



## **A Critical Appraisal of Integrated Humanism and Political Leadership Crisis in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The persistent political leadership crisis in Nigeria is basically a crisis linked to value orientation, as the scramble for power takes pre-eminence over the service of humanity. Many political literature examines Nigeria's political leadership merely from the perspective of structural lacuna, corruption or ethnic conflicts, and by so doing, neglect the deeper philosophical gap at the centre of governance. In view of the need to mediate between material demand of governance and the ethical obligation of protecting the human well-being, this research examines critically political leadership crisis in Nigeria in the light of integrative humanism. As a philosophical framework, integrative humanism emphasizes harmonization of individual human dignity, cultural values and communal responsibility. This research states that integrative humanism can go beyond merely being an intellectual theory to serve as a pragmatic substructure for transformation of Nigeria's political leadership. The establishment of National Di-Centric Leadership Institute (NDLI) to implement "Existential Auditing" for seekers of public offices is recommended.

### **Introduction**

The persistent political leadership crisis in Nigeria is basically a crisis linked to value orientation, as the scramble for power takes pre-eminence over the service of humanity. Many political literature examines Nigeria's political leadership from the perspective of structural lacuna, corruption or ethnic conflicts, and by so doing, neglect the deeper philosophical gap at the centre of governance. This study, rather takes a philosophical approach to the crisis, by appraising critically the philosophy of

integrative humanism and its application to political leadership crisis in Nigeria. As a philosophical framework, integrative humanism emphasizes harmonization of individual human dignity, cultural values and communal responsibility. In view of the need to mediate between material demand of governance and the ethical obligation of protecting the human well-being, this research examines on how integrative humanism can go beyond merely being an intellectual theory to serve as a pragmatic substructure for transformation of Nigeria's political leadership.

### **Leadership**

The word, "Leadership" is complex and cannot be circumscribed to one particular definition. This explains why scholars define it from different perspectives. For example, leadership is defined not "merely as an act of command, but fundamentally as a unique moral relationship between leaders and followers (Ciulla, 13). In this definition, emphasis is on how power is negotiated and exercised with ethical consideration. Similarly, leadership is defined as the display of "phronesis and justice" (Aristotle, 113). This implies that Aristotle views leadership as an expression of political governance bound by morality. In other words a true leader must possess the capacity to execute duties competently while remaining strictly loyal to the common good and the virtue of governance system. Similar to Aristotelian definition of leadership is Confucius' definition. He considers leadership as a "social process driven by internal moral refinement rather than external coercion" (Confucius 74).

Aside from the ethical consideration, John Wilding adopts a social contract view of leadership. He draws a distinction between formal and informal leadership. In his view, formal leadership is a "position authorized by institutional structures," whereas informal leadership is a "fluid social process where individuals naturally align to achieve egalitarian or collective group goals. (Wilding 5). However, Niccolo Machiavelli deviates from the ethical definition of leadership. For him, leadership is "the pragmatic management of power to maintain stability, order and control over state affairs (61)." His emphasis is on pragmatic manipulation of power in aligning outcomes to secure the longevity of the state. A critical view of the above definitions suggests that definitions of leadership by Ciulla, Aristotle, Confucius and Wilding are very essential because of their ethical and social considerations, which favour the well being of citizens whereas, Machiavelli's definition of leadership should be considered with reservation, as it favours manipulation of power for the stability of the state, and not necessarily the protection of the welfare of individuals. It is necessary at this point to consider the idea of leadership crisis.

## **Leadership Crisis**

Leadership crisis has been widely conceptualized by philosophers and social theorists; and the summary of this is that leadership crisis is a deep collapse of ethical governance, decision-making capacity or structural legitimacy. Some perspectives of leadership crisis are highlighted below:

(i) **The Gramscian Perspective:** In this perspective, leadership crisis is conceptualized as "a "crisis of hegemony" or an "organic crisis" (Gramsci 276). This is said to occur when there is a loss of moral and intellectual control by the rulers over the society, losing grip of consensus and resorting solely to forceful decisions. Exhibition of self-centredness by many Nigerian political leaders, and their failure to pursue collective interest, seems to be a manifestation of loss of moral and intellectual direction of governance. This is because a leader who embraces morality and is intellectually endowed, is expected to be altruistic in approach to governance, rather than being egoistic, which is sentimental, as found among many Nigerian politicians.

(ii) **The Habermasian Perspective:** In this sense, leadership is said to be a "legitimation crisis" (Habermas 46). According to Habermas, this occurs due to failure of leadership administrative structures and political leaders to secure the needed level of mass loyalty or consensus required from the citizenry to maintain governance and implement policies.

(iii) **The Existentialist Perspective:** From this view point, leadership crisis is an institutional paralysis resulting from an inability to make authentic, decisive choices (Mabey 106).

(iv) **The Complexity and Structuralist Perspective:** From this view point, leadership crisis is a rupture in the communicative flow between leaders and followers, characterized by systematic hostility, a failure of consensus-building, and an inability to navigate complex changing realities (Lichtenstein et al. 4).

A critical view of Habermasian and complexity/structural perspectives of leadership have also shown relevance to Nigerian leadership crisis, which is characterized by inability of political leaders to communicate effectively with the masses, following their insensitivity to the plight of the masses. For this reason, they have lost the loyalty and trust of the citizenry (Achebe 1). It is pertinent to discuss Nigerian political leadership crisis.

### **Political Leadership Crisis in Nigeria**

Political leadership crisis, in this context, refers to failure of political leaders to perform their duties and obligations appropriately. Achebe (23) aligned with this view when he defined political leadership as inability of political leaders to rise up to their responsibilities. When this occurs, the interest of the masses is not assured. In many cases, failure of leadership to do what is expected of them is driven by selfish interest, leading to corruption. Insensitivity of political leaders to the plight of the common citizens and inability to carry them along in decision making have negated the democratic principle that sovereignty and legitimacy lies in the people. Political leadership crisis in Nigeria is fundamentally linked to foundational, systematic and ethical flaws. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, a highlight of its historical antecedents and instances are necessary.

### **Historical Antecedents of Political Leadership Crisis in Nigeria**

The understanding of the historical antecedents of political leadership crisis highlighted below would give a clearer picture of the root causes of the crisis.

(i) **Colonialism and the Foundational Lacuna:** It is widely stated that colonialists were not focused on building and fostering unified national consciousness among the people, instead, they concentrated on establishing structures driven by economic exploitation and administrative convenience, and by so doing sowed the seed of self-centredness in Nigerian political leadership. For example, the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 was a systematic failure intended for economic exploitation (Achebe 2). This synthetic state creation produced fragmented elite class; and influenced post-independence leaders who inherited an exploitative and externalized state apparatus, rather than a system built on local consensus, converting public governance into ethnic competition for resources (Achebe 2).

(ii) **Paucity of Ethical Responsibility:** The shift from colonial rule to indigenous government in 1960, and the subsequent democratic experimentations of democracy within the First and Second Republic revealed cases where regionalism and self interest dominated ethical obligations of political leaders to the people. Prominent scholars like Chinua Achebe argued strongly that the "trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" due to an "unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility" of personal example (1). The idea of "personal example" as used here, depicts exemplary leadership, which is not visible in Nigeria's political leadership. For example, there were manifestations of ethnic fragmentation and election rigging during the First Republic (1960–1966), and these highly degenerated into the 1964–1966 political turmoil and the Nigerian Civil war.

**(iii) Military Autocracy and Institutional Decay:**

Recurring military interventions with specific reference to 1966 and 1983, brought a command-and-control political culture that disrupted democratic structures and introduced dictatorship to political administration (Asaju 118). The suspension of constitutions and entronement of decree-based governance collapsed public morality and institutional checks and balances (Ijewereme 28 ).

**(iv) The Fourth Republic: "Sharing the National Cake" and Timocracy**

The return to democracy right from 1999 ushered in excessive and ambitious pursuit of accumulated wealth among political leaders to the neglect of their moral responsibility to the masses. In fact, the leadership crisis of this period has been characterized as a "crisis of public morality" and "political godfatherism" (Muhammad 140). The collapse of public morality and entronement of political godfatherism resulted in the shameless ideology of "sharing the national cake" (Muhammad 140). Rather than embracing wisdom, knowledge and self-restraint, the contemporary political leaders relies on "whoism" ideology where political position is dependent on wealth, godfatherism and personal aggrandizement, thus making governance transactional.

The above historical antecedents gave rise to negligence of political leadership responsibilities in many areas, including lack of transparency and accountability, nepotism and favouritism and internal party crisis, leading to neglect of good governance and infliction of hardship on the masses. Further instances are as follows:

**(i) Dethronement of Transparency and Accountability:** Looking at the issue of transparency and accountability, it is irrefutable that Nigerian political leadership has fallen apart. For, example, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on his first day in office, declared the removal of fuel subsidy, but cannot explain vividly how this subsidy removal has impacted positively on the economic lives of the common citizens. This explains why the labour unions had protested against fuel subsidy removal due to "lack of transparency and a history of corruption in government spending" (Okwa et al, 95). In a similar way, Budget Transparency Advocates reported that Tinubu-led government has failed to publish quarterly reports of budgets implementation for 2024, describing the situation as "troubling and unprecedented" (West Africa Weekly, 16). The Nigerian governors are also noted to have failed in publishing comprehensive reports on their utilization of public funds (Oladele 159).

**(ii) Enthronement of Nepotism and Favoritism:** Nepotism and favouritism also constitute political leadership crisis in Nigeria. These involve unfair offer of

opportunities and privileges to specific persons at the expense of others based on ethnic bias and personal relationship (Nwoko *et al* 274) An instance is found in political appointments, particularly , during the regime of Muhammadu Buhari in which majority of Service Chiefs were appointed from the Northern region of the country ( Udehet *al* 60). In terms of job recruitment in Nigeria, merit is thrown away at the expense of ‘man know man’ syndrome. Here job opportunities are offered to people not because they are qualified for the job but because of godfatherism or personal relationship with the recruitment authorities. When this happens, there is no hope for the common man, who may be qualified for the job, but lacks a sponsor.

**(iii) Party Crisis:** Internal party crisis also forms part of political leadership crisis in Nigeria. When political parties have internal conflicts within them, such would distract opposition parties from offering constructive criticism against any form of bad governance that may be exhibited by the ruling party. Also, the ruling party would be distracted from good governance. One major cause of political party crisis is the struggle for control of party structure. For example, upon the expiration of the tenure of the National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Umar Damagum, Wike - led faction took over the secretariat of the party, created their own leadership structure and instigated a serious disarray, leading to series of court cases. In the Labour Party crisis, Julius Abure-led faction is alleged to have hijacked the party structure; and is strongly opposed by a 29 member caretaker committee constituted in late 2024. This committee is backed strongly by prominent members of the party like Governor Alex Otti and the 2023 Presidential candidate, Peter Obi (Badejo 17).

The crisis rocking the African Democratic Congress (ADC), is allegedly due to rejection of David Mark as the National Chairman of the party. Recently, “some state chairpersons of the party unveiled an interim national leadership of the party and endorsed the Independent National Electoral Commission’s recent action against the David Mark-led faction, and the other by Nofia Bola” (Eboesomi 4). All Progressive Congress (APC) is not free from internal crisis despite its status as the ruling party in the country. The struggle for leadership positions, party structure and inclusion among legacy members, power brokers and defectors constitute the crisis in the party (Abu 7). For example, the CPC block of the APC protested that its members were not included in the appointment of people into strategic leadership positions in government, despite their fundamental roles for the emergence of the APC as the ruling party. Hence, the members of the CPC bloc demanded firmly for national chairmanship position in the APC, recommending one of its members, Umar Tanko for the position (Emmanson 13). According to Daily Nigerian (10), Some defectors are also scrambling for positions of relevance in the party. This has brought tensions

into the party, thus diverting the attention of the ruling party from the plight of the citizens.

A critical view of political leadership crisis in Nigeria, as revealed in the above instances, among others, has shown that the political office holders have derailed from their primary responsibility of caring for the welfare of the masses and rather used the machineries of governance for personal aggrandizement. This is why this research attempt to use the philosophy of integrated humanism. Before this, an overview of integrated humanism is expedient.

### **An Overview of Integrative Humanism**

Integrative humanism is a system of philosophy which perceives reality as possessing both physical and spiritual attributes. It is considered as an organized and unified system through which views that appear to be conflicting are welded together so that harmonized knowledge and development may be guaranteed (Ozuma and Chimakonam 6). Integrative humanism received insights from mathematics, electronics and Njikoka Amaka, an Igbo expression (Ozumba and Chimakonam. 6). Mathematically, the word, "integration" is said to be rooted in the word, "integers", meaning whole number. According to Mamadu Titus (46), "The idea of 'whole' is due to the relation of the parts in a unified system or structure". On the basis of this, the integrativists claim that theories, even when they seem to be opposing, could be unified as one reality, depending on their relevance to a given context. In relating electronics to integrative humanism, mention is made of integrated circuit, which is said to reveal the interconnectedness of electric wires on the board, which makes it possible for signals to be sent to the main substrate, which is controlled to produce sound and other electronic operations. Inspired by the electronic integration, the integrativists admonish that steps towards bifurcation of realities should be retraced, except where it is leading to a meaning analysis.

As the third insight for integrative humanism, the word, "Njikoka" is an Igbo word, interpreted as "Group power or identity". Here, "the emphasis of this concept is on group identity rather than individual identity or group strength as in Nmekoka" (Chimakonam, 79). In Ozumba's and Chimakonam's words, "Group identity could mean the aggregate resource potential in meaningful or rational multitude which results in power" (8). The crux is that where there is unity, co-operation and common understanding, better results would follow a given task. In other words, team effort produces better outcome than individual's, when an assignment is carried out. This then leads to "insightful" Igbo injunction, "Njikoka Amaka", which is said to be translated as: "to integrate is better than to disintegrate". On this injunction, the integrativists advocate that theories should be investigated widely by philosophers for familiarity with and good integration of these theories for an enhanced perception of reality. The integrativists, however, call for the transformation of

“Njikoka Amaka” from hypothetical to categorical injunction, to ensure its philosophical relevance.

### **The Logic of Integrative Humanism**

Research reveals that integrative humanism, as an African philosophy operate on African logic, the root of which is African thought system. African thought system relates to the sum total of the fundamental beliefs and assumptions that provides the framework upon which Africans perceive realities. This logic in question is said to be a three-valued logic, within which a proposition can be true, false and both true and false, depending on the context. The point is that the three-valued logic of the African type is not subjected (in a strict sense) to the principle of contradiction, as it is the case in the western two-valued logic. The emphasis of African logic is on the third value, which is considered to be integrated. This reflects in one of the principles of integrative humanism which states that “A theory which fails in one context has another context it passes or fits” (Ozumba and Chimkaonam, 16).

It is pertinent to clarify that integrative humanism recognizes as theories only the position statements that can work in an organized humanist society. So, integrated value, which is a product of the African three-valued logic, is considered to be the logic of integrative humanism, since it is noted to establish a link between two sub-contrary values. Its eclectic and contextual approach to realities, according to the proponents of integrative humanism, attract the name, “Njikoka” logic, as it perceives reality as that which should not be strictly polarized, but multidimensional, with contextual inter-dependence. Realities in this sense are said to complement one another in a way that does not call for contradiction. Guided by the African logic, the integrativists say that knowledge is not limited to the physical realities but that it goes beyond to include spiritual and other forms of realities. This, perhaps, it related to the view that “Truth like values springs from the physical realm unto the transcendental realm” (Okeke, Asuo and Agu, 54). Let us relate this to the integrativist description of man as a being unto eternity, which we intend to discuss briefly.

### **Man as Being unto Eternity: Integrativist Perspective**

The idea of man as a being unto eternity is predicated on the fact that man’s stay in the physical world is temporary and a preparation for a permanent existence in the spiritual world. This is the view of the proponents of integrative humanism. For them, every existence is purposeful and man, being part of existence, has purposes for which he exists. The integrativists further claim that man’s grand purpose cannot be fulfilled in “Uwamgbenta” but in “Uwamgbeebi-ebi”. It is pertinent here to clarify that Uwamgbenta and Uwamgbeebi-ebi are Igbo expressions used by the integrativists to describe the transitory world and eternal world

respectively. As earlier noted, man's existence in the transitory world is said to be momentary and a journey into the eternal world, the success of which depends on his ability to surmount hindrances or obstacles. This is because he is expected to cross what is called "the bridge of darkness" (Ogwe Ochichiri) before reaching the Uwaebi-ebi, and this, in the view of the integrativists, demands prudence and caution, else he falls into what they call "the bottomless pit".

The bridge of darkness here might refer to the peak of man's trying moment, while bottomless pit might symbolize failure and inability to end the journey well. The theorists of integrative humanism, however, remarked that corrected mistakes could still lead the journey to a successful end. The integrativists further maintain that on reaching the Uwamgbeebi-ebi, man becomes Nwamgbe-ebi-ebi (eternal man) and no more Nwamgbenta (terminal man) since he had left Uwamgbenta. In Uwamgbeebi-ebi, he is said to be exposed to what is called divine light (ife di ebude), the light that is assumed to perceive every reality as one; it is considered as the only source of the real truth, unity and harmony. The integrativists maintain again that all the afore-mentioned characteristics of the divine light are due to the fact that in Uwamgbeebi-ebi, differences do not exist because every reality is united in Nke-mbuna-mbu, interpreted as the First and the Only One. Because every reality is said to be one and part of Nke-mbu, one-valued logic is said to operate here, contrary to the three-valued logic that works in the Uwamgbenta, where differences that manifest in various forms become the order of the day, making it difficult to distinguish between appearance and reality. These differences are attributed to the earthly light (ifenkeuwa), governed by the influence of time, and such is not applicable in uwamgbeebi-ebi. On the forgoing consideration, it is noteworthy that integrative humanism, as the term implies, emphasizes priority to the welfare of humans; and it becomes necessary to apply this philosophy to political leadership crisis in Nigeria with a view to making a case for Nigerians' liberation.

### **Implications of Integrative Humanism for Political Leadership Crisis in Nigeria**

This section of the research is an attempt to mediate between integrative humanism and political leadership crisis in Nigeria, in order to liberate the common masses from this crisis. For the purpose of this research, this mediation is coined by the researcher as "Integrative Political Mediation". Some scholars might argue that mediation is inherently "integrative". However, it is significant to note that conventional political mediation in Nigeria is often transactional or exclusionary, where, for example, political elites usually engage in sharing resources or power behind closed doors. The addition of the qualifier "integrative" changes the definition of mediation, and makes clearer the distinction between conventional mediation which in this context, focuses on superficial compromise, elite pacts, or legalistic arbitration, and integrative political mediation which is rooted in integrative

humanism; and its centers on harmonising conflicting realities, acknowledging marginalized voices and balancing the competing interests of the masses, rulers and the led under a unified humanistic umbrella. It is necessary to state here that integrative political mediation, as used in this research, is not an ideology different from integrative humanism, but an application of integrative humanism to address political leadership crisis in Nigeria. As a micro-level operational framework, designed to function within Nigerian political context, the framework of integrative political mediation will offer useful suggestions on how to mediate integrative humanism with Nigerian political leadership in order to liberate the citizenry from its crisis. This takes the following structural dimensions:

**(i) Mediating the Decline in Trust between the Government and the Governed:**

The trust deficit exhibited by the citizens of Nigeria is due to a disconnect between the political actors and the common masses, amplified by lack of transparency and accountability in governance. The framework of integrative political mediation calls for a harmonization of state power and human dignity. It could be recalled that integrative humanism stresses the wholeness of the human experience, mediating material needs with spiritual, ethical and communal well-being. In integrative political mediation, it implies that there should be a radical shift from perceiving governance as a top-down exercise of power to viewing it as a continuous mediated relationship of mutual reliance. In this sense, political leaders must consider themselves not as rulers, but as "trustees of collective human dignity." In a pragmatic sense, all policies must be citizen-oriented; if the assessment of the policy reveals that it would not impact the vulnerable positively, such must be eradicated, ensuring that political survival is tied directly to the well-being of the masses.

**(ii) Shift from Nepotic Exclusivity to Merit-Based Inclusivity:** It could be recalled that this article had identified nepotism and tribal sentiment as instances of political leadership crisis in Nigeria, and their effects on the citizenry. Situating these within the ideals of integrative humanism implies that there should be a radical shift in governance from "Sectarian Particularism" to "Integrative Communalism". For example, sectarian governance operates on nepotism, where infrastructure and appointments are influenced by tribal sentiment, whereas integrative communalism demands that resources be deployed based on human need and demographic realities. In this sense, execution of projects in different communities should be based on need and not on the indigenous status of the government official. For example, if a particular community is in need of clean pipe-borne water, then water project should be undertaken in that community; while the community that needs health care services should also benefit from health project, without reliance on the influence of her indigenous politicians. Similarly, employment opportunities should

be opened to qualified citizens who need job, and not only to the indigenes of a particular community due to political influence. Moreover, the communal ideals of integrative humanism demands that citizens should actively oppose sectarian policies and activities of politicians during elections and community organization, and should demand for human-centred governance to enable them break the persistent leadership crisis and compel a government machinery that honestly protect the welfare of the common masses.

**(ii) Shifting Focus from "Cake Sharing" to "Cake Baking":** It was noted earlier in this work that one of the drivers of political leadership crisis in Nigeria is "sharing" national cake" ideology. This shows that the political framework in Nigeria accommodates predatory consumption, instead of holistic human flourishing. Within the "national cake" ideology, public funds and resources are perceived as temporary goods to be shared among ethnic, regional or factional elites, instead of a resource that should be baked and nurtured for sustainability. To resolve this, integrative humanism, narrowly described as integrative political mediation, demands a radical shift from "cake sharing" to "cake baking". Since integrative humanism maintains that human beings, their environment, and their socio-political realities are fundamentally intertwined, the framework of integrative political mediation urges political actors to realize that the "national cake" ideology is unsustainable and ultimately leads to state failure. For this reason, they should see public wealth not as a loot to be divided, but as a seed capital for sustainable infrastructure, human capital development, and collective survival.

**(iv) Redefining Loyalty and Transcending Godfatherism:** Nigeria's political system is confronted with the problem of godfatherism. Here, greedy politicians who regard themselves as powerful individuals (Godfathers) use their wealth and influence to bring puppets into governance. By so doing, they prioritize personal loyalty over public service. Being a philosophical framework that balances human values, spiritual awareness, and community responsibility, integrative humanism rejects this systematic exploitation and calls for eradication of hyper-individualism that makes "godfathers" to view state resources as personal property. It calls for collective accountability and charges leaders to be accountable to the entire community, not a single political patron. It reminds that policies are designed to benefit the public good, rather than enriching an elite minority.

**(v) Transitioning from Litigation to Communal Resolution:** Party conflicts in Nigeria also constitutes leadership crisis in Nigeria, and they usually result in court cases which drag for a long time. When it happens, governance is crippled and resources wasted. Integrative humanism, in this sense calls for "the supreme value of

the human being". Here, warring party factions are charged to benchmark their compromise against tangible benefits for the masses (e.g. security, infrastructure, and job creation), instead of elite consensus. This implies that party faction's legitimacy within the party would be measured by its promotion of common good.

## Conclusion

The recurring political leadership crisis in Nigeria requires a radical transition from fragmented and self-serving governance frameworks toward a more holistic model. Integrative political mediation, rooted in the philosophy of integrative humanism offers this essential alternative through creation of harmony between individual human dignity with collective national progress. By bridging the gaps between diverse ethnic, ethical, and political factions, this framework restructures leadership not as an exercise in absolute power, but as a collaborative, human-centred service. Ultimately, adopting an integrative humanist framework provides a practical roadmap to tackle political instability, promote genuine national unity, and guarantee sustainable development.

## Recommendations

In order to go beyond the persistent leadership crisis in Nigeria, this article recommends that a National Di-Centric Leadership Institute (NDLI) be established. The institute should be saddled with the responsibility of executing "Existential Auditing" for public and those seeking election into public offices. Transcending conventional anti-corruption clearance, this model aligns with the basic principle of integrative humanism — the unification of the "noumenal" (inner moral/spiritual conscience) with the "phenomenal" (external material governance). Existential auditing would demand for candidates' defence of a public "Social-Ontological Impact Pledge," transitioning political value orientation from material wealth and ethnic domination to measurable human value orientation that can be measured. Institutionalization of this di-centric assessment would offer Nigeria the ability to move beyond a political culture of transactional political leadership rooted in materialism to a holistic humanist framework upon which leadership becomes a service both to the physical well-being and the dignity of the masses.

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