



DEMOCRACY, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE: A MEANS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to synthesis the fast growing research in the field of Democracy, leadership and Governance towards the attainment of Sustainable Development in Nigeria. The paper relies on secondary source of data in an attempt to beam a searchlight on the research topic. Nigeria is a country blessed with great and abundant human, natural and mineral resources with potentials to be a great country. Despite these abundant human and natural resources, the country suffers from the problem of good and effective leadership cum democracy which could guarantee good governance that will enhance Sustainable Development, and that can harness and manage these resources judiciously in order to facilitate socio-economic development of the country. As a result of poor leadership drive, bad governance and inability to imbibe consolidated democratic values, the country remains one of the third world countries with problems relating to deficit of basic social and infrastructural amenities. The leadership problem which culminated into bad governance and epileptic democratic practices has not made sustainable development achievable. These vices are manifested in leadership failure, poor governance, insecurity related problems, electoral violence, policy summersault, corruption, unemployment and wide spread poverty. In essence, this study is carried out with a view to enhance the understanding of the parameters and contents of Sustainable Development in order for Nigeria to key into the current waves of Sustainable Development Goals among the comity of nations. The paper concludes that for Nigeria to reach the goals of Sustainable Development, the country needs responsible leadership, and a properly coordinated democratic principles and good governance apparatus in all ramifications.

KEY WORDS: *Development, Democracy, Leadership, Governance, Sustainable, Sustainable Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Generally, democracy involves the opportunity to participate in decision making in the political process. It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianisms. It entails the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values. Democracy, whether liberal African or modern includes fundamental recognition of peoples sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and, more essentially, periodic elections (Oke, 2005). The concept of democracy affords workers the opportunity to participate in decision making by all adult citizens. The citizen enjoys widespread participation in the political process. Democracy

provides a veritable platform for the entrenchment and consolidation of good governance through institutional correspondents of citizens' participation.

Nevertheless, the ongoing democratic experiment in Nigeria is yet to engender good governance, as a result of the increasing rate of poverty that rose from 17.7 million in 1980 to 34.7 million in 1985, 67.1 million in 1996, 70 million in 2004 and well over 70 million in 2011 (Omotoso, 2011). To worsen the situation, as at November 2019, it was reported that Nigeria is the capital of poverty stricken people in the world (The Nation, 2019).

This coupled with the high rate of employment, inflation, deteriorating social institutions and structures, as well as increasing population, which is due basically, to the specific policy choices and



strategies pursued by the Nigerian government.

These include deliberate withholding of resources, both fiscal and jurisdictional, from states and local entities for political and ideological reasons, central bureaucratic rigidity and weakness; a turbulent economic and policy environment which has undercut local institutions; absence of complementary reforms needed in national administrative lawsystem, unprecedented electoral violence in Kogi and Bayelsa and underdeveloped local civil society that has left local government "reckless" as they try to develop policy and deliver services (World Bank, 2004:).

In the original Greek, democracy is associated with ideas as well as with a form of rule. Even though the meaning of democracy has changed over time, the classic Greek conception of it viewed it as rule by the people (Held, 1996). The Greeks left no one in doubt about who the people are. For example, Aristotle argued that democracy "exists where the sovereign authority is composed of the poorer classes and not the owners of property" (Aristotle, 1981). It is noteworthy that the word democracy derived from the combination of the Greek noun *demes*, meaning 'people or common people' and the verb *kratein*, that is, to rule. Thus, even though democracy in Ancient Greece was associated with all citizens, it was nevertheless understood to be a form of class rule. That is, government by and for the benefit of the lower or working class. It was meant to cater for all adult citizens especially those without property.

Democracy, according to Lineberry (1993), is a form of government that stipulates the modalities for selecting policy makers and organizing governments to ensure that policy represents public preferences as well as corresponding to same, while governance is an exercise of economic, political and administrative authority at both micro and macro levels. It includes the mechanism, processes and institutions, through which the national and individual groups are able to communicate their interests, make use of their constitutional and legal rights besides meeting their obligations and mediating their differences (Sahni, 2003). Anchored on socio-political principles like freedom, human rights and rule of law, democracy is deemed the best form of government.

Given its appealing prospects, democracy has become evidently relevant in the contemporary world's governance. Thus, nations operating other forms of government have over time either strongly sought democracy or are compelled to do so by external forces. Dissatisfied with a long-term period of military rule, Nigerians clamored for democratic rule and the nation has since 1999witnessed civilian transitions of power within democracy. For Nigerians, the beauty of

their hard earned democracy lies in its proclivity towards integral and sustainable national development. The thrust of democracy anywhere is determined hugely by the manner and style of leadership by which the system of government is run. Any democracy driven by bad leadership not only stunts nation building but engenders expedition for political alternatives. From a philosophical stance, this paper critically examines Nigerian democracy and identifies corruption as a major leadership problem be deviling Nigerian nation building. It proposes attitudinal-change based orientation of leadership for service as more dignifying and rewarding which in turn enhances progressive and sustainable development of Nigeria and indeed Africa.

Conceptual Clarification

The definition of democracy depends on the perspective from which it is being considered, as it means different thing to different people in different contexts. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau are popular social contract theorists who conceptualized political institution to entail organic transition from the precarious state of nature to civil society. Whereas Hobbes conceived of an unappealing commonwealth of absolute monarchy, Locke thought that the natural rights to life, liberty and property are to be best preserved in a democratic system of government. Prior to the era of modern philosophy, theories of democracy were manifest in the ancient Greek political thoughts "...as rule by the citizens in general(nevertheless excluding women and of course slaves) in contrast to government by the rich and aristocratic." (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 2005). In the *Republic* Book VI, Plato graded democracy below oligarchy, monarchy and aristocracy for lacking the enterprise and expertise for adequate governance of society. He was apprehensive that, in a democratic rule, those who are expert at winning elections and nothing else will eventually dominate democratic politics. Aristotle considered democracy (rule by the people) the most moderate form of government besides monarchy and oligarchy. Whereas monarchy remains the tyrannical instruments of kingship, oligarchy is a form of aristocracy favouring mainly the rich, but democracy is the rule to the advantage of the poor. In Book IV, Chapter four of his *Politics*, Aristotle enunciated forms of democracy. In his words: There are several kinds of democracy. The first set is based particularly on equality, where the poor and the well-off are treated equally and the majority rule since both groups have equal authority to rule. Other kinds of democracy include having the rule of law but allowing all to take part in offices, or allowing the multitude and not the law to have authority. In such a case, "the people become a monarch, from many combining into one." Properly



speaking, however, such an arrangement is not really regime, because "where the laws do not rule there is no regime."

The contemporary popularity of democracy with much emphasis on rule of law, freedom and rights tends to have evolved from the Lockean social contract thesis with its stipulations of the prevalent democratic arms of government- the executive, legislative and judicial. Considered as a mainly constitutional driven system of government, Locke vested much of democratic importance to the legislature in view of its participatory role. Given its participatory and liberating tenets together with its developmental prospects, democracy has its Lincolnian definition as government of the people, by the people and for the people and adjudged the best form of government. Zakka (2014) puts it that: Throughout history, the most important aspects of

democratic way of life have been the principles of individual equality and freedom. Accordingly, therefore, citizens in a democracy should be entitled to equal protection of their persons, possessions, and rights; have equal opportunity to pursue their lives and careers; and have equal rights of political participation. In addition, the people should enjoy freedom from undue interference and domination by government. They should be free, within the framework of the law, to believe, behave, and express themselves as they should as they wish. Democratic societies seek to guarantee their citizens certain freedoms, including freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. Ideally, citizens also should be guaranteed freedom of association and assembly, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, and the freedom to work and live where and how they choose. In practice, many countries of the world Nigeria inclusive have embraced democratic rule in replacement of loathsome military regimes.

What Is Leadership?

It is difficult to define the term "leadership". It is understood that an investigator compiled a list of 130 definitions by 1949. It may not be surprising if this list has already expanded two-fold by 1982, as major researches into the leadership phenomenon have been undertaken only during this period. However, as a starting point, we may proceed with the workable definition that a leader is one who leads others and is able to carry an individual or a group towards the accomplishment of a common goal. He is able to carry them with him, because he influences their behaviour. Leadership is always a fundamental issue in any human endeavour. It is vital to the actualization of dreams and vision whether at micro or macro level. He is able to influence their behaviour,

because he enjoys some power over them. They are willing to be influenced, because they have certain needs to satisfy in collaboration with him.

Leadership within Nigerian Democracy

Almost sixty years after independence, Nigeria is still battling with so many debilitating problems as unemployment, poverty, infrastructural decay, corruption, electoral frauds, political debacle, insurgency, insecurity, militancy, dependency on monolithic source of revenue and many other problems that are tied closely to inefficient and ineffective leadership style and bad governance. It has however been stressed by scholars that for any country to achieve growth and development socially, structurally, economically and technological wise, its leaders have to be effective and efficient in the art of governance or service delivery to the generality of its population. This is absolutely important because everything rises and ends at the table of the leader. In fact, leadership ability to a very large extent determines the progress of nations in every area of their endeavour as a country and the key to success in such endeavor is the ability to lead others successfully.

Although, the various definitions of leadership revolve around the ability to organize individuals for the achievement of a common goal, the trait theory of leadership, which projects the idea that leadership is based on individual attributes, was prevalent in the earlier scholarly period as a seeming response to Plato's quiz of the constituent quality of a leader. Unable to subsist the attendant 'leaders are born' versus 'leaders are made' debate, the trait theory has, over the era, competed with alternate theories. Prominent scheme of the post-trait theories is to present vigorously a situational leadership philosophy. Leadership roles and dispositions vary with given situations. Leadership variation is as natural as existential situations and leaders, whether substantial or developed, are situational emergency leaders. Certain existential circumstances turn out concomitant leadership features. Within the political setting, leadership tends to strongly equate ruler ship. Any political setting guided by laws presupposes ruler ship. Hence various systems of government embody appropriate ruler.

In his article, "Leadership Philosophies", Kimberly Pendergrass (2013) adumbrated nine leadership traits one of which is the democratic (participatory) leadership philosophy. He maintained that, a leader who practices this leadership philosophy offers guidance to organization members while still being a part of the group. This type of leadership is democratic, considerate, participative, and consultative. It focuses on creating and maintaining good working relationships that are supportive and interactive.



Followers are encouraged to participate and engage with the decision making process and their input is considered. This results in the group being more motivated and creative as a whole. This kind of leadership is supposedly the vision of Locke, Rousseau and Mill's theories of democracy. Leadership in the democratic system of government remains the exercise of political powers within the frame of constitutional provisions duly legislated for common good. Such leadership approximates Brad Smith's (2014) view in his article "Personal Leadership Philosophy" thus: "your title makes you a manager; your people will decide if you are a leader". Leadership is not the job of putting greatness into people, but rather the recognition that greatness already exists. The role of a leader is to provide the grand challenge, create the environment and invest in the individual to inspire that greatness to emerge. Leadership is about inspiring a group of individuals to achieve extraordinary things. According to him, the qualities of a good leader include:

Integrity: I am a principles-based leader, and will always say what I mean, and mean what I say. In the end, my words and my actions should be synonymous.

Humility: Mankind has many gifts, and I do not view myself as one of them. I seek to learn from others, treat every success and failure as a learning opportunity, and strive to be a better version of myself each and every day.

Teamwork: I believe that a player that makes the team great is far more valuable than simply a great player. A team plays for a cause greater than itself or any individual, and believes that only together can we create outcomes that will echo an eternity.

METHODOLOGY

The paper relied essentially on secondary source of data in an attempt to examine the comparison between democracy and leadership practices in Nigeria. Documents on leadership roles in Nigeria as well as journals relating to environmental factors affecting leadership role in sustainable development was used. The major benefit of working with secondary information is economic and breadth of data available, which create easier way for providing comparative and contextual information that may result in unforeseen discoveries of subject matter under investigation.

DISCUSSION

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's embrace of democracy in 1999 saw the transition of political power from the grip of the military to civilian rule. The country adopted a model of democracy that is basically representative with three tiers and arms of government. Thus the exercise of political power resides mainly

within the confines of three arms of government viz; the executive, the legislature and the judiciary both at the federal, states and local governments. At the federal level, Nigeria runs a bicameral legislature of the Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate is constituted of 109 members, three of which are elected from each of the thirty-six existing States of the Federation. The House of Representatives have 360 seats drawn from federal constituencies across the country. Leadership within Nigerian democracy as in every other democracy is either by election or executive appointment. Hence, seekers of political offices either contest election or lobby for appointments.

From the inception of the Nigerian democratic dispensation of the fourth republic headed by Olusegun Obasanjo, to the present, Nigerian political leadership has witnessed civilian to civilian transitions and even from one political party to another party. Of course, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulated leadership tenures for mainly key political leadership positions occupied through elections. After the general election of 2007, Obasanjo handed over power to Late Umar Musa Yar'Adua whose administration was short-circuited by his demise in 2010. The 2011 general election propped up Jonathan Goodluck, who was vice president during Yar'Adua's tenure but sworn-in as president and completed that tenure. It was Goodluck Jonathan of PDP that handed power to another democratically elected president, Mohammedu Buhari from APC, another political party.

Despite the laudability of current sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, the question remains as to the extent Nigerian democratic leaders have justified the essence of democratic leadership. If Nigerians' clamour for democracy was propelled by the quest for good governance aimed ultimately at enhanced national development, then Nigerians must have clamored for the assurances of the general benefits of democracy. This definitely includes visions for real democratic governance. It simply entails that Nigerian democratic leaders must be disposed to lead the citizenry on the parts of rule of law, protection of human rights and freedom, enhanced public participation as well as integral and sustainable development. So far, the benefits of democratic governance are evident in Nigeria. The current rating of Nigeria as Africa's greatest economy is owed to democracy. A relative advancement in Nigerian politics rests in the actuality of successful civilian to civilian transitions within twenty years of uninterrupted democracy. On the minimum, Nigerians could presently boast of quasi satisfaction as regards, the replacement of civility of governance against the preceding military dictatorship. Aside these and more, some leadership challenges within the democratic setting are discernible.



Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria Democracy

The 1999 democratic military-to-civilian transition saw the emergence of retired army General Olusegun Obasanjo as the first Fourth Republic Democratically elected Nigerian President. That administration was fraught with a subtle militarization of a civilian government. This view is corroborated by Akuta's (2009) submission that: sincerely speaking, the only gain we have got in the past 10 years of democracy in Nigeria is simply that we have had a civilian regime. Besides it has not been truly civilian in the true sense of it. 8 years out of the last 10 years (Obasanjo's administration) was a quasi-military government because Obasanjo ruled Nigeria like a military head of state. Obasanjo's military approach to democratic rule popularized presidential arbitrary imposition of elective candidates with sheer impunity, a situation from which the citizenry developed the slogan 'selection' in place of election. The Odi military massacre of November 20, 1999 remains one of the most undemocratic and ignoble actions of that administration (Ogirisi, 2015). The military-styled democratic rule of the government which was nothing much short of despotism and dictatorship institutionalized the cankerworm of Nigerian democratic leadership- corruption. Though, the current leadership situation in Nigeria raises more questions than answer. There is flagrant disregard for the rule of law in Nigeria today, the country is being governed as it was during military regime. It is even worse now because, during the military, the constitution is suspended and this is clear and understandable to every citizen, rather than now that the current leadership appears to be pretending to be practicing democracy with nonchalant attitude and total disregards for the rule of law and flagrant disobedience to court orders. This type of attitude on the part of the present leadership in Nigeria is inimical and strange to democratic practices.

Public Sector Corruption

In Nigeria, corruption is not a term specific to the nation's democracy but a reality rooted and developed within the military era. Transparency International defines corruption as "... the use of entrusted power for private gain", corruption in any political setting represents gross betrayal of public trust. Nigeria's notoriety for Advanced Fee Fraud popularized as 419 together with the spate of economic and financial crimes germinated and sprouted within the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. Ranging from treasury looting and embezzlement of public fund to money laundering, abuse of power, bribery, the leadership of these

administrations thrived on so much corruption. Hence, researched revelations about them could be gleaned from Wiki account thus: The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida is seen as the body that legalized corruption. His administration refused to give account of the Gulf War windfall, which is estimated to be \$12.4 billion. He annulled a democratic election in Nigeria on June 12, 1993 and decided to install Ernest Shonekan as his successor on August 27, 1993 when he stepped down as head of the military regime. However, within three months of the handover, General Sani Abacha seized control of the government while Babangida was on a visit to Egypt. He lives in a very exquisite mansion in his home state (Niger State) in the Northern part of the country. The death of the general Sani Abacha revealed the global nature of graft. French investigations of bribes paid to government officials to ease the award of a gas plant construction in Nigeria revealed the global level of official graft in the country. The investigations led to the freezing of accounts containing about \$100 million United States dollars. In 2000, two years after his death, a Swiss banking commission report indicted Swiss banks for failing to follow compliance process in allowing family and friends of Abacha access to accounts and depositing amounts totaling \$600 million US dollars into the accounts. The same year, a total of more than \$1 billion US dollars were found in various accounts throughout Europe.

Nigerians clamour for democracy during the protracted military rule became an expression of the people's desire for political positive change. Most unfortunately, the corrupt leadership inherited from military rules equally permeated the democratic era. Apart from economic and financial corruption, political corruption ranks very high with the greatest feature of electoral malpractices. Being one of the greatest oil producing nations of the globe, Nigeria is economically wealthy with prosperous oil explorations and businesses. The nation's economic resource is controlled by the Federal government which makes monthly allocations to both State and local governments with a stipulated sharing formula. The control and distribution of the wealth of the nation is constitutionally placed in the hands of both elective and political appointive leaders. Despite the level of Nigeria's economic wealth, majority of its citizenry are living below poverty level. Global Development Index (GDI) continually place Nigeria at the baseline of global development. The reason remains that instead of ensuring adequate wealth distribution and national development, Nigeria's riches are confined to the coffers of few corrupt leaders.

To inflate the situation, Nigeria's political offices are so constitutionally empowered in some cases with the immunity clause that protect certain



office holders from public prosecution. With frail checks and balances and given the wide access to national wealth provided through the acquisition of political power, political offices become unduly attractive. Thus, such offices become gravely competitive as many individuals consider it avenue to gain access to the national cake. The Marxist theory of dialectical materialism in which the economic structure is the propeller of other structures plays out strongly in Nigeria democracy. The motivating factor of craze for political office is no more than self-interest of economic empowerment at the expense of common good and national development. The unfortunate situation is that those who do not possess leadership capacity seek leadership positions and often acquire power either by hook or crook. In praxis, most Nigerian democratic leaders are oblivious of either the workings of governance or the principles of democracy. The result is that Nigerian democratic setting has become a terrain of more visionless and purposeless leaders without integrity. Most unfortunately, the institutions designated with the duties of protection of democratic ideals are degraded into mechanisms for achieving corrupt objectives. The June 2003 final report of Nigeria Survey and Corruption Survey Study, Institute for Development Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (IDR, ABU Zaria), provides a practical insight into the reality of Nigeria institutional corruption (Nweke, 2001). Such institutional corruption are manifested in the following:

Rating Institutions

1. Nigerian Police
2. Political Parties
3. National and State Assemblies
4. Local and Municipal Governments
5. Federal and State Executive Councils
6. Traffic Police and Federal Road Safety Corps
7. Power Holding Company of Nigeria

One of the greatest manifestations of corruption in Nigerian democratic leadership is the inability to ensure once a free and fair election. Even the judiciary considered the last hope of the common an is equally enmeshed in collaborative corruption with the political bigwigs. Thus it is possible within Nigerian democracy for political moneybags to influence judicial decisions in order to install cohorts in power.

Ethnicity and Religion

It may not be so much out of place to hold that the 1914Lugardian amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorate to produce the present Nigerian State was the genesis of Nigeria's ethnic rift. If the formation of a nation-state should be the product of a social contract, the most feasible States must be the

ones founded on commonality. Common origin ensures the 'we' feeling to impel a nation on the path of common purpose. Stable sovereignties are anchored on homogeneity and natural sense of indigenship. Without prejudice to certain multi-cultural polities, a heterogeneous sovereignty administers its affairs with much exertion, since it struggles with the management of expanded diversity, irrespective of its presumed harmony. A country of over two hundred ethnic nationalities coalesced into three major tribe (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) with two major religions (Christianity and Islam), Nigerian governance, from the point of colonial independence, has been a display of ethnic/religious politics. Within the current democratic setting, ethno-religious politics entrench strong leadership tussle between the North (Muslims) and South (mainly Christians) giving rise to series of ethno-religious crises resulting in religious bigotry, born to-rule orientation, incessant killings and wanton destruction of property, insurgency and terrorism. The Yar'Adua administration bore the stings of Niger Delta militancy guised as ethnic struggle for emancipation from political cum developmental marginalization. After the 2011 general election that threw up Jonathan Goodluck as President from the region of Southern minority, the nation witnessed wide post-election violence in the North where comments of making the tenure ungovernable for the President preceded the current virulent Boko Haram insurgency. The sub-division of Nigeria into six geo-political zones and introduction of federal character are measures put in place for ethnic harmony in the polity. Hence, the distribution of democratic leadership is widely guided by zoning formula at various levels. Aside the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) which is vividly an umbrella party reflecting some level of national unity, the formation of most other political parties are motivated by ethno religious factors.

Good Leadership as a Parameter for Nigeria Political Development

If democracy is deemed the best form of government consequent upon its people oriented prospects, leadership within democracy ought to reflect the will of the people. In simple terms, leadership of any democracy should basically before service. Of course service could be double-dimensional. There is apparent difference between objective service and self-service. Leadership of self-service approximates the attitudes of corrupt leaders who utilize the privileged positions of leadership for personal aggrandizement. This is the kind exhibited by many corrupt Nigerian democratic leaders a situation that results in developmental retardation of the nation. Leadership of objective service refers to purposeful leadership aimed basically at the common good. Such leadership is most



appropriate for democratic governance. For such kind to be feasible in Nigeria democracy, philosophy would prescribe adequate capacity building for prospective leaders. The designers of the 1999 Nigerian constitution which the current democracy operates, makes openness for people of low education to vie for political offices. As such, it invariably provides for even touts to occupy positions of leadership. The Nigerian constitution ought to be amended to make stipulations for quality leadership. What kind of law would an illiterate legislator make? Nigerian parliament is filled with many half educated, less effervescent and nominal legislators who only grace the seats of the hallowed chambers, collect their entitlements without any meaningful legislative contributions. Many of them are simply ignorant of the principles of democracy, let alone legislative business. Some others are just aloof because their interests are far from legislation. Although Plato did not subscribe for democracy, he placed high intellectual capacity as the greatest parameter for quality leadership which of course is found within the class of philosophers. Hence, unless philosophers become kings, the society cannot progress developmentally. Plato philosopher king postulation signifies the import of critical thinking as a requisite for quality leadership even in a democratic setting. The over concentration of political decisions at the centre necessitates quest for devolution of power and fiscal federalism.

Nigerian democratic leaders ought to be driven by the visions of common good without ethno-religious favoritism. The establishment of some institutions like Nigerian Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (NIPS) together with other activities designed for leadership capacity building is a commendable attempt. Nevertheless, critical thinking studies, with emphasis on leadership for service, are highly recommended as pre-requisite for any leadership position. Importantly, there ought to be legislation for constant compulsory leadership training for occupants of leadership offices in Nigerian democracy with pragmatic and sustainable policy implementation mechanisms. With these human development indices in place, it could be held that Nigerians can be assured of rapid, sustainable and integral development through democratic governance.

Leadership within Nigerian Democracy

The various definitions of leadership revolve around the ability to organize individuals for the achievement of a common goal. The trait theory of leadership, which projects the idea that leadership is based on individual attributes, was prevalent in the earlier scholarly period as a seeming response to Plato's quiz of the constituent quality of a leader. Unable to subsist the attendant 'leaders are born' versus

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