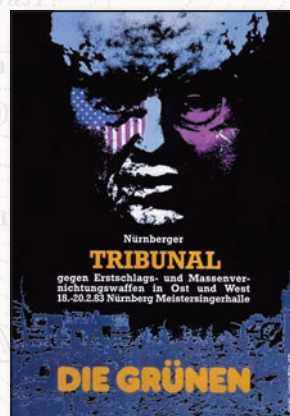


STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



Why is Germany a non-nuclear power,
and will it ever become one?

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Thomas Donnelly • Russell A. Berman

Josef Joffe • Josiah Bunting III



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DECEMBER 2015 · ISSUE 28

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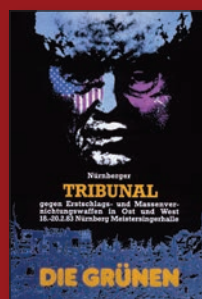
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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

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No German Bomb— at Least for Now

Thomas Donnelly

This past September, the US Air Force introduced a cache of twenty new B61-12 nuclear bombs to the Luftwaffe's Büchel Air Base in western Germany. The upgrade, part of the NATO program on nuclear "sharing," replaced a higher-yield version of the venerable B61 with a less destructive weapon, but it nonetheless sparked protest by opposition parties in Germany. "The Bundestag decided in 2009, expressing the will of most Germans, that the US should withdraw its nuclear weapons from Germany," wrote one. "But German Chancellor Angela Merkel did nothing."

Indeed she did not. Objections also came from the far right as well as the left. Willy Wimmer, a member of the Bundestag for more than thirty years and once defense spokesman for Merkel's own Christian Democratic Union party, but also noted for his anti-American and pro-Russian views, warned that the warheads gave "new attack options against Russia" and constituted "a conscious provocation of our Russian neighbors."

Why, at a time when Germans are paying painfully high energy bills to rid themselves of civilian nuclear power plants, would Merkel make such a controversial move? Not only did she approve the new B61-12 deployment, but her government has also announced that it will retain the Tornado fighter jet—also based at Büchel, where it routinely practices missions with dummy B61s—in its inventories until at least 2024.

The no-nukes movement in Germany has a deep and long history. Beyond the broader make-war-no-more ethos that stemmed from Germany's guilt after World War II, the Reagan administration's decision to deploy Pershing II missiles in Germany in the 1980s provided a focus for nuclear activists; the subsequent signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty removed the irritant along with the Pershings, but the movement endured. In the wake of the Chernobyl meltdown and the Fukushima disaster in Japan, it found its new target in Germany's nuclear power plants. That campaign proved a success—though the decision to substitute unreliable and immature renewable energy sources is playing havoc with the German energy grid and the economy.

But the anti-nuclear impulse must also be seen in light of the powerful American security guarantees, and the deployment of substantial US forces, to Germany throughout decades of Cold War. Safe under an American deterrent umbrella, Germans were free

to posture without direct or immediate consequences. But as Barack Obama folds the US umbrella, it raises incentives for Germans to rethink the question.

The fact is that Chancellor Merkel and centrist Germans have every reason to feel the need for new military and policy options to counter Vladimir Putin's aggressive moves in Eastern Europe. The continuing Ukraine crisis, in particular, has begun to shake Germany out of its post-Cold War, post-modern dream. Another, ironic measure of how Germany is changing in the direction of geopolitical "normalcy"—that is, a nation whose fundamental concerns are for its security—is the angry response to Merkel's refugee policies. Merkel's personal confusion is representative of the country's contradictions and self-doubts.

Nevertheless, Merkel is clearly striving to articulate a leadership role for Germany, with strong encouragement on the part of the Obama administration. The Greek debt crisis naturally depended upon German willingness to finance any resolution and, despite a lot of grumbling and posturing, Merkel's government has done enough to prevent the worst from happening. The mass-circulation weekly *Bild* went so far as to photoshop a cover of Merkel with a *Pickelhaube*. She was not quite the kind of "Iron Chancellor" that magazine wished for, but to the degree that there was any European leadership during the Greek melodrama, it came from Berlin. Josef Joffe's two-cheers praise—"[She] knows she does not want to have a dead body on her hands—not in Europe, not in her Europe"—was accurate.

What might a German return to geopolitical normalcy look like? In one sense, a unified Germany is not normal; for most of the modern era, Germany was divided into lesser kingdoms, principalities, and "electorates" of the Holy Roman Empire. Its strategic orientation was as much eastward as westward and, when viewed from Berlin—that is, the capital of Prussia—more eastward. Indeed, the Cold War division of east and west might be said to be more in line with German historical experience than either unification under Bismark or George H.W. Bush.

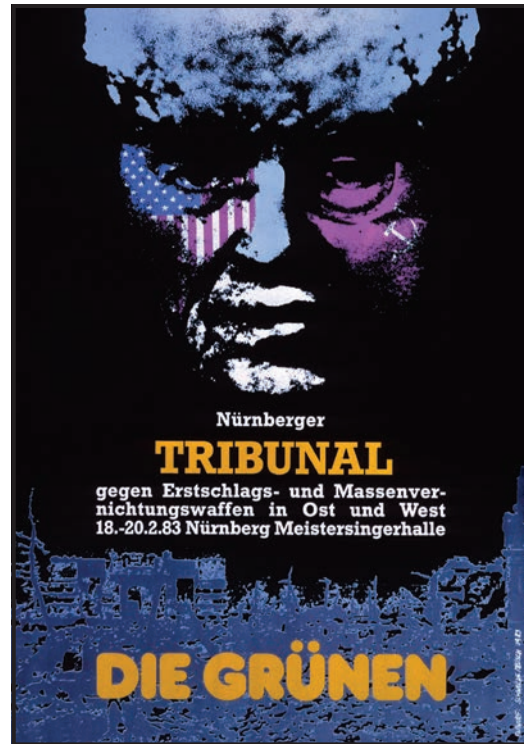
In this light, the pattern of German behavior in the post-Cold War period may be more coherent than it otherwise appears. Notably, Germany has distanced itself from American and European interventions in the Arab world—in Iraq in 2003, when Gerhard Shroeder proudly announced he would not "click his heels" in response to Bush administration entreaties; in Libya, when Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle laid out the Merkel coalition's refusal to participate in NATO actions to remove Muammar Gaddafi, despite his insistence that "he must go;" and now in Syria, where Merkel has said she is willing to negotiate the fate of the Assad regime even as the refugee crisis roils Germany. In response to a direct request from the French in the wake of the Paris attacks to join the fight against ISIS, Merkel has deployed aircraft to help protect French forces in the region, but not participate in strikes on ISIS. By contrast, Merkel's willingness to bear

the burden of the Greek debt crisis and to shepherd the various Minsk agreements that have punctuated the Ukraine war would seem to mark a kind of new “Ostpolitik,” based upon a supposed special relationship with Russia and an underlying eastern-looking strategic orientation. Germany’s participation in Afghanistan might prove to be the exception to the new rule, a valedictory nod to the west and to Washington for the Cold War past.

Sustaining the strategic independence of a unified Germany will not be easy. The plains of north-central Europe are notoriously indefensible and have been the central battleground of the world’s great powers for centuries. Unification under Bismark arguably made things worse; Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler were megalomaniacs, but their drive to dominate was in part a response to fundamental insecurities. In the end, unified Germany could not remain, as Bismark wished, a “satisfied power.”

The fissiparous trends of twenty-first-century politics and power seem likely to expose Germany to similarly cold winds. It is debatable whether Merkel-style leadership, which rests almost entirely on diplomacy and wealth, will provide the kind of security that Germany has taken for granted as a ward of the United States. If she cannot check Putin in Ukraine—and, thanks to his bold gambit in Syria, there will be mounting pressure to accommodate Russia in Eastern Europe—others in the region, especially Poland, will not want to follow where Berlin leads. Moreover, Germans have never been able to take a global view of the balance of power. The contrast with other European great powers, particularly Britain, but also Bourbon France, Habsburg Spain, and even Tsarist Russia, is marked. Even today, Western European countries have a residual impulse to try to shape the situation in the Middle East; Germany does not. To truly lead Europe, Berlin will have to export security to the west as well as to the east. And as China muscles its way toward a global role, Germany’s narrower strategic horizons will prove a limiting factor.

Further, Germany’s lack of conventional military power will be crippling to its ambitions to lead. During the Cold War, the *Bundeswehr* became a force to be respected.



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German tanks, German aircraft, German submarines were all top-notch. Its officer corps retained—and still retains—a tradition of professionalism despite a creeping politicization, especially in years of Social Democratic rule. The German military might have become more “normal” had the country been more serious about its commitment to Afghanistan. That seems not to have happened. Last February, the Germans sent the 900-man *Panzergrenadier* Battalion 371 to participate in high-profile NATO exercises in Norway. This allegedly elite unit, part of the NATO Rapid Reaction Force, had to borrow 14,371 pieces of gear from a total of fifty-six other *Bundeswehr* units, yet still was short on equipment. To simulate MG3 machine guns, the Germans painted broomsticks black.

Which returns us to the original question: Is Germany’s antipathy to nuclear armaments a forever-and-always commitment? Allowing the US Air Force to substitute one model of a B61 bomb for another hardly constitutes a new arms race in central Europe (although Russia’s love affair with shorter-range missiles has already moved them into a leading position). Despite the popularity of the anti-nuclear movement, German leaders have quietly but consistently accepted the need for a theater-level deterrent, one that gave “attack options against Russia,” most of all when the conventional military balance was uncertain.

Germans have thus far been able to trust in the United States to provide that deterrent. Others in Europe have not: thus France’s *force de frappe*. And the Obama administration remains committed to drawing down the US European garrison, despite Putin’s moves in Eastern Europe—the 2008 Georgia grab and the 2014 cyber-attack on Lithuania as well as the annexation of Crimea and the continuing war in Ukraine. The twenty total B61-12s at Büchel is a minimum deterrent if ever there were one. The military and *realpolitik* logic for an independent German *Kampftruppe* is strong.

To be sure, it would take a giant change in German domestic political attitudes to even begin to talk about a homegrown nuclear force. But perhaps, with the outside world changing so rapidly and so violently, it is foolish to think that Europeans won’t change their attitudes toward security and the need for military power as well.



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Donnelly also served as a member of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. He is the author, coauthor, and editor of numerous articles, essays, and books, including *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* and *Clash of Chariots: A History of Armored Warfare*. He is currently at work on *Empire of Liberty: The Origins of American Strategic Culture*.

Nuclear Germany: Could the Impossible Become the Inevitable?

Russell A. Berman

Drawing on the older traditions of the Prussian army, nineteenth-century Germany grew into a formidable military power, and during the twentieth century it nearly dominated Europe. It took two world wars to defeat Germany and to contain its aggressive ambitions. While the end of the First World War left the German home front relatively unscathed, the conclusion of the Second World War devastated Germany: Most of its cities and industrial infrastructure were destroyed through aerial campaigns, and the occupation by the victorious powers put an end to national sovereignty, leaving the country divided for forty years. In addition, the inescapable need to face the crimes of the Holocaust undermined most vestiges of national self-esteem. All these factors contributed to a widespread revulsion against nationalism and military might. The German legacy of militarism turned suddenly into a culture of pacifism, which centrally defined the political self-understanding of West Germany (not, however, Communist East Germany) and now the unified Germany of the "Berlin Republic." Germans largely regard their militarist past as a source of shame, and they view the prospect of any military engagement with deep apprehension. Even though German scientists played important roles in the development of nuclear science and missile technology, that was a long time ago: Today's Germany is no candidate for ambitious military undertakings and certainly not for nuclear weaponry.

German politics tends to be dominated by the forces of the center-right, which can understand the need for a strong defense, but the government typically faces significant popular opposition to military initiatives. This was true in the 1950s, when West Germany rearmed and joined NATO, but only despite widespread protests. In the 1980s, Social Democrat Chancellor Helmut Schmidt supported



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the deployment of NATO missiles (to counter Soviet armaments), but he faced vocal criticism, especially in his own party and further on the left. After 9/11, Germany did contribute troops to ISAF but only with very strict restrictions on their combat roles, and recently, after the Paris attacks, Germany committed troops to Syria for the war against ISIS, but primarily for the purposes of intelligence gathering. Despite its pacifist culture, Germany does participate in military operations, but only with major restrictions.

Yet while Germany's twentieth-century past continues to cast a long shadow that limits its willingness to wield military force, the same country has emerged as a significant economic and political power within the European Union. During the years of the Euro crisis, policy made in Berlin effectively defined key European decisions. Angela Merkel's opponents, especially in southern Europe, attacked her for pursuing German national interests rapaciously. Yet Merkel succeeded because she could persuasively argue that her economic policies were in the best interest of Europe in general. In other words, the German chancellor has been prepared to use considerable economic and political power as long as she could operate with a European, rather than a national rhetoric. There is a lesson here for the prospects of German military options in the future.



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Working Group on Islamism and the International Order. He specializes in the study of German literary history and cultural politics. He is a member of both the Department of German Studies and the Department of Comparative Literature at Stanford. He has served in numerous administrative positions at Stanford.

Given the legacy of the world wars, it is unimaginable that Germany will become an independent nuclear power. Domestic political opposition would block it, as would its European neighbors, which harbor lingering anxieties from the world wars. However, if the nuclear question were reframed in a European context, the answer could be quite different. Germany, of course, already participates in NATO, which places it in a nuclear context, albeit one dominated by the United States. In the meantime, the EU is searching for modalities for a common foreign policy, and if that difficult quest were to be successful, a common military policy and even a common military force could emerge. Given the German commitment to the EU project, it is likely that it would participate in a joint nuclear force. In fact, the Germans might even see their participation as an opportunity to put a brake on the French. While an independent German nuclear force is impossible to imagine, a European solution, with *de facto* German leadership, is not unrealistic.

France and the United Kingdom are already nuclear powers. For them to subordinate their capacities to a European force—a European force that might well end up under German hegemony—would not be an easy step. Such a “European nuclear unification” might, however, be plausible if the domestic political pieces were to fall into place in the face of a growing Russian threat coupled with an erosion of confidence in the Atlantic alliance. If the United States pivots to Asia (or turns inward), the Europeans will have their own choices to make. As of this writing, however, the internal coherence of the EU is under considerable stress, and its future is uncertain.

A Non-nuclear Germany: Today, Tomorrow, Forever

Josef Joffe

Those who used to worry endlessly about the “N + 1” problem—rampant proliferation—in the sixties would be quite surprised some fifty years later. As the consensus of the strategic community had it at the time, there were some twenty countries with the industrial base capable of building nuclear weapons—and would do so in short order.

First surprise: The pace of proliferation actually has been quite slow. Counting eight declared nuclear powers and one undeclared (Israel), the average acquisition rate since 1945 was one every eight years. Just as surprising is the number of “deproliferators.” These were West Germany, Sweden, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, and Taiwan—nations developing a technological option and stopping along the road. South Africa gave up a small number of nuclear weapons. Libya and Iraq were forced to dismantle their capabilities. So it is actually “N – 9”—a far cry from the “N + 1” alarm.

Germany belongs to the first group: nations not going for nuclear weapons as such, but for the industrial-scientific wherewithal that dovetailed neatly with the enthusiasm for nuclear energy in those days. Bonn had renounced nuclear weapons as a price for joining the Western alliance in 1954, and it did so again, when it signed the NPT in 1968. And yet all the accouterments (minus weaponization) remained in place into the nineties.

Nor were these just props, but integral to Germany’s civilian program. In addition, the Federal Republic

sought “export primacy,” that is, a top global position in the nuclear-sales business. It was to be, so to speak, “one-stop shopping:” power reactors, plutonium reprocessing, fabrication, and ultimately, “fast breeders.” Whether there was a hidden weapons agenda, the record does not yet reveal, though certain politicians like Bavaria’s strongman Franz Josef Strauss must have been thinking of assembling the wherewithal for a nuclear option.

At any rate, German nuclear policy put Bonn on a direct collision course with the Carter administration. Washington pushed hard for a proliferation-proof energy regime, seeking to eliminate reactors fueled by highly enriched uranium, reprocessed plutonium, and fast breeders. The Helmut Schmidt government pushed back just as hard, insisting on a complete fuel cycle: uranium conversion, fuel-element fabrication, heavy-water reactors (a more efficient plutonium producer than the light-water type), reprocessing, and fast-breeders (an even better source of plutonium).

Schmidt prevailed, and these components stayed in place way beyond the NPT. Now the 180-degree turn. By the end of the nineties, all the critical items were gone—closed or dismantled. By 2022, it will be curtains for nuclear energy, robbing Germany of any nuclear option whatsoever. Germany will not go nuclear because it couldn’t—at least for a generation.

Are there general lessons? For those, we must go back to the pivotal years of 1954 and 1968, when



overwhelming *political interests* dictated renunciation. Without a vow of abstinence, Bonn would not have gained entry into the Western alliance. Reaffirming the pledge in the NPT of 1968 was the *sine qua non* of Ostpolitik, otherwise no *détente* and rapprochement with the Soviet bloc. In this respect, Germany was not a singular case in the world. The precedence of the political over the strategic also explains the case of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan which would have faced a net loss in security by going nuclear, reaping the unforgiving hostility of their Asian neighbors and of China, above all.

In all other respects, the German story does not hold a general lesson. The causes of deproliferation were not political, as in the Asian cases, but cultural and psychological, and they are *sui generis*. Alone among the nations, Germany has developed a cast-in-concrete aversion to all things nuclear, even against nuclear power, which, to repeat, will be phased out completely by 2022. This revulsion would be easier to fathom in the case of Japan, history's only victim of nuclear devastation. Yet even after Fukushima, Japan is holding on to nuclear energy.

Germany has suffered no such catastrophe. What's more, German industrial prowess had turned to nuclear power in the fifties with a vengeance, and the enthusiasm remained unbroken into the eighties, with Germany eager to become the world's premier exporter of nuclear technology. Yet that is the snow of yesteryear, which has been replaced by an anti-nuclear mindset uniting left and right. The cultural transformation is complete. Now, the anti-nuclear faith is practically an ersatz religion. To explain this psycho-cultural reversal is beyond the ken of strategic analysis, save to reaffirm that the German case does not yield much insight into the future course of other advanced nations.

Suffice it to say that whatever nuclear dreams West Germany might have had in the distant past, the nuclear option is gone—no more reprocessing, no more fast breeders. Might the quest be revived in the 21st century as the US security guarantee to Europe is waning? (300,000 US troops have dwindled into 30,000.) Elsewhere, particularly in the Middle East, America's retraction and its turn toward Iran, leaving Tehran's nuclear program intact, have set up incentives for competitive proliferation. But it defies the imagination to come up with a scenario that would reverse Germany's transformation. Russia reconquering its Near Abroad? The United States cowering behind the walls of "Fortress America?" To go down this road is the stuff of thrillers, not analysis..



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The Federal Republic of Germany: No Nukes, Now or Ever

by Josiah Bunting III

In 1997, the writer spent several weeks at the Bundeswehr University in Munich, exploring a possible exchange of cadets with the Virginia Military Institute.

An academic environment less military (or—Vagts—militaristic) could scarcely have been imagined. Our hosts talked little of current military matters or of military history, not excluding their country's pre-Nazi military legacies. They seemed ignorant of such military heroes as Moltke, Blücher, Von Schlieffen (as they were ignorant of Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann). I was astonished by it. Franklin Roosevelt's determination

that Germany, all its citizens, acknowledge their culpability in the nation responsibility for starting and sustaining the war in Europe with all its collateral, genocidal horrors, continued then, in 1997 and now, 18 years later. They still sear the national consciousness and still condition German strategy by (among other things) excluding the preparation of nuclear weapons of any kind. Practically, of course, Germany remains bound by the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (and its successors) not to produce such weapons; and it is difficult to imagine the Merkel government or its successors arguing the need for them whatever circumstances might seem to provoke arguments to the contrary. Opposition is, and will remain, fully settled and fervent.

On the other hand Germany still develops and builds components of various weapons of mass destruction not excluding chemical agents, but nuclear instrumentalities of war remain, in the cliché, beyond the pale, and for many reasons, almost surely will remain so.

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POLL: WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF GERMANY BECOMING NUCLEAR?

- ☐ None. That issue was resolved after World War II for both Japan and Germany.
- ☐ Slight—as long as it remains a member of a powerful NATO.
- ☐ 50/50. It depends on American leadership and whether Germany remains under the US nuclear umbrella.
- ☐ Good. The nuclear club is expanding, and deterrence is Germany's only method to prevent blackmail.
- ☐ Inevitable. Germany will eventually become nuclear, given its historic dominance of European politics.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WHY IS GERMANY A NON-NUCLEAR POWER, AND WILL IT EVER BECOME ONE?

1. To what degree is Germany's postwar non-nuclear status different from Japan's?
2. Do Germany's traditional east-west worries over France and Russia still apply?
3. What are the roles of the EU and NATO in freezing the European nuclear club?
4. Would nuclear status offer Germany any security, given the enlarging nuclear club?
5. Given its history, what would be the downside of a nuclear Germany?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

DOES ISIS REALLY DIFFER FROM OTHER TERRORIST GROUPS? IF SO, HOW DOES ITS SINGULARITY COMPLICATE US EFFORTS TO DEFEAT IT?



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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