Three Paradigms of Public Administration: An Analysis of the Current Status of Public Administration in China

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In the 1970s and 1980s, many scholars paid much attention to the movement of government public administration reforms beginning in some western developed countries such as Britain, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia (Farnham and Horton, 1996). This movement has been referred to as managerialism (Pollitt, 1990, 1993), new public management (NPM) (Hood, 1991), market-based public administration (Lan, Zhiyong and Rosenbloom, 1992), post-bureaucracy (Barzelay, 1992), and entrepreneurial government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Although referred to in different ways, they described the same phenomenon, which challenges the optimal bureaucracy proposed by German sociologist Max Weber (1947). After more than 100 years development and improvement, bureaucracy is now being attacked for its inevitable shortcomings, such as department expansion, administrative cost increases, bureaucratic red tape, and institutional complexity and rigidity (Ranson and Stewart, 1994). Although governments in the aforementioned countries have realized these problems and have implemented some reforms several decades before, history keeps repeating itself after each round of reform. However, with the revival of New Libertarianism and a deeper understanding of public administration, this situation has been greatly changed by the NPM movement (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), which is gaining attention from academia and compliments from the public (Flynn, 1997).

In general, the Chinese government must contend with dilemmas similar to those faced by developed nations, namely poor administrative efficiency and large government scale. Since the “the Third Session of the 13th CPC National Congress” in 1979, the Chinese government has launched four rounds of government department reforms in 1982, 1988, 1993 and 1998, which have focused upon reducing government, cutting down the number of civil servants, and improving

Abstract: Historically, there have been three paradigms of public management, namely, the Machiavelli-Hobbes Paradigm (MHP), the Wilson-Weber Paradigm (WWP), and the Ostrom-Hayek Paradigm (OHP). These paradigms have different characteristics and face different challenges. After more than 100 years of development throughout the western countries, the WWP has achieved its utmost, having emerged as an obstacle to further development. Given this, Western countries are now embracing the OHP, and the New Public Management is a reform that is fostering this transformation. In China, however, the situation is very different. Due to the feudal traditions and the dominant governance method (rule by man, not by law), public administration in China contains several aspects of the MHP. Currently, China’s most pressing challenge encompasses instituting reforms that will cultivate a public administrative system where the rule of law prevails. The change to bureaucracy and establishment of WWP is ultimately more critical than the New Public Management.

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administrative efficiency. However, the first three did not live up to people’s expectations and finally fell into the vicious circle of “reducing, expansion, re-reducing, and re-expansion” (Ma Jianxiong and Gu Hailiang, 1996). Deng Xiaoping (1994) criticized this situation furiously, stating the following:

Now, the administration of our government has so many departments, so many layers, so many procedures, and so poor efficiencies, that we have to spend most of our time on useless political quarrels…. If we don’t carry out reforms as soon as possible, our objective of modernization and socialism will be just as good as a dream.

According to the Chinese official announcement, the government has successfully implemented the 1998 reform. However, the effectiveness of this reform is still being evaluated. According to certain Chinese scholars, the NPM is considered to be a dose of good medicine for the Chinese government (Chen Zhenming, 2000; Zhang Kangzhi, 2000).

Nevertheless, after a comprehensive analysis of the history of public administration and the status quo of the Chinese government, we find that public administration in China and the Western developed countries are at different stages, follow different paradigms, and face different problems. In developed countries, the bureaucracy has achieved its utmost, having emerged as an obstacle of further development. The New Public Management (MPM) is used to overcome bureaucracy. Because of feudal traditions and the dominant governance method (rule by man, not by law), China’s most pressing challenge encompasses instituting reforms that will cultivate a public administrative system where the rule of law prevails, which can be accomplished through bureaucracy. The change to bureaucracy becomes more critical with the information explosion and globalization. China should not follow others blindly and lose its objective of public administrative reform.

This paper discusses and analyzes three paradigms of public administration are discussed. Then the current status of public administration of China is analyzed. An argument is put forth against the adoption of NPM, as it is imperative to establish a real bureaucracy. The fourth section gives reasons why there is lack of real bureaucracy in China. Finally, we offer a conclusion.

Three Paradigms of Public Administration

Since the beginning of human societies and organizations, management or administration has emerged as the engine of organization, where the function is planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling in order to allocate the tangible and intangible resources (Fayol, 1925; Wren, 1994). According to the sectors in which an organization serves, the organizations can be divided into private and public organization, and the management can be distinguished as private and public as well. The former (“private”) refers to management in families, clans, and guilds, especially in firms nowadays. The latter (“public”) deals with whole societies or states and their subsections of the local ones. There is also a difference between management and administration, but here we do not desire to make clear clarification, as this is not the aim of this paper.

Obviously, public management has governed society, its members, and products. After the emergence of political states, public administration had become more essential in the interest of sustaining power. In many instances, force and violence served as a means of maintaining power. With the establishment of democratic states, however, management became based upon institutions, procedures, and the notion of equity, which ultimately replaced force. With this in mind, the following are three public administrative paradigms:

Machiavelli-Hobbes Paradigm, Reign Administration, and Experience Management

Throughout most periods of human history, minorities, whose validity and reasonability have been advocated and verified by political theories, have dominated the masses. Many theorists constructed the theory bases for this system for administrative control, namely Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. We can define the public administration of this time as the Machiavelli-Hobbes Paradigm (MHP), whose objective was to sustain the dominance of the minority over the majority, where power was sustained through force.
Niccolo Machiavelli was a civil servant and diplomat in Florence, Italy during the Renaissance. In his famous work *The Prince*, the monarch views his subordinates as villains, who would show their evil natures as much as they could. It was reasonable for the monarch to take any measures to deal with these irrational people. It was also necessary for him to gain a good reputation without worrying about justice. If he had to choose between cruelty and mercy, being feared and being loved, cruelty and being feared would be his choice. For a monarch, the end was more important than means, as his sins would be forgiven and the people would support him once he succeeded. The monarch must be aggressive, like a lion, and possess duplicity, like a fox (Machiavelli, 1513). "Machiavellism" became synonymous with autocracy.

Thomas Hobbes, a famous ideologue and jurist during the period of Bourgeoisie Revolution, embraced similar notions. In his book, *Leviathan*, a huge and feral beast in the sea was a metaphor of his great admiration of state power. According to Hobbes, a monarch must possess absolute power, and the citizenry are compelled to obey unconditionally (Hobbes, 1651).

Throughout the history of class rule, public administration was only the accessory of this class rule. The power of public administration came from an undisputed "God" or "Charisma," and was delegated in the manner of a scalar chain running from top to bottom. The management of society and the class rule were mixed together, and mainly took the form of a unilateral power chain from the state to its people. In this period, public administration coincided with unequal reigning. From this point, we named it reign administration, or the Machiavelli-Hobbes Paradigm (MHP).

Organizational structure is the externalization of the power structure (Weber, 1947). The organizational form of MHP is the traditional organization or Charisma organization, which is similar to the traditional hierarchy. That is, both are like a pyramid, but the management modes are totally different. In the MHP, the power to run public management — more accurately, reign — is empowered by God or Charisma, and will be passed down by inheritance or tradition. The organization lacks stable and reasonable administration in its everyday activities, and the superior could give orders skipping a grade or even juggle the order of his subordinate to the sub-subordinate at his personal will. Simply, the ruler, in accordance with his preference or experiences, manages the organization, and there are few explicit procedures and rules to follow. The aphorism "a prince has the same accusation as a plebeian if they break the same law," has proven to be a beautiful slogan, representing the manner by which ordinary people have been cheated as a result of the MHP for thousands of years.

**Wilson-Weber Paradigm, Managerial Administration, and Institutionalized Management**

With the victory of bourgeoisie revolution and the foundation of the capitalist state, democratic principles emerged, with equity serving as a foundational public administrative tenet. The ideas that "everyone is born equal," "everyone has rights with birth," and "power lies in the people" transferred the source of power from God to people. The government was recognized as a tool of the people, exerting power in order to manage social public affairs.

Certainly, it was impossible for public administration, at that time, to do away with the use of force as a means of rule, yet democracy and participatory management were becoming more popular throughout more sectors. This tendency not only brought public administration more publicity and weakened its service for political reigns, but also made it more independent to political reigns. Furthermore, it transferred the traditional political reign, overriding the whole society via an equal managerial mode that penetrated all sectors throughout the entire society. The organizational structure of this kind of public administration was "bureaucracy" (Weber, 1947). The bureaucratic power structure is based upon the separation of politics, which is the source of power, and administration, which is the use of
power (Wilson, 1887). From this point, we define it as managerial administration, or the Wilson-Weber Paradigm (WWP).

Elected in 1913 as President, Woodrow Wilson was an outstanding politician, educator, reformer, and thinker. At the end of the 19th Century, the scholars of his time were debating questions about the source of power, such as “monarchism versus democracy” and “who have the right to make law.” Wilson recognized that society was becoming increasingly more complicated, and consequently, governmental responsibilities had become diversified. With this, Wilson paid much attention to the exertion of power. In his opinion, politics and administration are two different fields. With the foundation of the democratic state and the location of the source of power, it was more important for a democratic state to understand how to exert power. Based upon the dichotomy of politics and administration, public administration as a discipline of study emerged from politics. An inherent difficulty in public administration lies not in who should master the power, but “on the one hand, to disclose what functions should be done by the government appropriately and successfully, and how to accomplish them with the highest efficiency and lowest cost; on the other hand, to abstract the effective methods from the chaos and the waste of the experiences, and establish the ‘stable principles’ upon these methods” (Wilson, 1887).

Weber (1947) provided the organizational basis for the notion of “stable principles.” Unlike the reigning administration in the traditional organization, the managerial administration is implemented in the legitimate organization whose externalization is the optimal organization structure, which is bureaucracy or hierarchy, according to Weber. From the point of organizational form, the bureaucracy is not much different from traditional structures. That is, it is a pyramid that has a small top but large bottom. Yet, there are some fundamental changes in the internal managerial modes between them.

In the bureaucracy, the power originates from the established institutions and will be delegated top-down. For a state, these institutions include its constitution, laws, bylaws, and procedures. Because the people at the bottom of the state could modify the institutions by public choice, the power of the state is no longer a unilateral reigning administration. Rather, it is in the form of a closed circuit. The staffs of the government are rational creatures, and will follow the institutions and procedures without any emotion. And with this, everything will be dealt with according to rules rather than the actors. These staffs are not the proprietors of the government, but the employees earning fixed salaries. They will take the responsibility for their superiors, which is the essence of these institutions. Moreover, they should pass the exams and received formal training in order to obtain their positions. The government should be departmentalized according to the principle of division of labor. As a result, the authorities and responsibilities of every department should be clear and independent. Therefore, the institutions, procedures, and rules, and not personal experiences or preferences, will serve as the spirit of bureaucracy. In contrast to the management in the reigning administration, the managerial administration also relies on the organizational institution. And, administrative efficiency will be determined directly by the degree of an institution’s integrity and maturity.

The bureaucracy could foster efficiency and reduce the likelihood of corruption. It is synonymous with a precise clock, which is strictly controlled by prepared programs, operating without deviation. However, the greatest handicap of the institution lies in its rigidity. “The law is not sufficient to be executed by itself.” No matter how perfect the institutions are, they must be carried out and manipulated by people. And, the bureaucracy is just a organization in which “there is no room for people” (Bennis, 1976) or “designed by genius but operated by idiots” (Blau and Meyer, 1971). Once the bureaucracy has a set of perfect institutions, it is not necessary for people to exist within the organizations.

Because of its rationality, opacity, rigidity, and the characteristics of hierarchy, it is inevitable that bureau-
cracy will conflict with democracy. Weber ultimately recognized the inherent tension between bureaucracy and democracy. That is, on the one hand, "the bureaucracy and democracy emerged simultaneously and exist with the company of each other." On the other, democracy "will undoubtedly collide with bureaucracy," and "as long as the bureaucracy exists, the people will be impossible to escape from its control and find something to substitute it" (Gerth and Mills, 1946).

**Ostrom-Hayek Paradigm, Democratic Administration, and Decentralized Management**

After more than 100 years development, the bureaucracy and managerial administration throughout the western countries have begun to gradually show side effects, such as government scale expansion, management rigidity, officialism, and formalism. This is due to the increasing complexity of society, and therefore government must accept more responsibilities. The disadvantages of the rigidity of institutions outweigh its advantages of rationality, and the people are slowly becoming the slaves of the institutions. An excellent case can be observed in accordance with "Reinventing Government" (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The Pentagon needed to replace a $100 steam valve. Wasted steam from the broken valve cost $50 every week, but it was regulated that anything more than $100 should be acquired by government purchase in June and December of every year. As a result, the government wasted thousands of dollars worth of steam because of a valve that cost merely $100. The rigidity of bureaucratic institutions is easily seen in this particular case.

The governments of these countries have realized the seriousness of this situation, and have subsequently launched a series of reforms. However, due to the constraint of managerial administration and bureaucracy, problems continued. In 1989, Vincent Ostrom provided the theoretical basis for a fundamental and meaningful reform, which become known as the New Public Management Movement. Almost 40 years ago, another famous scholar, Hayek, expressed similar ideas (1945). He made a comparison between the market and authority based upon the dispersion of knowledge. Since the knowledge relating to the decision-making was distributed among the whole market and was mastered by every individual, the centralized plan economy was inevitably worse than the market economy, where the individuals occupying knowledge made their own decisions. Ostrom (1989) followed this idea and criticized the WWP. In his opinion, the WWP is the "single center administration" and "hierarchy organization" based upon the rigid division of politics and administration and the centralization of administration center will foster the expansion of departments and increase the complexity of institutions. It is ultimately necessary to replace the WWP with a "multi-decision center," "participatory," "dispersive, overlapped and decentralized" democratic administration. We refer to this as the Ostrom-Hayek Paradigm (OHP).

The New Public Management Movement, which gained strength throughout western countries during the late 1970s, sought to achieve the following: "minimizing the government, socializing functions, improving efficiency of administration, marketing the management." This movement began in Britain with Prime Minister Thatcher, whose government took serious steps, which included selling state-owned enterprises such as Britain Tele, Britain Steel, Britain Oil, and Britain Aero. Thatcher further established efficiency teams and set up the semi-autonomous Executive Bureaus, whose heads gained the position through market competition instead of being appointed by the government. Following Britain, the Labor Parties of Australia and New Zealand came into power in 1983 and 1984 respectively, and implemented similar reforms. They abolished most of government formulas, redesigned the core departments, established the mini departments that were evaluated by their performance, and privatized $5 billion of state-
owned enterprises. In the United States, the Clinton Administration strived for “more efficiency, less expenses” and put forward the “National Performance Review” to carry out the administrative reform in both federal and local government. Until the mid 1990s, 39 states had implemented public service quality plans, 29 had exercised the government department performance review, 33 had simplified the personnel formulas, and 28 had treated the public as customers. Thereafter, the members of the OECD, such as Canada, Holland, and France, carried out similar government reforms (OECD, 1992). The New Public Management Movement became a popular phenomenon among the Western developed counties at the end of the 20th century.

Although the New Public Management Movement did not replace the organizational structure of bureaucracy, the functions of government no longer covered all respects of the whole society, and some of them were executed by NGOs, which resulted in the reduction of government scale. It did not, however, abandon the institutions. Rather, it strengthened them on the whole, as the institutions became relatively more flexible. Nonetheless, it failed to change the fact that power originates from Constitutions and bylaws, and it is the people who have the power to modify these institutions. On all accounts, the “newness” of the New Public Management Movement does not mean that it is thoroughly different from the traditional WWP.

The Current Status of Public Administration in China

Different developmental phases are facing different tasks in terms of reform. Undoubtedly, it is crucial to find the bottleneck of public administration within China and clarify its paradigm.

After a thorough analysis of the current status of public administration in China, we find that, on the one hand, reigning administration is transforming into managerial administration. On the other hand, China’s immature bureaucracy is also conflicting with democracy and decentralization in the age of the knowledge economy, globalization, and information explosion. The former is more important. However, a number of problems ultimately blur our vision.

First, the experienced management has not been completely replaced by the institutional management. The institutions and procedures are the spirit of bureaucracy and managerial administration, which was criticized for being “designed by genius but operated by idiots,” but the essence of which is to sacrifice the human sensibility for the sake of organizational rationality. This is the reason why it improved the efficiency of administration greatly. In China, however, the administration system is similar to the bureaucracy. The institutions and procedures have not yet replaced the preferences and experiences of governmental officials, especially upper-level decision makers. Chinese people place their trust in people, whereas Americans trust institutions. This may account for the difference between their prosperity (Fukuyama, 1995). When the institutions are useful to a government officer, they will be carried out without any pleas. However, when the institutions are obstacles to him, they will be discarded. In fact, the institutions are a narrow canoe to the weaker, but the broad road to the stronger. In addition, institutions seem ideal, but they are far from perfect. Some institutions conflict with others, such as the bylaws of departments and state laws. Meanwhile, there are some areas that have yet to be covered by institutions. More seriously, a large number of institutions cannot be exercised in practice. The first one is Constitutions. There are so many actions of the government breaching the Constitutions, such as depriving the migrating right of the peasants and depriving the equal right of acquiring education of children simply because they are born in the different districts. As a result, some scholars question the necessity of establishing the Constitution Court to protect it. If supreme Constitution is marginal, how about others? The difficulty of executing laws makes it difficult for the Chinese to depend on the law.

Second, the exercising of the public power is not sufficiently regulated and supervised. In the optimal bureaucracy, administrative power is, in fact, the aggregation of the public power endowed by the institutions.

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The consequence is that the power chain becomes a closed circuit, with no definitive beginning or end. The power of a superior is not his own individual power. Rather, his power comes from his position. Accordingly, one's responsibility to the superior is, in fact, not to the individual but to the institutions. When the orders of the superior conflict with the institutions of the government, the subordinates should appeal or even refuse to comply with these orders.

In China, however, governmental power is still a top-down scalar. The cost for the people to exercise their power endowed by the Constitutions is incredibly high. Because the power ends at the top of the government, and the sub-departments receive their power from their superiors, the subordinates will naturally satisfy the needs of their superiors instead of the people. With this, it is difficult for them to disobey their superiors. The power of the government is so great and unlimited that it always interferes with ordinary people's living. So, it is very urgent for the Chinese government to establish the normative, reasonable, predictable, stable, and limited public power-exerting mode, which is similar to the WWP.

Third, the administration department is not set up properly, as mismatching, overlapping, and separation between authority and responsibility exist simultaneously. Due to these deficiencies, on the one hand, there are many blind districts where nobody is responsible. On the other hand, there is multi-directing in many areas. The real bureaucracy is designed according to the division of labor and each department has its matched authority and responsibility. Different departments' functions are tangential, neither overlapping to induce multi-directing, nor separating to form the management vacuum, so that any public goods and services will be provided by the government. But in China, some government departments' functions are blurred given a lack of clear boundaries among them. The government departments' motivation for rent seeking is so strong that some public affairs containing great interests are scrambled for by many of them, but others without any benefits are repulsed and even their own duties cannot be accomplished smoothly. Nowadays, there are plenty of fake goods flooding the market and the consumers cannot distinguish among them, such as fake cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, seeds, soccer, financial statements, and even poisonous rice, biscuit, and vermicelli. Nobody, however, takes responsibility for the consequences of this. Supervision of the market is an inescapable responsibility of any governments. Failure to do so constitutes a dereliction of governmental duty.

Reasons

The public administration reform in China is facing two tasks: the first one is to consummate the WWP; the second is to introduce the OHP. The reason for the latter task is similar to that of the Western countries, and so it will not be our focus here. The first one, which will be analyzed below, however, is unique to China. In our opinion, the reason for the lack of real bureaucracy in China lies in the following two aspects: people and government.

People

Feudalism throughout the world and Confucian culture have cultivated the psychological tradition of "rule by man, not by law" among most Chinese people, which needs long-term and thorough reengineering of democracy and legitimacy.

The feudalism based upon Confucianism has governed the Chinese for more than 2000 years. Under this circumstance, it is difficult for most Chinese to form the habit of doubting the legitimacy of the government. Instead, they believe in it without any doubts, and the government has become accustomed to considering themselves as the "parents" of the people without realizing that their power rests with the people. In the minds of most people, the relationship between the government and themselves has yet to become an equal social contract. It is an unequal relationship between managing and managed, commanding and obeying, and superior and subordinates. With the foundation of
PRC and the powerful centralized planned economy, this relationship has not been weakened, but strengthened. The architects of the PRC used their own subjective experiences and authorities from the success in the wars to govern the state; and neglected the importance of institutions and laws. The transactions among ordinary people are dependent on the flexible "relations," but not the rigid institutions. These relations, however, are quasi institutions (Williamson, 1985; Hart and Holmstrom, 1987; North, 1990, 1991). It only functions among a small group of people or in small-scale organizations, but fails in large organizations, especially the whole state. It is something like the trust that can be used to explain the prosperity of different countries — the Americans trust the institutions but the Chinese trust relations (Fukuyama, 1995).

The market economy is the economy based upon the institutions. The government of market economy should be the government based upon the institutions as well. The formation of the institution needs long-term cultivation and the enhancement of institutional consciousness of all people. It further needs the fundamental change of the relationship between the government and its people. Additionally, the consciousness of institutions will need much more time. The long revolutionary war and the establishment of PRC interrupted the good traditions of "May 4th movement," and in the Cultural Revolution, the institutions were trampled. The lack of trust in institutions constrains the WWP from realizing its full efficiency in China.

Government

There is no effective and sufficient supervision and restriction on the Chinese government. It is impossible to expect the sovereign, who has received great benefits from the residuals of the MHP, to give up these benefits. And, the weakness of the civil strength makes it more difficult to change this situation.

"In reality, the administration departments or legislatures, to say nothing of the decision-makers in them, are not the simple institutions who dedicate themselves to promote the social welfare as the general political theories said." "Most government leaders are also economic man as ordinary people, who have not the saintly altruistic objectives. What they want to do is just only to achieve their own objectives, and by the way the social welfare is realized" (Buchanan, 1986). Undoubtedly, the MHP is beneficial to those authorities which are the privileged ones above the whole society, and need not bear the troubles and sufferings as ordinary people; who monopolize the mass media and deprive the people' right to know; whose private lives are so secret that nobody knows whether their families, relatives and friends profit from their public right and how much their private wealth is; whose exercising of public power is not open to the public and the people could not see whether this process is normative and legal. The power is born with expansion and we cannot expect it to withdraw by itself. With the government's slogan of "stability is the most important," it is difficult to expect the government to give up the remainder of the MHP by itself, ultimately weakening its own power. For example, the Constitution of PRC stipulates that the most powerful department is the National People's Congress (NPC). But in reality, most representatives dare not exercise their rights for the people. The relationship between them and the government is not the superior and subordinate, supervising and supervised, but the contrary. So, these representatives merely listen and applaud. They do not criticize or debate. It is well known that the NPC is just a "rubber STAMP."

The other force pushing the reform comes from the civil side. The power would maintain itself but, at the same time, it would be challenged by its objects. The development of society and market economy are strengthening the people and enlightening their consciousness of democracy, although their strengths are relative weak and always suppressed and interrupted.
by the government. Miscellaneous administration approval and administration fees are good examples. It is the exogenous strength to push the transformation from the MHP to the WWP. This process will be full of conflicts, but will inevitably succeed.

Conclusion

The bureaucracy should not be abandoned completely, and the New Public Management should not be adopted unconditionally. It is not the scientific attitude to follow others without any serious analysis based upon the realities. Why were the bureaucracy and WWP criticized in the western developed countries? Because the WWP has achieved its peak following more than 100 years development, and the centralization of the administration and rigidity of the institutions have been the narrowest bottlenecks hindering further development. So, in the western world, the WWP is transforming toward the OHP, and the New Public Management Movement is just the means to achieve this transformation.

The situation in China is very unique and different from others. Due to the longest MHP in history, the WWP in China is congested with large residuals of the MHP, which confuses our viewpoints and makes us misconstrue the bureaucracy and its WWP. Therefore, China will achieve great improvement of administrative efficiency after abolishing the MHP and establishing the real bureaucracy and the perfect WWP. Here we do not rule out the necessity of adopting the OHP. As the OHP is based upon the perfect WWP, it is far more important to China to adopt WWP now. In conclusion, the bureaucracy and WWP are useful in terms of creating the path toward rule by law, establishing a democratic society, and building the authority of institutions.

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