Integration of Migrants

Section 3.6

Topics:

Determining the Goals of Integration
Integration Measures
The Provisions of International Law
Policy Challenges
Integration of Migrants

Section 3.6

This Section focuses on the migration dimensions of integration and the challenge of integrating migrants into a host society. Migrants come from every region of the world. Changing circumstances within countries, as well as overall “globalization” trends, are contributing to emerging migratory realities. The process of mutual adjustment by migrants and their new host community is one of the biggest and most sensitive challenges to governments and societies worldwide, and governments are seeking new approaches to manage increasingly dynamic patterns of interaction between migrants and their host societies. Integration for migration in the twenty-first century will require innovation and multi-faceted migration management systems.

Learning Objectives

• understand a variety of approaches to migration and integration

• identify major issues that integration policy must resolve

• increase your ability to apply a conceptual model and develop migrant integration policy options in your setting

Background

The process of integration concerns all aspects of life in a society, and includes migrants as well as the host society. Migration patterns are producing increasingly diverse cultural influences in host societies. These influences can be used constructively while preserving social coherence and unity. Integration measures are generally intended to preserve or re-establish the smooth functioning of a
society and to assist people who require support in order to become active participants in economic, social, and cultural life.

There are several approaches to integration. No single set of “best practices” would be relevant for all States. Approaches to integration of migrants set goals that can be positioned on a continuum that ranges from unity (common values and cultural practices) at the one end to diversity (different values and practices) at the other.

International norms that guarantee migrants certain basic human rights are relevant to integration because they require policy makers to include these basic rights in their approaches to integration. International norms support the right of migrants to interact economically, socially, and culturally with a host society under the terms of applicable national legislation, while also allowing them to maintain a sense of their own cultural identity.

**Guiding Questions**

1. What is the most appropriate goal for integration in your setting? To what extent should it draw from the models of assimilation, of two-way integration, of multiculturalism, or of segregation?

2. What is the appropriate integration policy in your setting in terms of your country’s expectation of the degree of societal adjustment to migrants?

3. How well do you understand the situation in your setting in terms of existing levels of linguistic, educational, social, economic, and residential integration of migrants?

4. What programme responses would be appropriate to the needs of migrants and the goals of public policy in your setting?
Terms and Concepts

**Assimilation**
The process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture.

**Circular migration**
The movements of migrants who return to their country of origin once or many times over a period of time.

**Integration**
In this Section, the term is used on two levels. Generally, the term is used to describe the process of introducing a new element into an existing system, for example, introducing migrants into a new host society. The term is also used to refer to the process of bringing people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups into unrestricted and equal association in a society. A number of models are used to describe this process of mutual adjustment by migrants and their new host community (often referred to as a “melting pot”).

**Multiculturalism**
The encouragement and promotion of many cultures within a society rather than in only a mainstream culture.

**Segregation**
The policy or practice of separating people of different races, classes, or ethnic groups. In the segregation model, the monocultural value system of the host society remains untouched and unaffected, while migrants are required to do an absolute minimum of adjustment. Their participation in society is highly restricted, as too are their rights.

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**Key Message**

Integration policies and programmes are urgently required if diverse societies are to survive and prosper in the twenty-first century. Societies are challenged to find ways to embrace diversity while preserving unity.

The challenge for policy makers is to enable a balance between the original cultural identities of migrants and a sense of belonging that is based on an acceptance of the core values and institutions of the new society.
Topic One

Determining the Goals of Integration

Integration policies are an essential part of a comprehensive migration management system. They are designed to:

- allow migrants to realize their personal, economic, and social potentials
- ensure that the human rights of migrants are protected
- reduce levels of alienation and marginalization, and thereby contribute to national security
- help establish and maintain social cohesion and harmony.

There are many approaches to integration. Current integration concepts tend to reflect the policy approaches developed in the traditional countries of immigration and Western high-income countries. Many of these countries were pioneers in the field of integration, although the focus has been primarily on permanent migrants. While these countries are being challenged to monitor and further improve their approaches, newly emerging immigration countries, in all world regions, are being challenged to develop their own approach to integration.

Integration policies dealing with migration will address the specific circumstances in a given country; no single set of “best practices” would be relevant for all States. Nonetheless, attempts can be made to identify “effective” or “promising” practices that provide a range of options for policy makers to consider for their country-specific approach to integration. The following graphic organizes a range of options on a continuum of integration goals. One pole identifies the goals of integration as uniformity with monocultural features. Here, migrants adjust to a large extent and the host society makes smaller adjustments. The opposite pole identifies diversity with multicultural features as the goal of integration. Here, migrants adjust less and the host society adjusts more. Assimilation, two-way integration, and multiculturalism describe policies that span the continuum.
Approaches to integration can be positioned on a continuum that reaches from unity (common values and cultural practices) at one end, to diversity (different values and practices) at the other. Considered from the perspective of the degree of adjustment required on the part of society, assimilation, two-way integration, and multiculturalism range from “minimal adjustment” of society on the left to a “high level of adjustment” of society on the right.

Important Points

1. Policy approaches by States hosting migrants have varied and evolved significantly over time. They usually accord with the way governments and society view questions of national identity and cultural diversity, and seek to ensure social stability and well-being for their residents. They reflect the socio-economic, cultural, and political character of host societies, as well as the divergent characteristics and origins of the migrants in these societies.

2. A host country is often concerned about its capacity to accommodate various cultural influences. Host countries tend to require migrants to adjust to their society and stress the obligation of migrants to assimilate. This is a particularly relevant issue for countries that have only recently become immigration countries. Migration can be perceived as a threat when cultural differences are emphasized between the host society and the migrants. Such a perception could develop into a climate of fear, discrimination, and potential violence between migrants and a host society. The role of governments in promoting tolerance and understanding in a diverse community is of critical importance.

3. A country of origin is often concerned about the possibility that its diaspora members, especially those of the second and third generation, may lose cultural and economic links to their country of origin. Multiculturalist approaches that enable and encourage diaspora members to practice their customs and religion are often preferred.

4. Traditional approaches to integration include assimilation, two-way integration, multiculturalism, and segregation. Additionally, each approach can be group-based or based on the individual. Each approach defines different goals for the integration process. While these concepts have mainly developed in the Western world and in traditional countries of immigration, they cover the range of available options for integration, and can hence be applied to any society. Depending on the existing social hierarchy in a given society, as well as the present forms of migration, countries will need to select and combine elements from these approaches to assemble their specific approach to integration.
What You Need To Know About...

_adjustment, integration, and degrees of diversity_

The foundation of the assimilation approach is a monocultural definition of society. This approach requires migrants to adjust entirely to the values and the rights system of the host society. Migrants are expected to become indistinguishable from the majority population. The approach is based upon the expected outcome of full citizenship.

Segregation does not expect migrants to assimilate into the culture of the host society, and has typically applied to temporary migrants. In this model, the monocultural value system of the host society remains untouched and unaffected, while migrants are required to do a minimum of adjustment. Their participation in society is highly restricted, as are their rights.

Two-way integration is also based on a monocultural definition, but it requires both the migrants and the host society to adjust to each other. Under this approach, which is also known as the “melting pot,” both contribute to the common culture while a sense of diversity and cultural heritage is retained.

The multicultural approach recognizes different value systems and cultural practices within society, revolving around a set of common, non-negotiable core values. For example, democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, and gender equality. Importantly, the values of diversity and respect for differences are ranked highly in a multicultural approach.

Integration and multiculturalism are very similar, aiming for managed diversity. Multiculturalism differs from integration and assimilation by granting equal rights and opportunities to migrants without their relinquishing other cultural affiliations; although this too is, to a lesser extent, an element of integration.

What You Need To Know About...

_individual and group approaches to integration_

An individual-based approach rejects the concept of groups as bearers of rights. In this approach, every individual has the same rights. Any form of discrimination on the basis of belonging to a group, including affirmative action, is legally prohibited.

A group-based approach recognizes the existence of groups within societies that have distinct needs and rights concerning access to opportunities. This approach focuses on the representative distribu-
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What Do You Think?

To what extent do migrants need to adjust to the values and the cultural practices of the host societies, and to what extent do the host societies need to adjust? Consider the following observations.

Globalization and increasing human mobility are contributing jointly to raise the level of frequency and impact of cultural encounters and exchanges. This has already been the subject of much research, debate, and controversy. Positions range from theories about clashes between civilizations, to the positing of a global ethic that embraces all cultures and religions. Societies experiencing cultural encounters through inward migration face the challenge of accommodating migrants from various cultural backgrounds, while preserving their unity and cohesiveness at the same time.

Apply What You Have Learned

1. Describe the approach to integration in your country including the mix of group and individual approaches as well as the goals for integration.

2. How heterogeneous is the society in your country? What are the values that all cultural groups share?

3. Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement: “The integration of migrants is just one aspect of the broader process through which any society manages its diversity.”
4. What makes a monocultural or multicultural approach to integration more suitable in your setting?

5. What are the potential problems that could result from special treatment for migrants?
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Topic Two

**Integration Measures**

Integration measures are intended to achieve or maintain a State’s vision of a cohesive society and to assist people in society who need assistance to become active participants in economic, social, and cultural life. Since the composition and values of society differ from country to country, the people who are the subject of integration measures may vary.

The primary intended beneficiaries of most integration policies are newly arrived migrants who will reside legally in the host country for a long period of time. Both the migrants and the host society have a direct and long-term interest in the rapid and successful integration of newcomers to ensure that they become constructive members of the community, contributing to its economic, social, cultural, and political life.

Since integration is a process, analysis of the level of integration achieved in a society needs to consider the dimension of time. Changes over years and decades can indicate the efficiency or inappropriateness of integration policies. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between different generations and different migrant groups because the level of integration may vary between the first, second, and third generations, and some migration groups may integrate more rapidly and more effectively than others.

**Important Points**

1. Policy makers may wish to target migrants of the second and third generation i.e., the children and grandchildren of authorized migrants, who were born and brought up in the host countries. Many countries have immigrant communities that consist in large part of second and third generation immigrants who have never actually had contact with their country of origin. Nonetheless, most have preserved some ties to their country of origin through customs, traditions, religion, or language.

2. Some immigrant-receiving States already factor integration considerations into the selection criteria for skilled/qualified applicants and recruit persons on the basis of points acquired for such attributes as qualifications, age, linguistic skills, and connections with the country. This approach
facilitates longer term integration planning, which in turn can aid the evolution from temporary to permanent status, if necessary, to meet labour market needs in the host country.

There is a lack of consensus on indicators of integration. Countries and research institutions use different indicators. The process of integration concerns all areas of societal life, and refers to the migrants as well as to the host society. A lack of data and statistics in many countries represents a serious obstacle to the production of reliable findings about levels of integration. Relatively few studies have been conducted, and those that monitor the level of integration over several years are rare. Instead, most existing research presents a “snapshot view” that compares the situation of immigrants and non-immigrants at a single point in time. Several traditional immigration countries, including Canada, Australia and the United States, are undertaking longitudinal studies on the experiences of migrants in their host societies. The results of these studies provide a dynamic picture of the experiences of migrants over time and are feeding into immigration policy decision making, including integration policy.

Six areas can be identified as sources for basic indicators to measure the success of integration policies.

- **Language** is a fundamental basis for any interaction within society. Therefore, linguistic integration is among the first necessary steps, and the proficiency level of migrants in the language(s) of the host country provides an important insight into this aspect of integration.

- **Integration within the Education system** is an important condition for the economic integration of migrants and their children who are not yet working. Indicators are the performance of migrants in schools, the choice of schools and universities, as well as the propensity of migrants to carry on in post-secondary and further education as compared to native born.

- **Social integration** relates to the well-being and the participation of migrants in the social life of the host society. The health of migrants, as well as their psychological condition, needs to be considered in this context and, by extension, the actual access of migrants to the health system of the host countries. The number of inter-group marriages between migrants and nationals is another important indicator for social acceptance and inclusion.

- **Political integration** is linked to social integration. Membership in associations, unions, and political parties can serve as an indicator for social and political integration. Migrant organizations, individual participation in elections, and political representation at the local, regional, and national level are additional indicators.

- **Economic integration** refers to the participation of migrants in the labour market. Indicators include the participation rate of immigrants, for example, the percentage of working-age immigrants who are employed in the national labour market and the unemployment rate.
of immigrants as compared to the general unemployment rate. Consideration of household income as compared to the national average is also an indicator of economic integration. Comparison of the distribution of migrants in various employment sectors with the distribution of the overall working population provides further information about integration and segregation tendencies.

- **Residential integration.** The environment in which the migrants live provides information about the level of residential integration. The area of settlement, the level of regional concentration, and local “ghettoization”, as well as the nature and quality of the housing itself, all show to what extent migrants are separated from the host society, and whether their housing standard is below, equal to, or higher than the average housing standard of the host society.

### Apply What You Have Learned

1. What indicators of integration are most useful in your setting?
2. How can the efficiency and appropriateness of integration measures be evaluated?
3. What migrant categories are the subjects of integration measures in your country?
4. How do integration measures affect diaspora groups in your country?
International norms guarantee certain basic rights to migrants. This is relevant to integration because it requires policy makers to develop approaches to integration that respect these basic rights. In essence, these norms provide migrants with the right to interact with the host society economically, socially, and culturally, under the terms of applicable national legislation, while also allowing them to maintain a sense of their own cultural identity.

Apart from the specific standards applicable to the treatment of refugees in the host country, there are few international legal norms relating specifically to integration of migrants. The most explicit of these norms, based on international human rights principles, are found in the 1990 International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which entered into force on 1 July 2003.

At a more general level, international human rights law provides a framework of rights that apply to all persons, including migrants. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights represent the most widely accepted international legal sources in this context. Finally, the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, though not a legally binding text, provides in its Chapter 10 a number of specific recommendations concerning the integration of documented migrants.

Arguably, the most important international legal principle concerning integration is the prohibition of discrimination, enshrined in article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This principle is contained in a number of international instruments and guarantees equality before law and equal protection by the law to all persons. It prohibits practices that lead to disadvantages for persons belonging to a specific race, religion, ethnic group, or social group.

These provisions have been cited as a basis for requiring the protection of migrants from discrimination and establishment of de facto equality where indirect discrimination leads to verifiable and objective disadvantages. However, governments can make distinctions between citizens and migrants by applying relevant legal principles that are based on reasonable and objective grounds for making such distinctions.
Important Points

1. International law contains provisions concerning a number of basic rights, which are specifically relevant to integration. It guarantees to migrants, as to all human beings, the right to:
   - equality and recognition before the law
   - education
   - association, and to peacefully assemble
   - join or form trade unions
   - social security
   - take part in social and cultural life
   - practice their religion and language
   - freely choose their residence.

   The extent to which each of these rights applies to migrants may be affected by their status in a country.

2. While States may not prevent migrants from practicing their mother tongue, international law does not prohibit States from requiring that migrants possess a minimum knowledge of the language of the host society.

3. International law requires migrants to comply with the national legislation of the host country. The host country need not tolerate practices that violate national or international law. Migrants have the right to maintain their cultural identity, however, there is no provision under international law that provides for migrants to be protected from other cultural influences.

Apply What You Have Learned

1. What national legislation exists in your State to govern language requirements for migrants?

2. To what extent are the basic rights of migrants reflected in legislation in your State?
To what extent have the laws in your State supported the right of migrants to maintain a separate cultural identity?
Policy Challenges

Recent developments are creating policy challenges and dilemmas. Migrants, whether regular, circular, or undocumented, are challenged to find their place in the host society while defining their own identity. In fact, their cultural background can help achieve this in the sense that their customs, artwork, music, literature, etc. have the potential to enrich the social life of the host society. In that way, the migrants become a new and important part of society, by affirming and actively practicing elements of their cultural background. When values and practices do clash, a resolution can be achieved by identifying the respective underlying interests that are involved and then developing a compromise that is acceptable to everyone involved.

A recent Migration Policy Institute publication defines integration as “a sustained mutual interaction between newcomers and the societies that receive them; an interaction that may well last for generations”.

Only if a host society is actively involved in welcoming and integrating their new members will the full beneficial potential of migration be realized. Often, the practices of their religion, and the celebration of specific holidays, represent indispensable parts of the migrants’ previous social life and cannot easily be substituted by customs and holidays of the host country.

An interesting challenge for governments is to find the point at which the migrant attains a secure balance between the “having been” part of his or her experience—which is tied to the country of origin—and the “belonging” or forward looking part, which is tied to the host country. The challenge for policy makers is to balance the original cultural identities of the migrants with a sense of belonging in the new society. To this end, societies are challenged to find ways to embrace diversity while preserving unity. Policy makers will consider many questions, including:

- How can host countries ensure economic integration in times of changing labour market structures?
- How can integration policies promote equal access to education and enhance upward mobility of migrants at the lower end of society?
- When is the right moment to provide migrants with nationality?

The important points that follow outline a series of challenges that have the features of dilemmas. In each point, policy makers are challenged to consider measures that avoid the worst outcomes and promote the best scenarios in their particular settings.
Important Points

1  Policy makers need to consider whether integration measures should be extended or adapted to migrants authorized to stay in the host country on a temporary basis. Integration policies are relevant not only to authorized migrants and their dependents living in the host country on a permanent basis, but also for persons staying in host countries under temporary migration programmes. Temporary migration has increased significantly in recent years. However, the integration needs of temporary migrants are not always clearly understood or attended to, and they create a policy dilemma.

On the one hand, to help ensure that temporary migration remains temporary, many governments do not want to promote connections between temporary migrants and the larger community that would create incentives for persons to seek to prolong their stay. On the other hand, failure to facilitate the integration of these persons, even temporarily, can lead to alienation and result in lack of productivity, or worse.

2  Policy makers need to consider whether integration services can be adapted for circular migrants. Circular migration poses a specific challenge to cultural and social integration. Temporary migration programmes increase the number of migrants who will stay for a restricted period in a given country. The fact of increasing mobility and interdependence now offers migrants the option to maintain much closer relations with their countries of origin. As a result, circular migrants might refuse to integrate at all, while citizens of host countries might fail to see the need to invest in their integration.

3  Policy makers need to consider whether there should be integration services for migrants in an irregular situation. These persons are by definition not authorized to stay in the host community, and therefore government policy would not normally identify or include these persons for integration. Promoting their integration would send a message validating their stay and provide an incentive for more people to seek to migrate illegally in the hope of receiving the same treatment.

However, if migrants in an irregular situation do not have adequate means to support themselves, and do not feel a sense of connection to the society, the risks can be significant. Such persons may seek clandestine access to educational, social welfare, and public health services, engage in criminal activity, and even threaten the security of society. In some countries without formal immigration programmes, but faced nonetheless with the entry and presence of irregular migrants in search of employment, the benefits of their integration, even temporarily, may, in specific circumstances, outweigh the potentially mixed message that it could send.
Policy makers need to consider whether adaptation should be one-way or two-way. In the case of migrants in an irregular situation, or in countries that do not have official immigration programmes but nonetheless host large migrant communities, the question of one-way versus two-way adaptation is particularly acute. The reason for this lies in the fact that integration policies and measures usually do not apply to migrants who are not authorized to be in the country. For this group, policy generally focuses on removal, not integration. However, a temporary absence of even minimal integration can pose risks to the host country because migrant groups and citizens can develop negative attitudes toward each other in short periods of time. This can produce social unrest and, in extreme cases, riots between opposing groups. Countries that encounter this situation will have to address this issue and develop integration efforts that deal with migrants in an irregular situation.

Section 3.9, Return Migration, provides greater detail on issues relating to the integration of irregular or illegal migrants who return, or who are returned, to the country of their origin.

Policy makers need to understand that integration approaches that exclusively require migrants to change and adjust to the host society (assimilation) are inefficient because they create tensions in the longer run.

Policy makers need to consider the value of involving stakeholders in the integration process. As mentioned earlier, a society is not a monolithic actor, but a complex network composed of various stakeholders. For migrants, becoming part of the network of society means developing a multitude of relations and connections with various actors. From this perspective, integration is not a bidirectional process between the host society and the migrants because there are several elements of each to take into consideration. Integration policies will ensure the involvement of all relevant actors that
make up a migrant group and a host society. In particular, representatives of the private economic sector, as well as of the political, social, and cultural sectors, will have interests in the integration process and the policies that manage it.

Examples of successful integration suggest that migrants are more willing to actively participate in society when they are able to maintain elements of their own identity.

What You Need To Know About...

Integration for Policy Development

The private sector has a vital interest in actively participating in the process of integration. Companies operating in urban areas inhabited predominately by immigrant populations often recruit a large part of their labour force from these populations. Moreover, immigrant populations can represent an important segment of the consumer market. The role of the private sector, therefore, includes making it easier for migrants to join the labour market and providing appropriate working conditions—equal to those granted to native workers.

From a more global perspective, migrants entering the workforce help to diversify the human resources required for operations in foreign markets, or for cooperation with foreign companies at a time of economic globalization. Highly skilled migrants can offer special know-how and expertise lacking within the native labour force. Integration is a precondition to fully realizing this potential.

Successful integration depends upon a range of factors. Governments can take concrete steps, for example to ensure that equality of access to education, health services, and employment is not obstructed by policy and structural aspects that may, unwittingly, discriminate against migrants, and that migrants and the community have sufficient information on the services and opportunities available. Similarly, migrants’ entry to employment can be greatly facilitated through quick and early recognition of their skills and qualifications. Less restrictive policies, e.g. permitting family reunification or work rights for spouses, can encourage the social adjustment of migrants and their eventual successful integration.

Social and cultural activities are often initiated and organized by members of civil society. Associations and clubs that include migrants and migrants’ associations in their activities promote cultural exchange and dialogue. Public education and schools also have a role to play in this regard. Migrant associations and local non-governmental organizations can play a role in preventing forms of social and cultural exclusion and promoting social cohesion.
A major part of the integration process happens at the local level where migrants and nationals are interacting on a daily basis. Migrant populations often become a theme of political discussion at the local, regional, and national level. Local political actors should be encouraged to consider the realities of the social life of nationals and migrant populations and develop creative solutions to improve the interaction between these groups.

The media plays a major role in establishing a constructive dialogue between migrants and the host society. To this end, media can provide a major vehicle for public discussion and shape the public perception of immigration. There is often a correlation between a stereotyped image of migration portrayed in the media and the development of xenophobia. This illustrates the importance of a constructive involvement of the media and a well-informed and balanced way of reporting.

While integration is not necessarily dependent upon citizenship or naturalization, for many immigrants, and for some governments, citizenship can be an important indicator of finally “belonging” to the new society and enjoying full political and social rights.

Issues relating to the management of public perception, the role of media, and the merits of pre-departure counseling of migrants are dealt with in greater detail in Section 1.10, Managing Perception.

International cooperation can foster and enhance the integration of migrants in the host society, and benefits can be realized by cooperating with neighbouring countries as well as with countries of origin in the process of integration. A coordination of policies can help to share the benefits and burdens of migration. Consultation and cooperation within regions, particularly between neighbouring countries, can lead to a harmonization of integration approaches. Newly emerging regional consultative processes on migration increasingly include the issue of integration on their agendas. Common approaches to integration may contribute—in the longer run—to a more equal distribution of inward migration between neighbouring countries. Cooperation and information exchange can also lead to the development of more effective migration management practices.

Cooperation between countries of origin and destination is important. It facilitates the outreach of countries of origin to their diaspora and helps them meet their needs and obtain protection of their rights. It also enables host countries to identify and implement effective integration practices. The effectiveness of integration is enhanced when the process begins in the country of origin prior to emigration. It may be useful for host countries to support education and information schemes in countries of origin, thereby investing in their own future labour force, as well as the development countries of origin.
Apply What You Have Learned

1. What policy dilemmas are of greatest concern in your setting?

2. What forms of cooperation between countries of origin and countries of destination is important for integrating migrants in your State?

3. What position would you take on each of the five policy challenges given in the important points in this topic?
Concluding Remarks

Integration is a daunting challenge for newly arrived migrants. The change of environment and circumstances often proves to be overwhelming. This Section has outlined some of the issues related to the integration of migrants. It has pointed out that there is no single blueprint for integration, and that policy makers will arrive at different conclusions depending on the specific circumstances in their own countries.

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