and Muslim states also respect the Pakistan and Pakistani leadership. This chapter further focuses on the relationship of Pakistan with different Muslim states in detail.

### **Historical Background**

The first Islamic States was established by the last holy prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in Arab in Asia. After that, Islam spread in different continents in a few centuries and gave famous scientists, philosophers, historians, tourists, astronomers, mathematicians, traders, artists, architectures, geographers, etc. etc. surgeons and doctors. After the rise of the Mongols European Empire's colonization, the Muslim world stayed behind in industrialization and technological revolution.

Traders and Suffies spread Islam in the Indian Sub Continent. Muhammad Bin Qasim was the first Muslim invader. He invaded Subcontinent in 728 AD. After him, many other Muslim Emperors around the region invaded the Subcontinent and established Muslim dynasties for thousands of years. After the British colonization of the Subcontinent, In 1906 first Muslim political party developed in the region named the All India Muslim League (AIML). Since Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah started the struggle for a separate nation for the suppressed population of the Subcontinent, he

followed the policy of solidarity and brotherhood with Muslim nations (Sattar, 2020). Quaid-e-Azam advocated for Khilafat in the Ottoman Empire and supported India's Khilafat Movement. He also became the voice of Muslims and advocated against the wickedness of European powers at the international level.

Muslim leadership of the Subcontinent always spoke for the people of Palestine even before the creation of Pakistan. In 1945, Quaid-e-Azam addressed the issues of Palestine in his speech and said, "I have no enmity against the Jews...But why should the Arabs be dumped with such a large number of Jews?". After becoming the Governor-General of Pakistan, Quaid sent the message to President Truman and showed his jolt on the decision of UNO. He questioned the partition of Palestine and showed his and his nation's support for the people of Palestine. After that, solidarity with the Muslim world and support of the Muslim world became the objective of Pakistan's foreign policy. At the United Nations and other international forums, Pakistan always raised its voice to support "independence of Indonesia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and other former colonies." Now Pakistani leadership always spoke its heart on the issue of Syria, Chechnya, Rohingya, Kashmir and Sudan at all international and regional forum and showed their support with all suppressed Muslim community around the world. Pakistan verbally supports them and gives services as mediators host meetings to solve these issues. Pakistani people give funds to support their Muslim brothers and sisters in different regions.

Pakistan's foreign policy toward the Islamic world is driven by cooperation, peaceful co-existence, economic and technological development. Pakistan's foreign policy is further encouraged by social and cultural ties between all Muslims, Islamic unity, and brotherhood. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan also believes in collective security and mutual understanding, and peaceful conflict management in the Islamic world. So, leaders of Pakistan developed close relationships with all Islamic states globally but especially with neighbouring and regional states such as Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Kingdom of

Saudia Arabia, Libya, Central Asian Republics. All of these states also welcomed Pakistan with open hearts and supported Pakistan in achieving its Islamic unity goal.

Iran is one of the first states that recognized Pakistan, and the Shah of Iran was the first head of state to visit Pakistan after its separation. Turkey still admires the support of Muslims of the Subcontinent for the Ottoman empire. Turkey also admires that the Muslim population of India admires and supports the Kemal Ataturk. While Muslim states of southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, admire the struggle for Pakistan and backed the newly born state. After the partition of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia prayed for the state's prosperity and progress. Pak-Saudi relations are still cordial and brotherly. KSA supports Pakistan at every level. Pakistan stood with Palestine and still did not recognize Israel, so, as a result, the Muslim world supported the narrative of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. This chapter further discusses the role of Pakistan in the Islamic world and the bilateral relationship of Pakistan within the Muslim world in detail.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudia Arab (KSA) had an affectionate relationship from the beginning. Saudia Arab is the most important state of the Muslim world because of Hermain Sharifain. Every Saudi government pledged for the security and development of these holiest places on earth. Every Prime Minister and President visit Saudi Arabia and maintain a cordial relationship. In return, Saudi Government always stood with Pakistan in every situation. After Pakistan's first nuclear test, KSA was the only state which was right behind Pakistan. So to thank Saudi Arabs, Pakistan promised the security of the KSA. Saudi Arabia has a political and religious influence on Pakistan. Pakistan always tries to fill the gap between Iran and KSA to understand the two biggest blocs of the Muslim world. Pakistan and KSA signed many economic and defence agreements and MOUs. Both states have trade relations of millions of dollars. Both states stand side by side against

the war on terror and sectarianism (Sial, 2015).  
Turkey

Pakistan and Turkey have an ideal relationship. People of both states are in a relationship even before the creation of Pakistan. Turkey also has an ideal geographical location. It is in 97% in Asia and 3% in Europe (Is Turkey in Asia or Europe, 2021). So Turkey can be a gateway for Pakistan to entering in Europe. Pakistan and Turkey were CENTO members and established ECO for economic and defensive reasons. Pakistan and Turkey both speak up for issues of the Muslim world on international and regional forums and appreciate the efforts of each other. Now Pakistani television is paying Turkish dramas to develop cultural ties, and Pakistani people admire it. Now Pakistan and Turkey are developing their defensive and economic relationship. For this purpose, the president of Turkey Tayyip Eradgon visited Pakistan multiple times, signed many agreements of joint military exercises, and maintained Pakistani fleets of F-16 (Lino, 2020). Pakistan and Turkey also support each other narratives on Kashmir and Cyprus issues.

### **Afghanistan**

Although Pakistan and Afghanistan are both Muslim states, they had a pitfall relationship since the beginning. Pakistan and Afghanistan share the border of the Durand line. One of the most controversial borders is the Durand line. This border agreement was signed by the British empire and Nazim-e-Ala of Afghanistan in 1893. But now, Afghanistan claimed that this agreement was over, and Pakistan gave back the Makran and Torkham so that Afghanistan could access the sea. Even though Pakistan gave easy access to Afghanistan to water, Afghanistan disagreed and demanded more. In the 1965 and 1971's wars of Pakistan, Afghanistan remained neutral and promised not to attack Pakistan while it was already at war. After the invasion of the USSR in Afghanistan, Pakistan supported Afghanistan at the international level, opened its border for Afghan refugees and gave assistance to Afghan mujahideen. Because of Pakistan's efforts, USSR and Afghanistan signed a treaty in

1988 in Geneva to end the nine years-long war. Representatives of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and America signed this treaty. Later on, leaders of Afghanistan signed a treaty in Islamabad to appoint Burhanuddin as President and Gulbadeen Hikmatyar as Prime Minister.

After some time, Afghanistan again faced political instability, and the Taliban took over the government of Afghanistan. To continue its brotherly relation with Afghanistan, Pakistan recognized the Taliban government. Unfortunately, the instability of Afghanistan continued because of the war on terror. The USA attacked Afghanistan because of the 9/11 incident. Pakistan once again opens its border for Afghan refugees. In this twenty-year war of terror, Pakistan faced many terrorist attacks and terrorist organizations but did not stop to accommodate the issues of Afghanistan and afghanis. Pakistan recognized the first elected government of Afghanistan. Pakistan also plays its role in the peace agreement between USA and Afghanistan. And now Pakistan is looking forward to developing a cordial relationship with the new Afghan Taliban government.

### **Iran**

Pakistan and Iran are neighbouring states. Since the independence of Pakistan, the Shah of Iran has had a particular affiliation with Pakistan and supported Pakistan on various occasions. Pakistan and Iran are members of many international and regional organizations and have developed a brotherly relationship. Even though Pakistan was a member of the western bloc and the USA sanctioned Iran after its revolution in 1979, both states continued their cordial relationship. The majority population of both states belongs to different sects, but they are connected with each other. Pakistan and Iran are both the neighbouring states of Afghanistan, and both are on the same page on the Taliban government and the war on terror. Both states had opened their borders for Afghan refugees now both are facing the same problems. So in the recent era, the Pak-Iran relationship is more solid and brotherly. Under the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi, Iran has the initiative to improve and boost its relationship at regional and international

levels. So Pakistan can be the gateway to achieving Iran's diplomatic goals. Raisi's presidency wants the revival of the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), its regional role, relations with Saudi Arabia and stance on Israel's role in the Middle East." Pakistan also played its role to fill the bridge between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the past. Pakistan can play this role in the future to central Islamic states together for the prosperity of Muslims worldwide.

Pak-Iran has a bilateral trade relationship of \$359 million. Both states are ready to take steps to increase the volume of bilateral trade, including by signing a "Free Trade Agreement (FTA), setting up markets at the border region, the establishment of banking channel, elimination of illegal trade, visits of business delegations, organizing joint trade exhibitions etc." after Iran and China signed the agreement similar to the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)" and also shown interest to join CPEC with the goal to expand its trade ties with Pakistan. This cooperation can be further enhanced through more great road and railways connectivity. There is also considerable potential for energy trade. Iran also provides electricity to different regions of Baluchistan, such as Gwadar, Turbat and Makran. Pakistan also imports electricity from Iran around 100 megawatts and at times faces technical problems. This issue needs to be solved for the Baluchi people significantly since Iran has increased its electricity supply to 3000 megawatts. Pakistan and Iran are also working on bilateral security on 928 kilometres border to stop illegal trade, narcotics and terrorism (Anwar, 2021).

### **Bangladesh**

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was established on 14th August 1947, under the outstanding leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, with the help of Indian Muslims. Pakistan was divided into two divisions (East Pakistan and West Pakistan). Both of them were separated by 1600 kilometres (1000 miles). As a result, the terrible historical

event of East Pakistan's split occurred. Similarly, on 16th December 1971, Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) became a different country, while West Pakistan was renamed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

During Benazir Bhutto's first term, relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh began to improve. Benazir Bhutto and her family fled Pakistan due to political unrest. As a result of Mian Nawaz Sharif's inability to complete their reigns, ties between the two countries could not progress. In 1999, Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, visited Bangladesh and attempted to usher in a new era of relations between the two countries. The topic of eradicating painful memories from the past and resolving previous mistakes was also discussed. Although relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh are improving, there is still a lack of warmth in the relationship that should exist between two Muslim brothers. Pakistan and Bangladesh have signed several agreements relating to the advancement of science, education, culture, and agriculture (Ali & Abideen, 2015).

### **Egypt**

Pakistan and Egypt are both important states but situated on two different continents and far away regions of the world. But people of both states are connected with the thread of religion and culture, and brotherhood. During Cold War Era, both states faced a few setbacks in the brotherly relations because Egypt was following the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), and Pakistan was part of the West bloc and signed SEATO and CENTO. But after the Cold War, both states are trying to develop their relationship because of changes in geopolitics and wars. Egypt is one of the essential states for Pakistan because it is a gateway to Africa Pakistan. The government and people of Egypt want to reestablish foreign and diplomatic relations with Pakistan. Recently Pakistan organized the 48<sup>th</sup> conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s CFM. On this platform, both states come close. Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said: "We want to re-engage with Egypt in order to enhance our economic diplomacy." Pakistan's current annual trade volume of about

“\$4 billion” with Africa leaves much to be desired. Egypt can help Pakistan enter North African markets to promote items where the two countries do not compete”. A new warmth and desire to expand the scope of bilateral relations is now clearly visible”. Foreign Minister Qureshi also invited President Al Sisi to visit Pakistan, and the president of Egypt generously accepted the invitation. This successful visit will improve regional peace and pen new outlooks of bilateral cooperation (Hafeez, 2021).”

### **Libya**

Since the independence of Pakistan, Pakistan and Libya have had friendly and bilateral relationships. Especially in 1970, when Pakistan was facing a crisis because of the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan, Libya gave the loan and aid of millions of dollars to Pakistan. Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Ghaddafi of Liya had a very close relationship in the 1970s. In the same decade, both states signed an agreement on economic and cultural relations. Pakistan and Libya also gave assistance to each other “fight against floods, infection, disease and natural catastrophes (Aslam, 2013).”

Pakistan also provides the services to Libya, and almost thirty thousand Pakistani were living in Libya. In 2009, Pakistan guaranteed to send more than fifty thousand “skilled workers, carpenters, masons, electricians, steel fixers and plumbers to Libya along with engineers, architects, doctors, teachers, and other professionals.”

In 2009, Pakistan and Libya also signed “An agreement on extradition,” and different MOUs such as “MoU on Labour and Manpower, MoU on Higher Education, MoU on Human Resource Development, MoU on Political Consultations, MoU on Culture and Information, and MoU on Abolition of Diplomatic Visas.”

In 2009 Pakistan and Libya had noteworthy trade amplified in “textile, engineering, and food sectors along with leather products” are the main contributors for this increase. Pakistan imports

“chemical material and products, plastic material, other instruments and appliances” from Libya. Now for more than three decades, Pakistani workers have been working in Libya in “health, construction and public sector companies.” After the Arab Spring, the relationship of both states faced some hurdles and setbacks, but now after the revolution, both states are rebuilding their relationship. Because of the revolution, Libya faces many damages in infrastructure, so Pakistan is now assisting the brotherly state in “reconstruction and other rebuilding processes.” Libya needs expatriate skilled human resources, and Pakistan is a brother Islamic state that can meet Libya’s workforce requirements to a great extent. The export of human resources from Pakistan to Libya had considerably decreased over the years due to sanctions and recent instability, but its increment has been noted again recently (Aslam, 2013).

### **Indonesia**

Indonesia has the world’s largest Muslim population, and Pakistan is at number second on the index of Muslim Population, and both had a strategic relationship since the 1950s. Both states signed the Treaty of Friendship on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1951 in Jakarta (Asif, 2021). This treaty and Islamic unity are the bases for friendship and bilateral relationships. Indonesia and Pakistan are both members of the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN). Both states enjoy economic bilateral economic relationships. Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited Pakistan in 2018 and signed more MOU for mutual cooperation and progress of the Islamic world. After implementing the Preferential Trade Agreement 2013, the trade relationship between both states has been developed. In 2020 both states made a trade of 2.6 billion. “Pakistan largely exports cotton, raw hides and skin, semi-finished iron, rice, and citrus. Palm oil is Pakistan’s largest import from Indonesia. Coal, artificial staple filaments, paper and paperboard, betel nuts, elastic, cleanser arrangements, tea, substance items, natural, synthetic chemicals, and motor vehicles, among

other things, are other important imported items.”

Pakistan and Indonesia also signed academic MOUs. Around 1000 Pakistan students are studying “Entomology, Microbiology, Pharmacy, Biology, Biomedical Engineering, Clinical Pharmacy, Information Technology, Psychology, Electrical Engineering, Informatics and Computer Engineering” in 23 different Indonesian Universities. These efforts increased government-to-government and people-to-people relationships between both states and unity between Muslim states.

### **United Arab Emirates**

Pakistan was the first state to recognize United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1972, right after their independence. Since then, Pakistan and UAE have had cordial, bilateral relationships that revolved around economic and Muslim brotherhood. Because of this cordial and close relationship, Sheikh Zayed of UAE considered Pakistan his second home. Pakistan had provided workforce and assistance to UAE to shape the critical industries in the Emirates. Hundred of thousands of Pakistani are working in different UAE productions. This workforce assists UAE in developing its infrastructure, economy and regional security. In response, UAE gives financial support to Pakistan and invests in mega projects of infrastructure and health. UAE’s companies construct many bridges, hospitals, and airports in Pakistan; Sheikh Zaid Hospital is one example. In 1985, Pakistan International Airline (PIA) helped UAE establish its first airline, “Emirates.” PIA management gave the technical and administrative assistance and consultancy and leased two air crafts to newly developed airlines. As a token of appreciation, Emirates selected Karachi as its first international destination (Ferozi, 2021).

### **Central Asia**

Central Asia comprises five Muslim states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz Republic), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The distance between Tajikistan and Pakistan is only 16 km from Wakkhan Border (Rafiq, 2020). After the disintegration

of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asia, Pakistan fully supported central Asia and developed bilateral relations. Central Asia. Pakistan also included these states in Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1992 (Economic Cooperation Organization About ECO, n.d.) Pakistan signed many MOUs of cooperation with the states of the region. Pakistan is also part of different pipeline projects with Central Asia, such as TAPI. These projects will give prosperity and economic independence to the region and Pakistan. Pakistan and Central Asia also have people to people relationships.

### **Pakistan’s Relationship With Rest Of The Islamic World**

This chapter consistently discusses Pakistan’s foreign policy towards the Islamic world, and the following are examples of Pakistan’s diplomacy, which shows Pakistan’s efforts and abilities to lead the Islamic world.

- On Kashmir and Palestine Issues, Pakistan’s government and political leadership always stand with these states, support their stance, and speak for their freedom.
- Pakistan’s former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was the master of pan-Islamism and had a close, cordial relationship with Saudi King Faisal. This relationship resulted in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The state also organized OIC second Summit in its provincial capital Lahore in 1974.
- In the 1973 Arab-Israel war, Pakistan supported the Arab Alliance. Pakistani pilots fought with Israeli jets in aerial combat (Karim, 2021).
- In 1979, when the USSR invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan fully supported the Mujahideen and opened its border and accommodated the Millions of Afghan Refugees as the conflict escalated.
- In 1990, Pakistan also opened its border

for the Bosnian Refugees after the breakup of Yugoslavia. The state also supports the Muslims of Herzegovina and Kosovo. Pakistani soldiers also participated in UNO peacekeeping missions and fought for peace in the region.

- After the disintegration of the USSR, Pakistan recognized the Central Asian states and developed bilateral relations and brotherhood.
- To support Azerbaijan, Pakistan did not recognize Armenia because Armenia illegally occupied the area of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was part of Azerbaijan. To acknowledge the efforts of Pakistan, Azerbaijan also supports the narrative of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue at all international forums.

## Conclusion

In 1947, when Pakistan was created, and millions of Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, Islam became the ideology of Pakistan. Later objective resolution of 1949 made the Islam religion of the state, and three Constitutions (1956, 1962 and 1973) of the state supported the idea. As a result, the protection of Muslim brotherhood, building relationships with Muslim states, and promoting unity in the Muslim world became Pakistan's foreign policy objectives. To achieve its goal, Pakistan often plays the role of mediator and reconciles the issues within Muslim states and tries to fill up the gaps in the Muslim world. Geographically Pakistan is almost in the middle of Islamic states. Its borders are connected with Muslim states, and the heart of its people is connected with Muslims around the world. So, Pakistan is developing bilateral economic, social, political and technological relations with the Central Asian States, the Middle Eastern states, Muslim states in South Asia and East Asia. Pakistan also has diplomatic relations with Muslim states beyond the geographic dominion, such as Muslim states in Africa. Pakistani government

and population also support Muslims from all over the world and raise their voices for Rohingya and Yemen and Syria. So, we can say that Pakistan rightfully claims that it is the fort of Islam and leader of the Islamic world.

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