

The linguistic policy as a non-violent means in the struggle for the autonomy: the case of Catalonia

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Abstract

Ethnic nationalism, which is still a relevant issue in many states, is historically linked with various ethnic groups in many places of the world, including Europe. Most European nationalist groups tend to take after each other, regarding the methods of struggle and goals. Nevertheless, there are certain minorities with their unique approaches to the central government. The Catalan nationalist group in Spain can be pointed out as a good example of such circumstances. It appears that the representatives of the region were mainly oriented on finding the solution to the problems which they faced with the central governments of their state by using the non-violent means, including the language strategy to unite the whole minority. It is also interesting that the representatives of the minority focused on enhancing their autonomy within the Spain rather than separating from the state. Actually, this aspect differentiates the case of Catalonia from the most nationalist tendencies in Europe.

The purpose of this paper is to study the case of Catalonia in Spain and analyze the language strategy as a means of their struggle for compromising the central government of the state. Firstly, the paper shows the essence of the situation carried out in the aforementioned region and the research thesis in the introduction. Furthermore, the focus is on the research methods, conceptualization, operationalization and the relevant literature sources. Afterwards, the detailed analysis of the Catalan nationalism stresses the major aspects of the use of Catalan language as a non-violent method and its link to the struggle for the expanded autonomy by the ethnic group on the territory of the Spanish state. Last but not least, the findings are analyzed in the conclusion.

Keywords

Catalonia; Nationalism; Non-violent means; Language.

Introduction

The case of Catalonia is the important subject of the research for the scholars. The historical circumstances, happening in this region of the European state, demonstrate the maturity of the Catalan minority. According to Scott Greer (2007), “Scotland and Catalonia... are thickly institutionalized, dense societies with complex interwoven interests... in environmental stability and their own autonomy...” (p. 3). This shows that the Catalans were structurally well-groomed and did not have much trouble with the central government of their state. Based on this evidence, one might argue that such region would not focus on the violent measures. Therefore, it is important to study the nationalist tendencies in the region in details.

During the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, the ethnic nationalist waves were mostly oriented on the separation of certain territories from the sovereign states. However, the several ethnic groups would mainly call for the increased self-government capabilities (Greer, 2007). Due to these facts, it is interesting to study how helpful it was for the Catalan ethnic group to use the language strategy as a non-violent approach in order to articulate its needs during the nationalist processes. In other words, it has to be analyzed whether the use of the linguistic policy by the aforementioned groups became the important antecedent to the increased autonomy in Catalonia. Thereafter, the issue requires the careful analysis from the historical perspective of Spain. First and foremost, the existing literature has to be reviewed in order to analyze the essence of the academic works written in this field.

Literature Review

The analysis of the literature about the situation in Catalonia is crucial in order to get introduced to the different authors' views about the case itself and also find out the gaps which are important to fill by the new research. It has to be underlined that many scholars have studied this topic but only few of them focused on the linguistic policy as a non-violent factor for the Catalans in order to expand their autonomy in Spain.

Scott Greer focuses on the differences and similarities between the Scottish and Catalan nationalist groups. The author describes both regions of two diverse European states, UK and Spain, as the cases in which the nationalist tendencies ultimately resulted in the increased self-governance of the ethnic minorities. He acknowledges that historically both Catalan and Scottish societies were

mostly oriented on tacit and cultural tools in order to persuade the central government in the necessity of fulfilment of their requests (Greer, 2007). This, actually, gives the reason to think of the peaceful dynamics of processes in Catalonia because it appears that the Catalan ethnic group was not combatant and did not strive towards militarist activities. Considering the author's opinion about the civilized nature of Catalan nationalism, which was oriented on establishing the efficient cultural autonomy within Spain rather than seceding from the state (Greer, 2007), it becomes clear that the long-term plans of the region could have easily been executed by the non-violent strategy, chosen by the Catalans. The fact that the author describes the process of positive change of the Catalan language status in the region (Greer, 2007) breeds more interest in reading and analyzing each extract of it. The source can be assessed as a helpful work in the process of studying the nationalist tendencies in Catalonia. Despite the fact that the linguistic tendencies are described in the source, it is not evaluated as the non-violent mechanism in the hands of the ethnic minority to accomplish its ends. In other words, its essence in the struggle for the expanded autonomy of Catalonia is not perfectly studied which shows the necessity of the further research in this field.

John Etherington's point of view is also significant while analyzing the Catalan nationalism. Taking into account the author's emphasis on the Catalan's desire to extend their self-rule as well as the historical necessity of the Catalan language for the minority (Etherington, 2003), the source seems to be valuable for carrying out the in-depth research on the aforementioned ethnic minority. The author emphasizes the fact that Catalonia was involved in certain confrontations during the 1600s and 1700s (Etherington, 2003) which creates an atmosphere for reckoning of the existence of certain amount of violence in the region and once again depicts the necessity of foreseeing the author's opinion while working on the paper. Paying attention to the author's description of "Renaixença" (the so called "revival"), as an important event with regard to transforming the nationalist processes in Catalonia (Etherington, 2003), one might argue that this may be a key academic work to analyze the significant aspects of the case. It, actually, shows the importance of studying the phenomenon of the Catalan language as a non-violent source for the minority to strengthen its autonomous capabilities inside the Spanish state.

Moreno, Arriba and Serrano's work is also important, as they look the Catalan case through prism of the peaceful nationalism. They study the case during the different stages of history and show that the Catalan language was an important factor in the region (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998). This, actually, emphasizes that the linguistic factor has to be analyzed carefully while focusing on

Catalonia. The source is crucial in order to assess the non-violent nature of the language policy for the minority. In spite of not depicting the precise link between the use of the linguistic leverage and the increase of autonomous status, the authors' opinions pave the way for conducting the comprehensive research on the issue.

Henry Miller and Kate Miller concentrate on the importance of the Catalan language for the minority. They analyze General Francisco Franco's merciless steps towards Catalonia. According to them, although Franco's government penetrated rudely into the life of the minority by spreading the Spanish language and limiting the space for the Catalan one, the biggest part of the Catalan society was in favor of the pacifist attitudes (Miller & Miller, 1996). All this proves the necessity to analyze each aspect of the case and pay the special attention to how these non-violent approaches affected the autonomous status of the minority.

Jude Weber and Miquel Strubell i Trueta also describe and analyze the essence of the native language in the reality of Catalonia. To their mind, Franco's policy painted a harmful picture for the Catalans, as their language was strongly oppressed. They are also oriented on studying the Catalan language issue after the end of Franco's dictatorship, emphasizing the fact that it played an important role in uniting the whole ethnos (Webber & Strubell i Trueta, 1991). The source is necessary due to the fact that it describes the linguistic advantage of the Catalans, as a vital non-violent method for the development of the minority in modern Spain. Nevertheless, the causal chain between the peaceful language approach and the improved Catalan self-government is not perfectly studied in it.

Daniele Conversi and Sanjay Jeram's paper also has an important meaning in order to study the circumstances in Catalonia. They analyze the issues of multiethnicity and migration with regard to the minority. As the authors describe, the political importance of the Catalan ethnos started growing gradually after the establishment of the democratic regime in a post-Franco period in Spain and the Catalan language obtained many advantages in the official life of the minority (Conversi & Jeram, 2017). This is a good proof of the fact that the language policy was a pivotal aspect in the development of the Catalan ethnic group and therefore, it is important to study its contribution to the issue of autonomy of the minority within Spain.

The literature review emphasizes the fact that despite the existence of certain scientific sources on the essence of the case of Catalonia, the separate research has to be carried out in order to study

the impact of the Catalan language as a non-violent mechanism on the enlargement of autonomy of the ethnic minority. Thereafter, the analysis of the issue may result in new significant findings.

Methodology

The research mainly focuses on the use of non-violent means by the nationalists in Catalonia to reach their ultimate goals. The research question of the paper is the following: which factor made a pivotal influence on the increase of the Catalan's autonomy in Spain? Hereby, the following hypothesis is formulated: the use of the language strategy as a non-violent mechanism made a pivotal influence on the increase of the Catalan's autonomy in Spain. This hypothesis has to be tested in the paper.

First and foremost, there is a necessity to emphasize the independent and dependent variables in harmony with the hypothesis (Van Evera, 1997). As it appears, the independent variable in this case is the use of the language strategy as a non-violent method and the dependent variable - the increase of autonomy in Catalonia.

The qualitative methods are used in order to study the research thesis. Process tracing (Keohane, King & Verba, 1994) is of central importance, as it provides an opportunity to find a link between the independent and dependent variables. The case study method (Babbie, 2016) is necessary in order to figure out the major details in the case of Catalonia. Furthermore, the textual analysis (Carley, 1997) is a relevant method, as it facilitates analyzing the messages and official positions of the politicians, public figures and authors. Apart from these methods, the historical analysis (Keohane, King & Verba, 1994) is also necessary in order to observe the processes, held in the region, in the historical perspective.

The conceptualization of the major concepts is vitally important to study the thesis (Babbie, 2016). The language strategy/linguistic policy carries the meaning of the native Catalan language which was used as a tool by the Catalans to unite the whole Catalan society to deal with the central government of the states (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998). The violent and non-violent means also have to be defined. The concept of the violent means refers to the brutal activities that involve the tensions and bloody consequences (e. g. the War of Succession in 1700s (Etherington, 2003)), whereas the non-violent means include the peaceful methods such as uniting the people by the linguistic ties, holding the bloodless demonstrations, etc. The autonomy is also an essential term

for the paper, meaning the local self-government of the Catalan minority in the borders of Spain (Greer, 2007).

The operationalization of the basic aspects of the hypothesis (dependent and independent variables) is also crucial for the paper (Babbie, 2016). The essence of the linguistic policy as a non-violent method is analyzed by studying the use of the language strategy and its results on various historical stages in Catalonia. In other words, it is observed whether the approach of gathering the Catalans by the language ties brought the non-violent circumstances or on the contrary, became the catalyst of the bloody and drastic activities. Furthermore, the process of Catalans' struggle for the autonomy is observed by the connection between the linguistic ties of the Catalan individuals and the increase or decrease of their autonomous capabilities inside the Spanish state. Additionally, the increase/decrease of the Catalans' self-governing capacities are evaluated by the evolution/decline of the legal mechanisms for the execution of the perfect autonomy (Webber & Strubell i Trueta, 1991) and also the nature of their significance in political and social life of Spain (Miller & Miller, 1996). The careful analysis of these aspects is significant to draw the interesting picture of the events in Catalonia.

The aforementioned research methods, concepts and practical steps to study the variables are vitally important for the paper. To my mind, this research design gives an opportunity to observe the causal relations between the language policy and the autonomous conditions of the region.

Analysis

The historical background

“Catalan Nationalism is not a new phenomenon: as a modern political movement in Catalonia, its roots can be traced back to the 19th century, as with so many other nationalist movements in Europe and beyond”, - says John Etherington (2003, p. 135). In fact, Catalonia seems to be the place where the nationalist groups did not appear first and therefore, it could have adopted the already existing trends of nationalism. Taking into consideration the fact that later the Catalans were mainly interested in the increase of their rights in the boundaries of the Spanish state (Etherington, 2003), it might be reasonable to think that the minority would not opt for the violent strategy. The analysis of the historical circumstances is necessary in order to find out all the important aspects.

First of all, it is remarkable that Catalonia, as a region, has a very interesting geopolitical past. In the 12th century, it was under the rule of the Kingdom of Aragon. Bearing in mind that the Catalan language was of central importance and the territorial aspects were not, actually, considered as the fundamental tools in case of constructing the Catalan nationalist approaches (Etherington, 2003), the minority could possibly be oriented on peaceful, civilized measures rather than heavily radical steps. Moreover, it might be reckoned that violence was not the part of approaches at the early stages of nationalism in Catalonia. However, the events were not carried out as positively as it could be forecasted according to this analysis.

After the unification of the two kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1400s (which remained on the world map till the beginning of the 19th century), Catalonia fell under a huge pressure of the dual reign. At the beginning of the 1710s, their language was no longer relevant in the general societal life and the situation became harder in the 1820s, when it was completely altered by the Castilian language in the education sphere (Etherington, 2003). These historical circumstances lead to reckoning about the probable violent protest from the Catalans, as the aforementioned restrictions instituted by the unified rule might seem unbearable for the ethnos. The War of the Reapers and the transfer of Roussillon (the territory in Catalonia) to the French rule in the 17th century and the War of Succession in the 18th century (Etherington, 2003) are the facts of the use of violence at the early stage of the nationalist tendencies in Catalonia. Nevertheless, if we attentively follow the flow of events, it can easily be observed that the “Renaixença” (“revival”), as a pivotal cultural phenomenon in the history of Catalonia in the 19th century, played an important role in shaping the norms for the future steps that should be undertaken by the Catalans (Etherington, 2003). It appears that despite certain past traumatic facts, coming from the governing style of Castile and Aragon, Catalonia chose the non-violent strategy to deal with the challenges in the 1800s. In fact, this is reflected in Moreno, Arriba and Serrano’s (1998) words: “Catalan nationalism... was more intellectual and has always been less secessionist in character” (p. 67). Therefore, it is evident that the use of violent methods such as injuring and killing people, exploding the living areas, damaging and demolishing the infrastructure, etc., were not in the agenda of the Catalans.

It can also be assumed that the shift to the civilized nationalist policy was the product of the rapid economic enhancement of Catalonia. The fact that the Catalans were the most progressive manufacturers in Spain by the late 1800s contributed to their uniqueness in the state and evolved the cultural aspects in their nationalist attitudes which were in harmony with the “Renaixença”

values (Etherington, 2003). This statement once again underlines the emergence of peaceful approaches in the population inside Catalonia and shows that the rich region did not have the goal of fighting the armed battle against the central government at that time.

The historical facts show that in spite of certain tensions and confrontations, the Catalans were mostly oriented on the non-combatant ways of coping with challenges from the early periods of the humankind development to the 18th and 19th centuries. Thereafter, it is interesting whether the same tendency continued afterwards when Catalonia, as a region in Spain had to deal with the central government of the state in the nearest history.

The strategy of the minority towards the central government

As the time marched on to the 1900s, the new processes were incepted in Spain. After the end of General Primo de Rivera's brutal regime of 1923-1930, which hindered the formation of the alliance between certain provinces of Catalonia – Lleida, Girona, Barcelona and Tarragona, the establishment of the Second Republic led to the increased local rights of Catalans (Etherington, 2003). These circumstances demonstrate the interesting set of events because the new century began by the dramatic style of rule in Spain which was harmful for the Catalans in order to ensure stability in their region and articulate their requirements in a civilized manner. Thereafter, it can be reckoned that the minority might have chosen the violent path unless the Second Republic had provided new opportunities for them to feel comfortable inside the boundaries of the Spanish state. Bearing in mind the fact that the new constitution of the Second Republic granted the autonomous status to Catalonia (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998), it may be considered that the situation was becoming better for the Catalans for peaceful cohabitation with the representatives of the Spanish central government. Despite these positive steps, the establishment of General Francisco Franco's rule after the end of the Civil War led to the new policy towards minorities (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998). As Franco had an antagonistic approach to both categories of minorities that either demanded self-determination from Spain or self-government inside the borders of the state, he started an open war against any requests of minorities (Etherington, 2003). His rule was a real "cultural genocide" (Webber & Strubell i Trueta, 1991, p. 15) for Catalans, as the Spanish language was imposed on their educational, cultural and many other institutions (Miller & Miller, 1996). It may be argued that such kind of a scenario could be a motivational factor for the Catalans to start the radical struggle against the central government of Spain and this would reverse the situation to

the violent conflict. Paradoxically, the minority chose another strategy. As Miller and Miller (1996) reckon, language can be a useful tool for a certain ethnic minority within a specific state in order to emphasize its own difference from the other groups and maintain relevance as an ethnos. Ensuring the cohesion of the whole Catalan population by the linguistic ties became an important means for the region to strive towards better future inside the Spanish state and deal with Franco's repressive policy (Miller & Miller, 1996). This demonstrates a clear picture of the attitude of Catalonia to the central government of the state: the minority, actually, decided not to fight for its rights by the violent means and decided to depend on the peaceful mechanisms such as language. It is also apparent that the minority mainly focused on increasing its autonomy in the boundaries of the Spanish state and secession was not part of its strategy.

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned tacit, cultural approach to the central government's activities was the policy of the middle class of minority, whereas the lower class was calling for the use of force (Miller & Miller, 1996). It seems that the idea of opting for the non-violent means for the articulation of requirements was supposed to be more pragmatic for the general population of the region. Taking into account the neat institutional arrangement of Catalonia as well as its beneficial social-economic conditions (Miller & Miller, 1996), it might be considered understandable why the region was mostly able to take the peaceful steps rather than speaking in the language of weapons and bloody demonstrations. The major strategic-tactical arsenal of Catalans was based on the non-violent methods until the end of Franco's dictatorial style of rule. To sum up, it is clear that despite the heavy periods caused by Franco's brutal regime, Catalonia decided not to respond to the central government's policy by the violent means, remain calm and gather the whole ethnos by the linguistic links. Therefore, the historical circumstances after the end of the General Franco's rule have to be analyzed attentively in order to find out whether Catalans continued relying on non-violent measures or not.

The issue of autonomy of the minority

After the termination of the dictatorship and the revival of democracy in Spain, the new values of freedom, equality and collaboration were spread between the various ethnic groups in the state (Miller & Miller, 1996). It is remarkable that the linguistic factor was an important aspect in Catalonia's relations with the central government of the state on many stages of mankind (Webber & Strubell i Trueta, 1991). Thereafter, it is interesting whether the language phenomenon still

remained significant after the rise of the democratic tendencies in the state and whether it played a pivotal role in the restoration of the region's autonomous status.

Considering the fact that Franco's regime ended in 1975 and the new constitution, granting the autonomy to Catalonia, equalized the Catalan language to the Castilian inside the territory of the region in 1978 (Webber & Strubell i Trueta, 1991), it becomes evident that the native language itself did not lose actuality in case of Catalonia and it started preparing the firmer soil by legal instruments in the new era of the Spanish state. Realizing that the adoption of the new constitution contributed to the future prospects of the integrated Spain, inhabited by various ethnic groups that were given the right to choose the forms of self-rule on their own (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998), it can be emphasized that the attitude of the central government towards the minorities was becoming softer. The merciful multiethnic approach to the minorities, residing on the territory of the Spanish state, might be an antecedent to the fruitful cohabitation between the titular majority and the ethnic groups. This could most probably motivate the Catalans to remain devoted to the non-violent strategy. The Language Normalization Act of 1983 incepted the process of teaching Catalan at schools. This process was supposed to be a catalyst for the large-scale linguistic influence in the region. It seemed that the peaceful manifestations of the population of Catalonia after the end of Franco's rule, having the linguistic aspect as one of the key issues of agenda, was yielding fruit (Miller & Miller, 1996). It may be believed that these processes could make an important influence on the future relations between the Catalans and the Spanish. The most significant is the circumstance that the Catalans were the peaceful demonstrators and not the bellicists with barbaric intentions. This, in fact, shows that there existed many conditions for the mutually beneficial negotiations between the majority and minority groups.

As the attitude towards the Catalan language was changing, it was transformed into an instrument for the official communications. It became mandatory for the citizens to study the language in order to start a labor according to the 1991 decision of the court (Miller & Miller, 1996). Needless to say that the linguistic leverage, which the Catalans opted for as a non-violent mechanism during the early days of struggle for their rights, remained a fruitful weapon in their hands to execute their plans. The fact that the number of the Catalan-speaking people fell by 30 percent in the region during Franco's dictatorship (Miller & Miller, 1996) is a good proof to consider the profitability of the democratic central government's innovative policy for Catalonia. All this led to the political encouragement of the Catalans in the state in the 1990s. Precisely, the Socialist ruling party needed

an assistance from the Catalan peripheral political elite. This was an important opportunity for the Catalans to limit the influence of Castilians in the region, on the one hand and broaden their autonomy, on the other hand (Miller & Miller, 1996). These circumstances make clear one issue: the Catalans' peaceful means paved the way to the aims in the long-term perspective. It is doubtful whether the region would have the same influence on the political processes inside Spain in case it had chosen the violent strategy. The Catalan political figures quit being politically sympathetic towards the Socialist central government, after the latter was blamed for the illegal activities and started encouraging "Partido Popular" to become the new ruling political force in Spain. This provided a carte blanche for the Catalans to increase their self-governing capabilities (Miller & Miller, 1996). This fact once again proves the flexibility of the use of linguistic ties as a motivational factor for uniting the Catalans and coping with the challenges in a peaceful, civilized manner. Actually, the non-combatant attitudes contributed to the desirable future of the Catalans after the demise of the dictatorial regime and spread of democratic standards in Spain. Bearing in mind the fact that the local ruling force from 1979 till 2003, called CiU ("Convergence and Union"), concentrated on the linguistic strategy by requesting the execution of the official clerical work in Catalan in both state and private sectors (Conversi & Jeram, 2017), it becomes evident that the non-violent policy of the ethnos was the successful long-term approach. The continuation of the same linguistic attitudes during the new coalition government and the encouragement of the Catalans' tolerance towards other ethnic groups in the 2000s and 2010s in the region (Conversi & Jeram, 2017) can be emphasized as additional factual arguments for the peaceful policy of Catalonia towards the central government. This shows that the non-violent steps remained mostly acceptable for the Catalans in the modern era, too.

In sum, it can be assumed that the Catalans managed to widen their political importance as well as the autonomous status of their region in the Spanish state by choosing the non-violent steps towards the central government. To my mind, the analysis of the case may be summarized by Miller and Miller's (1996) interesting point of view:

"Political forces in Catalonia... have managed to win ever increasing concessions to the Catalan interest of further autonomy. ...This may be one of the reasons why the civic culture of Catalonia leaves little room for extremism. This is illustrated by the fact that the separatist elements have a relatively small following. Catalan political and economic forces

are on the whole trying to integrate and co-ordinate their own interests with those of the wider framework of Spain.” (p. 122).

Conclusion

The main results of the study indicate that the hypothesis is proved: the use of the language strategy as a non-violent mechanism made a pivotal influence on the increase of the Catalan’s autonomy in Spain. It appears that the central government of Spain was ready to negotiate with the minority during most periods of history and this became an important antecedent to the improvement of the self-governing capabilities in the region.

The analysis depicts that the answer to the question on the willingness of the central government towards the Catalan society lies in the fact that historically the nationalist tendencies in Catalonia were oriented on the peaceful means, mainly the linguistic ties. As it is analyzed above, despite certain political clashes at the early period of the mankind, “Renaixença” (“revival”) in the 1800s became a significant motivator of the Catalans to remain tolerant towards each challenge that they would face in life and use the major non-violent weapon, the language for the execution of their plans (Etherington, 2003). The non-separatist nature of the nationalist processes in Catalonia (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998) was a helpful contributor to the evolution of the peaceful tendencies in the region. In essence, the Catalans did not show antagonism towards the titular majority of the Spanish state and mostly concentrated on dealing with each issue in a more civilized, calm way. It can be assumed that the leading manufacturing characteristic of the ethnic group in the 19th century (Etherington, 2003) not only assisted the economic enhancement of the Catalan society but made an influence on the articulation of its general requirements. In other words, the study proves that Catalonia was not only the peaceful negotiator with the central Spanish political elite but also an economically advanced region, carrying a vital meaning for the state.

As argued above, the change of the central government’s attitudes towards the minority rights after the establishment of Franco’s dictatorship, involving the barbaric policy to the Catalan language (Moreno, Arriba & Serrano, 1998) did not become the causal factor for the periphery to start the violent activities against the central government. According to the analysis, sooner or later, the main goal was achieved by setting up the firm chain in each and every representative of the minority with the help of the native language. The termination of Franco’s rule and the flourishing

of liberal-democratic tendencies in Spain emphasized the suitability of the Catalans' approaches: as Catalan language firstly became egalitarian with the Castilian language in the region and then gained the essence of the officially significant factor for schooling and labor activities, this contributed not only to the improvement of the autonomous conditions of the minority but to its political significance as well. The analyzed circumstances show that the region was important for the central political establishment of the state in different periods, ranging from the Socialist party rule to "Partido Popular" (Miller & Miller, 1996).

In conclusion, it seems that the non-violent strategy, reflected in uniting the whole ethnic group by the linguistic leverage, became a strong catalyst of the increased autonomy of Catalonia in Spain. Therefore, it is apparent that this policy was a profitable tool for the Catalans to execute their main plans without the severe damage of infrastructure and the dreadful killings of people.

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