

Breaching Fortress Europe: By Any Means Necessary: The Complications of African Migration to Europe

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Abstract

Although African migration to Europe dates back to antiquity, Africans' presence in Europe increased substantially from the 1960s, especially since the imposition of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s, and the political crisis that consumed some African countries in the 1990s and 2000s. There has also been increased migration to Europe by the few skilled and professional Africans allowed to take advantage of opportunities that have opened up for employment in fields where there is a dearth of expertise. Nevertheless, predominant conceptualization of Africans' movement into Europe entails breaching an impregnable fortress, using any means at their disposal. Those making irregular migration includes as a mix of refugees, asylees, documented and undocumented migrants. However, European economic crises and the vulnerabilities spawned in consequence, have laid bare politicized, securitized, xenophobic and callous responses, particularly in the frontline states that receive what is increasingly perceived as a "deluge." Given the siege mentality that has developed around migration, the negative xenophobic attitudes, discourses and policies that emerge from them, and the increased securitization of migration, the siege characterization seems even more apt.

Keywords: Fortress Europe; African migration to Europe; undocumented migrants; irregular migration; refugees, asylees; xenophobia; securitization of migration.

Introduction

African migration to Europe is numerically smaller than those from other regions of the world as seen in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics (ECOWAS-SWAC/OECD 2006). The current refugee “deluge” also does not have an African face whether it is in media reports, scholarly analysis, the popular imagination, or even as measured through the institutional responses by African governments or their regional organizations. One does, however, get glimpses of African migrants from Islamophobic responses that paint Muslims from North African and other regions with a broad brush. There is little indication of the longevity and diversity of African migration, or of the true character of migration from the Maghreb, Sahel and other parts of Africa. There is inadequate understanding of the larger social, political, and economic contexts within which these migrations occur. There is even less understanding of the disparate motivations of migrants, and of how second and subsequent generations of African migrants are similar to, or different from their parents. There is also a tendency to see African migrants as predominantly driven to migrate by economic impetus rather than political constraints. Although it gives us a sense of the antinomies of this ongoing process of border crossing, scant attention is paid to the ways in which African talent is contributing to the enrichment of professional and cultural life, including academia, sports and entertainment.

The fact that some of us can cross European borders more easily than others also creates incentives for those denied entry to strive even harder. What they are challenging in trying to breach the seemingly impregnable fortress that Europe has erected to keep them out is not only state and regional policing of various ever-increasing borders; they are ultimately calling upon a

hypocritical liberal world order to act as though it were truly liberal. So many are dying because most of the world refuses to engage. Many believe it is not their business; the migrants/refugees/asylees should stay put wherever it is they are coming from, particularly when they are being propelled by economic crises. The liberal world order even has rules and norms that affirm this callous perspective.

This paper will explore the unfolding effects of contemporary securitization regimes on African migration to Europe, and how the complexity of African migration challenges tendencies to over-generalize, oversimplify, and underestimate the vibrancy that African immigrants bring to Europe. This applies to both those migrants that are treated as disposable and left to die on the Mediterranean, as well as those migrants that are lucky enough to have made the crossing. Though considered lucky, the latter are still expected to remain corralled in encampments, awaiting either a magnanimous response or a deportation to other places where they are fair game due to their desire to breach fortress Europe. Paradoxically, some of these locations are in Africa (Raghavan 2017, Graham-Harrison 2017 , Hall 2017, Hagan 2017).

Another paradox is that the establishment and strengthening of the fortress and increased harshness of policies to restrict entry cause an increase in clandestine movements and a proliferation of dangerous alternatives (Collyer 2010, DeHaas n.d.). Migrants have then to make longer, more fragmented journeys, often at great cost to their well-being. Sometimes, they even lose their lives. When this happens to numerous people, we hear about it on the news. Otherwise, the struggle goes on behind the scenes. African and European states are equally guilty for hypocritically choosing expediency over genuinely effective, well-thought out policies that would acknowledge that Europe needs migrants for many reasons, not least due to its inability to reproduce the aging population and tap into a steady stream of low-paid workers. African

countries need outlets for frustrated youth and other workers, who are either unemployed or underemployed. The volume and size of remittances have also been proven to be significant enough, not only as support for family in emergency situations, and for everyday living expenses, but also as a higher source of financial flow that in some situations, is bigger than both Official Direct Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Thus, there is no real incentive for African states to take serious measures to deter potential migrants. Regardless, expedient measures are often taken in response to European overtures that erect barriers to migration, leading sometimes to egregious human rights abuses. One such example is the removal of migrants from locations from which they can more easily make the crossing to Europe, and leaving them stranded in the desert without water by Libya and Morocco.

African states on the frontlines of the migration such as Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal have also entered into agreements that give them what I consider to be meager payoffs to shore up the fortress meant to keep out migrants. These bilateral agreements with African countries, e.g. Libya, lead to human rights abuses and flouting international law on refugees. Libya for example, constructed jails in the desert to stop people from reaching European Nation (EU) countries. Red Cross and Human Rights activists complained that they were denied access. Syria is a game-changer due to the sheer numbers of those attempting to cross European boundaries at the same time, but in spite of the lower numbers of migrants from Africa, the journeys through the Mediterranean are of long standing for people from the Maghreb, Sahel, and other parts of Africa. Regardless of what is done, the journeys will continue. Depending on state and regional policies, some journeys might be as dignified as when I casually travel to go to a conference, visit family, engage in tourism, attend my mother's funeral, visit a child, etc. Conversely, it might exert great suffering, indignities, otherization, and even death to Africans

who only differ from me because of the level of their desperation and exclusion from the much-touted benefits of globalization.

African Migrations: Documented, Undocumented, Irregular and Otherwise

African migration to Europe spans a panoply of typologies, including the documented, undocumented, irregular migrations, as well as the movement of refugees and asylees. The irregular movements that encompass African migrations to Europe are some of the most stigmatized forms of migration in the 20th and 21st centuries. They are precarious, capricious, turbulent trajectories via the Sahara, Morocco, and the Mediterranean that belie metaphors of waves and flows (Schapendonh 2012). It is also important to remember the frontline states Italy, Greece, and Spain, who complain about carrying the majority of the burden, and the EU response of using FRONTEX as a solution. This “solution,” or lack thereof, is unhelpful and inhumane. Many protests have caused the stoppage or pausing of FRONTEX, but there is no guarantee that this would not be revived.

Even as migrants who take the most grueling measures to breach fortress Europe and put muscles behind their imagined futures of better life are repelled, elite footballers and athletes are very welcomed (Paul 2007, Poli 2006). But this variant of the migrations too has a most unpleasant underbelly. Recruiters are not always ethical, and many would-be footballers get duped or at least, exploited by unscrupulous scouts who promise glorious futures akin to those of Yaya Toure from Cameroon who plays for Manchester City, Didier Drogba of Ivory Coast who plays for Chelsea, and Sam Eto'o of Cameroon who plays for InterMilan. In reality, many recruiters leave players in the lurch without any recourse.

The crisis-driven imperative affects not only media and popular attention, but also seems to influence scholarly focus. Structural explanations give some insight into the causal factors that are operative, but do not fully capture the complex reality. Long term historical elements that reveal enduring patterns due to the structural constraints from the Capitalist World System must be combined with attention to the influence of human agency. This means we should attend to variation in migration impetus, and the combination of structural and agentic drivers is needed for a fuller picture.

Media focus and the brutal nature of the journey, combined with multiple deaths and sheer numbers of migrants involved, shows us enduring images of unfolding, unending catastrophe. State policies and regional responses do not help. For example, on March 3 2015, Donald Tusk, the EU Council President made a statement in Athens after a meeting with Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, "I want to appeal to all potential illegal economic migrants, wherever you are from: Do not come to Europe...Do not risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing. Greece, or any other European country, will no longer be a transit country" (Afanasieva and Karagiannopoulos 2016) What does this mean for the policy of non-refoulement? (as expressed in Article 33(1) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of refugees: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR 1977). One almost wants to tell these bureaucrats and policy makers not to waste their breath. Nothing can stop people from migrating if they want to do so. Although people will migrate regardless of what states and regional organizations dictate, one cannot stop there particularly since there is much more to migration than the compelling lack of volition that

forces people to uproot themselves from the familiar to struggle in places where they are strangers and sojourners. *Oro po ninu iwe kobo*/there is much to be found in a penny-pamphlet, as my Yoruba kin are wont to say. There is also a great lament in Yorùbá that captures the situation of migrants: “*Ha! Ise Aje l’o gbe mi de’le yi o!*”/I am in this land due to the quest for work and good fortune (Ige 1960s). The lament reminds us that migrants are driven to leave their home countries and foray into other lands by the quest for good fortune. The lived experience of migrants also show that some are fleeing from conflict and persecution, as well as environmental devastation, wide variety of motives while others are highly sought after and courted. Paradoxically, when it comes to Africans, we tend to get the propaganda about those driven to migrate by desperate economic circumstances and devastation. Most are repelled and demonized rather than embraced and lionized.

The EU warns economic migrants to stay away. But is it that cut and dried? Scholars of migration have told us about mixed migrations. People move for economic reasons; some of these folks could also be asylees or refugees. It is often impossible to clinically separate one from the other category. Where war, conflict, political persecution and the like cause increased movement of people who leave everything behind, and are joined by people who don’t have the same impetus, but want better socioeconomic conditions, is this just opportunism? What solutions are available? As far as Donald Tusk is concerned, they should simply not come.

The matter is complicated by the existence of some international legal coverage for refugees and asylees, via global and regional laws, but no such coverage for people fleeing lack of economic opportunity and poverty. All these exist in a world that purports to be guided by liberal principles. No one here is naïve. We know that the liberalism that extends to economic situations doesn’t apply to the desire of people to move. Money moves faster than the eye can

blink. When bureaucrats in Europe see the refugees and asylees, they fear disruption, claim that they are freeloaders and free riders, and also want these people to realize that beggars can't be choosers. This is why the French bulldozed "the Jungle" in Calais. It is why many countries refuse to take refugees. It is why the EU President warned people to stay away. It is why three young African men were attacked by other youth in quiet, orderly Gottingen, where I currently live. It is why some people clutch their handbags closer to their bodies when they see me coming in the same Gottingen. It is clear that migration will not stop despite harsh and brutal measures and rhetoric. The people moving are an admixture from multiple origins. Africans are lost in the shuffle. People also express clear preference despite the desperate, harsh conditions in places like "the Jungle" in Calais. Many refugees and asylees prefer the UK to France. The UK doesn't want everyone. Neither do France and Greece, some of the epicenters of movement, particularly from Syria. Making sense and teasing out Africans from this has become very difficult. It was clearer before the Syrian crisis propelled its own flows. Eritrea, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan still have conflict. The Casamance region in Senegal and Northeastern Nigeria plus Nigeria's neighbors that are afflicted by Boko Haram are also pressure points. Some of the people affected will foray farther afield and join these flows. Some are similarly fleeing from or walking away from long-term lack of opportunity. It is these latter categories that attract the ire of Eurocrats and decision-makers which leads to efforts to keep migrants at home, to build more formidable barriers, including weaponized walls, and to increase brutal policing of borders of all sorts, including those over ever-increasing locales on land, the high seas and in airports (Jusionyte and Goldstein 2016).

Migrants Leaving Africa by any Means Necessary: The Problem with Bilateral and Multilateral International Agreements on Migration

International agreements with African states, as mentioned earlier, compel the interception, detention, and repatriation of migrants in gateway countries to keep them from reaching Europe. From the post-1973 oil crisis, these increased restrictions caused increases in family reunification and permanent settlement by migrants who knew that they could no longer freely travel back and forth. People moved to more congenial countries where cheap labor was in demand, including southern Europe, especially Italy, Spain, and even Portugal. Most of the migrants were Maghrebi until the 1990s when the irregular migrations were subjected to increased regulation by Spain and Italy. Again, the response increased clandestine migrations under unsafe conditions, increased crises in “Morocco’s Spanish enclaves in 2005 and Spain’s Canary Islands in 2006” (de Haas 2006). In a development dating from the 1970s and 1980s when African countries experienced serious economic crises, the migrants crossing to Europe from the Maghreb increasingly included Sub-Saharan Africans. The flows have intensified since the 2000s. The migrants draw on ancient historical trans-Saharan movements. Former nomads and traders began seeking construction jobs in Libya and Southern Algeria.

“By any means necessary” is how I conceive of the movements of irregular migrants. I do this because of the importance of the imaginary as an impetus for migration. Let’s consider one of Appadurai’s five scapes of globalization: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *ideoscapes*, and *financescapes*. Ideoscapes, in particular, concern the power of the imaginary and role of everyday lived realities and activities to create/reinforce/modify and reshape the possibilities (Appadurai 1990). Social institutions play an important role—the long shadow of the past and integration of new knowledge causes modified expectations and new possibilities.

New modes of attaining the desired objectives also materialize. The role of neoliberal ideological and institutional mechanisms is felt in a consumerist world where people are made to believe that all things are possible, but the possibilities are more to be found in the West, as a matter of fact, in some imaginaries, they are located there. Migration to Europe is seen as the avenue to success—glossy and privileged life in material terms appears and can be embraced. All one needs is to be there. Individuals and businesses, even media conspire to propagate this idea of the limitless, beautiful Europe.

It is also important not to downplay the persistence of economic pain for some. We all know of Africa's fast-growing youth population. Despite the rhetoric of "Africa Rising" and great investments in education by families that want their offspring to be successful, high levels of unemployment and underemployment drag on for years on end (Anyanwu 2013). The idea that all you need to do is leave, somehow get to the West and you're all set, inspires hope which is groomed by Christian pastors, Muslim clerics, friends, family abroad, media, ads, etc. This idea that your life is going nowhere and you could be successful instantly once you get to the West causes ever-rising expectations and the urge to go by any means necessary. The efforts to prevent migration/dampen the urge/stop entry is bound to fail because of the powerful impetus of the imaginary, the perception and reality of the absence of more viable options, and the tendency to believe that one success case is indicative of infinite possibilities.

The process of irregular migration includes both men and women but the securitization of migration favors young men who are able to scale high and formidable physical barriers such as the walls that barricade against easy entry. Women are also more vulnerable to some kinds of exploitation, but should not be seen as mere victims, or always as victims. They are in fact more likely to benefit from the "humanitarian" aspects of the migration regime, particularly if they are

pregnant, or have young children. As hard as the journey is, as challenging as the obstacles are, and as formidable as the barriers are made, the urge to leave and create better lives is even stronger. Those who successfully scale the hurdles are celebrated by institutions like churches that use them as examples. Pastors preach about them to inspire the potential migrants; businesses like Money Transfer Organizations (MTOs) feature them as providing for their families via remittances; advertisements show “the good life”; vacationing immigrants who show off their best attires and communicate only positive experiences, often claiming that were they to give the nitty-gritty, they would not be believed anyway.

Cumulative causation (Massey 1990) contributes to transnationalism in a process where contacts abroad assist with information, encouragement and actual facilitation of movement of migrants. This results in chain migration of family, friends, and people in social networks that provide information, assistance, and resources. There is a thriving migration industry and people movers proliferate by the day. They include a panoply of legal and clandestine institutions, mechanisms and processes. Human trafficking and the work of criminal syndicates tend to attract the most attention. Passages aren't always stable. Some may be stable and smooth and they inspire people to consider tapping into their presumed success and “good fortune”. Even as we see the heightening of securitization and harshness of the migration regime, neither the African Frontline states nor the European Union nor even the African Union are truly committed to restricting population movements because they have no economic incentives to do so. However, symbolism matters to European publics who in the aftermath of the world economic meltdown in 2008, became more xenophobic and believed that anti-immigrant measures would improve their economic conditions. The perceived threat leads to preferences for exclusion and increased anti-immigrant prejudice (McLaren 2012) .

The Mediterranean is described by Sarah Wolff as an “open air cemetery” where:

In 2004, between 700 and 1,000 died each year as they tried to cross into Europe from Africa depending on whose numbers you consulted. This number almost tripled in 2011 and included migrants dying in the Mediterranean, off the coast of Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Malta, Italy, Spain, Algeria, Greece, but also people shot dead on the Moroccan-Spanish border in Ceuta and Melilla or drowned in the Evros river on the Greek-Turkish border (Wolff 2015).

The West African route to Europe (Senegal→Mauritania→Morocco→Canary Islands) has become disrupted – not necessarily stopped. FRONTEX tells us that the migrants are from “Morocco and Senegal, with others from Niger, Nigeria and Mali” (FRONTEX 2016) By 2012, there were only 170 migrants. By 2006, the numbers peaked at 32,000. There was a 60 percent reduction in 2007. What was responsible? “Bilateral agreements between Spain and Senegal and Mauritania, including repatriation agreements. Strengthened border controls, including the installation of the SIVE maritime surveillance system, also helped, along with the coordinated Operation Hera” (FRONTEX 2016).

The current strategies are not working. Scholars of migration have said this ad infinitum and even the media sometimes show this. Migration evidence shows how badly the EU needs to rethink its migration strategy, which has made it “the deadliest migration destination in the world” (The Conversation 2016) The reports are grim. In 2014, the BBC said that over 700 died in just one week (BBC 2014). According to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), from January - August 2015, 300,000 people had made the Mediterranean crossing. 200,000 landed in Greece, and 110,000 in Italy (Flemming 2015). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said 3,329 people died while crossing in 2015 (IOM 2015). IOM’s Missing

Migrant Project reported that 418 had already died in the Mediterranean by 2016, out of 582 worldwide (Missing Migrants Project, IOM 2016). How many Africans died? Good question!

Securitizing Migration

The Western European regional integration process fostered the securitization of migration. Both the Maastricht and Schengen Treaties and The Dublin Convention guarantee freedom of movement among the signatory states, a freedom that is not extended beyond Europe, and one that asserts the sovereignty of states to determine entry into their territory, strengthened by volubly expressed concern about the destabilizing effects of migration on social security, welfare, and dilution of cultural identity, as well as fears about the invasion of terrorists, and criminal syndicates (Convey and Kupiszewski 1995, Huysmans 2000). The economic project of developing the European Common Market produced a regime that connected migration “with representations of social dangers” (Huysmans 2000). Migration is now “connected to representations of societal dangers” causing “the explicit privileging of nationals of Member States in contrast to third-country nationals and the generally restrictive regulation of migration sustains a wider process of delegitimizing the presence of immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees (Huysmans 2000, 752-753). The securitization of migration fuels “the wider politics of belonging, that is the struggle over cultural, racial and socio-economic criteria for the distribution of rights and duties in a community” (Huysmans 2000, 753).

The securitization of migration also causes the extension of borders to the high seas, and to other gateway or even origin countries, in a process that favors expediency over humane treatment of migrants, when arrangements are made with non-European gateway states like

Libya, to keep the migrants away. Grave abuses have been documented, including auctioning off migrants in slave markets, physical and sexual brutalization, exploitation and dehumanizing treatment. Migrants are also forced to undertake more dangerous migrations that increase the death toll (Sunderland 2017, Kirkpatrick 2017). The deaths in the Sahara and Mediterranean underline the harrowing nature of the journeys. African countries and regional institutions exhibit tremendous nonchalance to studying and making sound policy response to the root causes of problems that cause people to seek migration as means to survival. They tend to defer to European countries and adopt the strategies, policies and mechanisms favored by them. Such policies are not designed to help African migrants, neither are they designed to meaningfully address the fundamental causes of migration: poverty, desperation caused by structural violence, including lack of legal avenues to gainful employment, frustration from lack of economic mobility, political, sectarian and communal conflict and extreme marginalization.

Securitizing migration also encourages increased criminality. Lacking decent employment and key elements of human dignity, many see migration as a gamble that could not possibly be worse than what they endure at home. Legal opportunities for migration are few and far between, increasing the likelihood that people will pay to be trafficked. Given increased securitization, more dangerous avenues are pursued and trafficking becomes more grueling and dangerous. Both African and European states are to blame. Extreme marginalization will produce desperate “by any means necessary” type migrations. The only viable solutions are those that address structural problems that make violence characteristic of people’s experience in most African countries, and produce the unending stream of desperate migrants. These are more difficult problems to solve than stopping hapless migrants at various borders.

African countries also benefit from the remittances sent by migrants that succeed in breaching the formidable fortresses at the borders that fail to keep them out. Some, like Ghaddafi's Libya benefit from the payouts from European destination states that depend on them to keep out African migrants. This situation had its own harrowing tales of horrible treatment for migrants. However, the elimination of Ghaddafi has created a vacuum now filled by gangs that inflict even more pain, including establishing their own private prisons and auction off fellow Africans as slaves. Can African states really claim that they were unaware of these situations? Are the African Union, ECOWAS, and other regional organizations unaware? Where are their long-term policy responses to the problems?

There are also agreements between African regional organizations and the European Union, hammered out in periodic summits, of which the 5th African Union - EU Summit from November 29-30, 2017 is an example. In its account of the summit, the EU presented:

The joint declaration outlining common priorities for the EU-Africa partnership in four strategic areas:

economic opportunities for youth

peace and security

mobility and migration

cooperation on governance

According to Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, "As you know, the European Union is Africa's biggest partner and closest neighbour. Its biggest investor, its biggest trading partner, its biggest provider of development aid and humanitarian assistance as well as its biggest

contributor in peace and security. And this summit demonstrated our determination to reinforce our partnership even more” The EU also provided information on its financial outlay toward funding its priorities in the African continent:

The EU and its member states are the number one contributor to promote development, stability and peace in Africa:

€21 billion development aid was provided to Africa in 2016 by the EU and its member states, the largest aid donors on the continent

€32 billion were invested in Africa by EU companies in 2015, accounting for around one third of the overall foreign direct investment in Africa

€3.35 billion are allocated to the European fund for sustainable development, which should trigger up to €44 billion of investments

7 civilian and military missions are deployed across Africa

€1.4 billion are committed to educational programmes in Africa from 2014 to 2020 (EU 2017).

Reading the joint declaration of the AU-EU summit raise questions such as: Is this enough?

What is the AU position? How much African input is there in determining what’s needed and

what’s sufficient? How are the funds used in the implementation of these objectives? What are

African countries doing to guarantee the human security, well-being and dignity of their citizens?

Conclusion

Africans are breaching the fortress erected by Europe. They are not necessarily a deluge because their numbers are smaller than xenophobic discourse suggests. Many are losing their dignity, well-being, and lives in the process. They are not as visible as Syrians. They are not all fleeing from conflict or well-founded fear of persecution. But they are there. Are people deserving of refuge from grinding poverty? Who should decide? By what rationale? What if they are not fleeing from grinding poverty but just want better economic opportunities? What are their options if they stay at home? How do we treat all such adventurous quests for fortune regardless of race, class, gender, and status? Will migration cease when all Africans experience the benefits of the “Africa Rising” propaganda in their daily lives? According to deHaas and other scholars of migration, not necessarily. The migrants who make the trip are more affluent than people who stay (deHaas 2008). It is expensive; you need information, networks, and boldness. Most African migration also occurs within the continent. Europe loves or tolerates the skilled African footballers, artistes, medical doctors, nurses, info tech gurus, sometimes even professors. They are not always treated as though they were breaching any fortress. Should people be able to flee from conflict and political persecution and dare to come in irregular flows to Europe? The European answer to this: it depends. I agree with Carl Levy that Europe has extraterritorial refugee camps where people are processed in a way that adds up to neo-refoulement. This flouts the international liberal democratic asylum and refugee regime encoded in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention). A process of supra-national inter-governmentalism has been established where “the use of agencies such as FRONTEX and the more recent European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the open method of coordination, and other variations of soft law... was used rather than a formalized communitarian

method” (Levy 2010, 92). Along with compassion and humane responses, burden sharing among the states involved has flown out the window.

Just in case we want to shout the mantra: African Lives Matter! To whom should they matter? Whom should we hold responsible? Is it ironic that we live in a liberal international order, and money can move, goods can move, but people can't? What will it take for African governments to realize that, at least some of the onus for making humane solutions is on them?

Biographical Sketch

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