

Helpdesk Research Report

Preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention

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Question

Please identify how preventive diplomacy relates to conflict prevention, and how models for preventive diplomacy have evolved. We are also interested in how approaches to preventive diplomacy differ at the regional level. For example, how is preventive diplomacy approached in the Asia-Pacific region, as compared to other regions like Africa, the EU and South America?

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1. Overview

This report provides an overview of the literature on preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention, with particular emphasis on regional approaches to preventive diplomacy. The literature suggests that the last few years have seen a renewed interest in both preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention. Regional initiatives are playing an increasingly important role in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention. However, regional attitudes and approaches to preventive diplomacy differ quite significantly.

In terms of the relationship between preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention, some argue that preventive diplomacy is a component of broader conflict prevention, while others argue that the two concepts are autonomous. Moreover, the range of measures constituting preventive diplomacy differs significantly, depending on which definition is being used.

Preventive diplomacy as a concept has **evolved** considerably since its inception, and since the late 1990s (Mancini, 2011; Muggah & White, 2013). Key developments have been:

- The field of preventive diplomacy has become **increasingly crowded**, with actors including NGOs, governments, and international, regional, and sub-regional organisations (Mancini, 2011).
- **Regional and local actors** are playing an increasingly important role in preventive diplomacy (Mancini, 2011; Muggah & White, 2013).
- **New state actors**, such as Qatar, Turkey, and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are becoming increasingly involved in preventive diplomacy (Muggah & White, 2013).
- New **networks of NGOs** are emerging in the field of preventive action (Muggah & White, 2013).
- There has been a move away from the focus on short-term and long-term conflict prevention, in favour of initiatives, which have a **medium-term impact** (Mancini, 2011).

Regional involvement in preventive diplomacy has been on the rise. Due to cultural, geographical, and historical differences, regional approaches to preventive diplomacy are diverse. **Non-intervention** in the internal affairs of other states is a cornerstone of most regional and sub-regional organisations, however it has not served as a constraint for preventive diplomacy in all cases.

Africa arguably leads in terms of regional preventive diplomacy initiatives, with formalised early warning and mediation mechanisms in place. African approaches to preventive diplomacy also draw heavily on **traditional approaches** to conflict prevention. In Latin America preventive diplomacy is highly formalised but not very effective. This is in part due to the highly **presidentialised** nature of conflict prevention on the continent. The Asia-Pacific region has been slow to adopt concrete mechanisms for preventive diplomacy. While the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF)¹ is supposed to engage in preventive diplomacy, progress has been slow due to the region's focus on non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states. However, **informal preventive diplomacy** does take place on the side-lines of ASEAN and ARF meetings, even if it is not always acknowledged as such.

The range of preventive diplomacy measures used by regional organisations are:

- **Civil Society Organisation (CSO) engagement** – Track II dialogues² are increasingly being used to address conflict-related issues in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **City-led/municipal approaches** – In Latin America mayors have engaged in preventive diplomacy at the city-level in order to reduce levels of organised violence.
- **Councils/ Panels of the Wise** – Regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa use Councils/Panels of the Wise to engage in preventive diplomacy. They are a contemporary version of traditional cultural councils, which were responsible for resolving disputes.

¹ Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, the People's Republic of China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United States, and Vietnam.

² USIP defines Track II dialogue as 'unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process' (<http://glossary.usip.org/resource/tracks-diplomacy>).

- **Early warning** – Regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa have early warning systems. The OSCE’s High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) also has an early warning function.
- **Election monitoring** – Organization of American States (OAS)-led election monitoring resulted in the successful avoidance of conflict in Guyana.
- **Fact-finding** – OAS-led fact-finding in Colombia and Ecuador led to the successful avoidance of conflict between the two countries.
- **Formal mediation/Envoys** – In Southeast Asia, mediation is often carried out by ‘insider mediators,’ who are people who belong in some way to one of the parties to a conflict. Mediation has been used successfully by regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa.
- **Good offices** – In its role as ASEAN Chair, Indonesia engaged in good offices³ in order to prevent the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict from escalating.
- **Legal frameworks/agreements** – The 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea and the OAS’ legal framework for preventive diplomacy both constitute preventive diplomacy.
- **Norms as leverage for prevention** – This approach involves changing states’ preferences by encouraging compliance with norms as a means of gaining international and/or regional approval. It has been used effectively by the OSCE in Macedonia and Ukraine.
- **Quiet diplomacy** – This involves holding private consultations and providing advice via confidential letters rather than ridiculing a state for its behaviour. The OSCE successfully used this approach in Ukraine.
- **Preventive military intervention** – The AU and ECOWAS have standby forces, which can take preventive military action.

2. Relationship between preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention

According to Muggah & White (2013, p. 1) the purpose of both preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention is to stop armed conflicts before they escalate. Preventive diplomacy includes activities such as good offices, facilitation, mediation, conciliation, adjudication and arbitration, whereas conflict prevention is broader (Ibid, p. 5). Conflict prevention includes activities such as the strengthening of human rights oversight mechanisms and efforts to address the root causes of conflict such as improvements in governance, social and economic well-being, equality, and the management of common resources (Muggah & White, 2013, p. 5). Monitoring, containment, and risk reduction are all aspects of conflict prevention. Together the two concepts are often referred to as ‘preventive action.’ Muggah & White (2013, p. 3) note that there are experts who consider preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention to be two separate concepts, while others consider preventive diplomacy to be one part of conflict prevention.

³ USIP defines good offices as ‘low-key actions by a third party to bring opposing parties to dialogue or negotiation.’ According to USIP ‘good offices may include informal consultations to facilitate communication; offer of transportation, security, or site of venue; or fact-finding (<http://glossary.usip.org/resource/good-offices>).

Chichaya's (2010, p. 2) list of the components of preventive diplomacy is broader, and includes confidence building measures (CBMs), fact finding missions, early warning mechanisms, conflict impact assessment systems, measures to promote democracy and human rights, preventive deployment of peacekeeping forces, establishment of demilitarised zones, and measures to monitor and limit the trade in small arms.

Muggah & White (2013, p. 5) state that recent UN reports appear to suggest that conflict prevention may actually play a role in creating local conditions which facilitate preventive diplomacy. Yabi (2010, p. 54) notes that while preventive diplomacy can resolve one-off crises, it is ineffective in solving recurrent crises.

3. Evolution of preventive diplomacy

The term preventive diplomacy was first used by former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1960 (Babbitt, 2012, p. 352). Since then the concept has evolved considerably. Mancini (2011, p. 1) argues that 'the field of preventive diplomacy has become increasingly crowded' with NGOs, governments, and international, regional, and sub-regional organisations all playing a part. He states that the role played by local actors in preventive diplomacy in their own countries has expanded (Ibid, p. 2). Muggah & White (2013, p. 5) concur with this argument stating that the last twenty years have seen a shift away from preventive action driven by external actors towards more local and regional initiatives.

Emmers & Tan (2009, p. 8) state that there has been a shift from a focus on preventing inter-state conflict during the Cold War, to preventing intra-state conflict in the post-Cold War era. Muggah & White (2013, p. 6) agree, stating that there has been a shift from state-led interventions with 'superman diplomacy' and a focus on interstate conflicts to regional and non-state engagement in intrastate conflicts. A 'sprinkler system' of interventions is increasingly being used to prevent and mitigate organised violence (Ibid). New state actors are also becoming increasingly active in terms of preventive diplomacy. The BRICS, as well as Turkey and Qatar have devoted considerable resources to preventive action, as well as leading preventive action initiatives themselves (Muggah & White, 2013, p. 8). New networks of NGOs are also emerging in the field of preventive action. These include the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the Mediation Support Network (Ibid).

In 1997 the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict stated that there are two types of conflict prevention: operational (short-term) and structural (long-term) (Babbitt, 2012). However, Mancini (2011, p. 2) argues that nowadays both operational and structural prevention aim to achieve results in the medium term. He attributes this change to the realisation that successful operational prevention requires sustained engagement with the conflict parties, and that structural prevention needs to have a visible positive impact in the medium term (Ibid).

4. Different regional approaches to preventive diplomacy

Regional organisations' approaches to preventive diplomacy and mediation depend on their individual historical, geographical and cultural contexts (OSCE & UN, 2011, p. 13). Muggah & White (2013, p. 8) note that regional institutions tend to be prioritise the interests of their member governments over those of non-state actors. They also tend to 'adhere to strict notions of national sovereignty in which many forms of preventive action are deemed to be inappropriate, if not hostile' (Ibid).

According to Cristescu et al (2012, p.8), ASEAN leaders adopted preventive diplomacy as it enabled them to pursue the 'ASEAN Way.' The ASEAN Way is centred on 'mutual trust and confidence, principles of non-interference in internal affairs, quiet diplomacy, the non-use of force, and decision making by consensus' (OSCE & UN, 2011, p. 13). Della-Giacoma (2011, p. 30) notes that ASEAN puts a 'higher premium' on non-interference than other regional organisations. As a result ASEAN tends to focus on dialogue facilitation rather than mediation, which is interpreted by some member states as constituting interference in internal affairs (OSCE & UN, 2011, p. 13). There is also a fear among ASEAN members that mediation may legitimise rebel groups (Ibid). Cristescu et al (2012, p. 8) note that preventive diplomacy was initially introduced by ASEAN as part of a Track II process, but that following several meetings of the ARF it has moved from a research initiative to a policy initiative.

Emmers & Tan (2009, p. 4) argue that analysts fail to account for why the factors to which the ARF's failure is often attributed, such as size, fidelity to the concept of sovereignty, and the fact that preventive diplomacy can, since 2001, only be applied to inter-state issues, did not have an impact on the Six Party Talks and the ASEAN-China dialogue's preventive diplomacy activities. They note that the formalisation of the ASEAN Way has turned the ARF into an inflexible institution and has problematized the move towards preventive diplomacy.

The 2001 'ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy' outlines the key principles of preventive diplomacy, according to the ARF. These are:

- Diplomacy: It relies on diplomatic and peaceful methods.
- Non-coercive: Military action and the use of force are not components of preventive diplomacy.
- Timeliness: Action is preventive rather than curative and preventive diplomacy is most effective if used at an early stage of a dispute or crisis.
- Requires trust and confidence: Preventive diplomacy can only be implemented successfully if there is a high level of trust and confidence.
- Consultation and consensus: Preventive diplomacy can only be carried out through consensus after careful and extensive consultation between ARF members.
- Voluntary: Preventive diplomacy should only be used at the request of all the parties directly involved in a dispute and with their clear consent.
- Preventive diplomacy applies to conflicts between and among states.
- Preventive diplomacy is conducted in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law and inter-state relations (Emmers & Tan, 2009, p. 12).

Emmers & Tan (2009, p. 12) note that the 'ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy' identified preventive diplomacy initiatives, which could be undertaken by the ARF. These included CBMs, norms building, enhancing channels of communication through the creation of a Regional Risk Reduction Centre and enhancing the role of the ASEAN Chair to potentially include good offices and fact-finding (Emmers & Ibid). ASEAN's key institutions for preventive diplomacy are its current Chair and the Secretary-General

(Della-Giacoma, 2011, p. 30). Della-Giacoma (2011, p. 28) argues that preventive diplomacy in Southeast Asia marginalizes other multilateral institutions and excludes NGOs.

Muggah & White (2013, pp. 8-9) note that in 2012 the ARF addressed North Korea, Syria, Afghanistan and nuclear proliferation but not issues affecting member states such as the conflict in southern Thailand and the Philippines. However, Cristescu et al (2012, p. 9.) argue that while conflict issues are not always discussed in formal meetings, informal side meetings have resulted in ASEAN participation in peace monitoring in Aceh, and ASEAN's contribution in addressing the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict. In the same vein, Emmers & Tan (2009, p. 15) note that a number of indirect and informal preventive diplomacy-like actions have taken place on the side-lines of ARF meetings. They contend that members of the ARF may not acknowledge some instances of preventive diplomacy as such, because of a desire to avoid misunderstandings that could aggravate a crisis (Ibid, p. 17).

The ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) was launched at the ASEAN Summit in November 2012, but it was not mentioned in the ASEAN Chair statement in October 2013. The first AIPR meeting was held at the ASEAN Secretariat on 10 December 2013. While Indonesia appears to be very much behind the AIPR, other ASEAN members are not as keen. At present it seems that the AIPR will be a think tank rather than a peacemaking entity (Expert comment).

Cristescu et al (2012, p. 14) contend that the Africa is arguably the most advanced continent with regard to regional approaches to preventive diplomacy, citing regional and sub-regional organisations commitment to 'African solutions to African problems.' The AU's Peace and Security Architecture consists of a Peace and Security Council (PSC), and African Standby Force (ASF), a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace Fund (Murithi & Mwaura, p. 77).

The SADC's 2001 'Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation' binds members to promote peaceful settlement of disputes by preventive diplomacy, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, good offices, arbitration and adjudication by international tribunals' (Cristescu et al, 2012, p. 17). According to Hartmann (p. 5), the SADC has a political culture that prefers soft power approaches like mediation, as national sovereignty is 'paramount' for SADC member states. However, discussing Africa more generally Hara (2011, p. 4) states that 'the sovereignty of individual member states is no longer considered an absolute bar to intervention within the region.' Hara notes that the principle of 'non-indifference,' which is enshrined in the 2000 Constitutive Act of the AU Charter, has been implemented on a number of occasions (Hara, 2011, p. 5).

Hara (2011, p. 7) argues that the AU's institutional capacity to engage in conflict prevention remains limited. A lack of capacity and finances is a challenge facing many regional organisations engaging in preventive diplomacy (Expert comment). Moreover, competition between regional powers and individual leaders within the AU has prevented consensus on some key preventive diplomacy efforts, such as failure to address the electoral crisis in Cote d'Ivoire (Ibid).

Discussing the OSCE, Babbitt (2012, p. 372) argues that 'cooperation and consensus have, *inter alia*, resulted in unprecedented OSCE access to the internal developments of its participating states (via the HCNM), a fact that suggests that an uncommon degree of legitimacy has been conferred upon the organization.'

According to Borda (2011, p. 23) Latin American diplomacy is 'highly personalistic and presidentialist.' Any inclusion of other state actors or non-state actors in preventive diplomacy must be designed 'in coordination with, and with direct reference to, the role of each nation's president.' Institutions for

preventive diplomacy are very formal, but have limited influence (Ibid, p. 24). The OAS, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and sub-regional forums are active in the field of preventive diplomacy (Ibid, p. 18). Borda (2011, p. 18) argues that regional integration, and in particular the expansion of Mercosur, significantly increased the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy in South America.

5. Approaches which have been implemented at the regional level

CSO engagement

Southeast Asia has a number of civil society networks addressing conflict mediation (Cristescu, 2012, p. 19). One example is the Bantay Ceasefire programme in Mindanao, which has 900 volunteers operating in 7 provinces, who report violations of the ceasefire agreement and generally improve the security of civilian populations in conflict-affected areas (Ibid, p. 20). Track II meetings, often organised on the margins of the ARF, are increasingly addressing conflict-related issues (Ibid, p. 19).

City-led/ municipal approaches

In Latin America and the Caribbean, mayors are developing tools to monitor and anticipate violence, investing in institutions to negotiate disagreements, and facilitating inter-institutional coordination across multiple sectors (Muggah & White, 2013, p. 9). Lacas & Hoffmann (2011) describe how four mayors in Bogota succeeded in reducing organised violence through urban regeneration, community policing, local crime monitoring, localised disarmament, alcohol controls (cited in Muggah & White, 2013, p. 9). In San Salvador in 2012, mediators, including a former guerrilla fighter and congressman, and a Catholic bishop, brokered a truce between rival gangs. This truce is monitored by the OAS with support from both CSOs and the private sector (Muggah & White, 2013, p. 9).

Councils/Panels of the Wise

The AU's Panel of the Wise's main area of focus is conflict prevention (Murithi & Mwaura, p. 78). According to Murithi & Mwaura (p. 79), 'one can argue that the AU Panel of the Wise is operating in a contemporary setting as the functional equivalent of a cultural council of indigenous leaders tasked with intervening and resolving disputes.' The SADC's Panel of Elders consists of 10-15 high-profile individuals who can serve as mediators and engage in preventive diplomacy. The Panel of Elders is supported by the Mediation Reference Group, which consists of individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds who serve as a resource for the Panel of Elders and who also provide assistance in terms of capacity building and lessons learned (Cristescu et al, 2012, p. 17).

Early warning

The AU's Continental Early Warning System's (CEWS) purpose is to anticipate and thereby prevent violent conflict (Wulf & Debiel, 2009, p. 14). It consists of 'The Situation Room,' which is an observation and monitoring centre at the AU's headquarters, and observation and monitoring units at the sub-regional level (Wulf & Debiel, 2009, p. 15). Sub-regional organisations in Africa also have early warning systems, including the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) and IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). SADC's Mediation Support Unit (CPR-EMSA) profiles conflicts and potential conflicts (Cristescu et al, 2012, p. 18). According to Babbitt, one of the OSCE's High

Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) key activities is early warning (2012, p. 363). The HCNM is an autonomous institution within the OSCE and its mandate is to 'identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability, or friendly relations between OSCE participating states.'

Election monitoring

An example of election monitoring being used as a form of preventive diplomacy is the OAS' intervention in Guyana. Due to its history of violent elections, the Government of Guyana invited the OAS to establish an Electoral Observation Mission for the 2006 elections (Babbitt, 2012, p. 360). Two long-term observers were sent in May to monitor the political situation in the run-up to the elections, which were held in August (Ibid). An additional 123 observers were sent to Guyana for the four days before and during the election. The Chief of Mission travelled to Guyana numerous times and led the observation and mediation process (Ibid). The UN and the Carter Centre also participated in the conflict prevention process. The elections took place without any violent incidents (Ibid). According to Babbitt this intervention constitutes an example of long-term conflict prevention (2012, p. 362). However, Babbitt argues that the underlying causes of tensions in Guyana have not been addressed (2012, p. 371).

Fact-finding

An example of fact-finding being used as a form of preventive diplomacy is the OAS' engagement in the Colombia-Ecuador dispute. OAS Resolution 930 established a fact-finding mission to investigate Colombia's violation of Ecuador's sovereignty. According to Borda (2011, p. 18), the findings of the investigation were important in later discussions concerning the dispute.

Formal mediation and envoys

According to Cristescu et al (2012, p. 19), mediation in Southeast Asia is often carried out by '**insider mediators.**' Cristescu et al describe insider mediators as 'persons who are perceived as belonging ethnically, religiously or in other respect [sic] to one of the conflict parties, but who try to de-escalate the conflict, build bridges, engage in peace advocacy.' In the ASEAN context, Cristescu et al (2012, p. 19) describes these individuals as having 'experience, commitment, and a good rapport with the conflicting parties.'

Examples of mediation being used as a form of preventive diplomacy in Africa are:

ECOWAS engagement in Guinea – According to Yabi (2010, p. 53), the President of the ECOWAS Commission for the period February 2001-February 2010, fulfilled his role as defined by the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. He dispatched fact-finding and mediation missions, appointed special representatives, led a number of missions, including at the height of crises (Yabi, 2010, p. 53). Yabi contends that cooperation between the AU and ECOWAS on Guinea via the International Contact Group, which they co-chaired, contributed to the successful containment of the crisis (Yabi, 2010, p. 54). According to Hara (2012, p. 7) the UN provided technical and political expertise for conflict prevention efforts in Guinea.

SADC mediation in Lesotho in 2007 to address post-election violence – Initially the parties did not accept the SADC mediation mission. Consequently, Basotho church and civil society representatives revived the mediation process with SADC logistical support. The crisis ended four years later, and new elections were held in 2012 (Hartmann, 2013, p. 6).

SADC mediation in Zimbabwe in 2008 to address post-election violence – Despite complications, SADC mediation led by South Africa successfully brokered a power-sharing agreement between the parties (Hartmann, 2013, p. 6). The UN provided extensive support to the mediators (Hara, 2011, p. 7).

Good offices

Indonesia's preventive diplomacy activities in the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict were based on the good offices provision (Article 32) in the ASEAN Charter (Della-Giacoma, 2011, p. 30). In its capacity as ASEAN Chair, Indonesia engaged in shuttle diplomacy between the parties to the conflict, following which the matter was passed to the UN Security Council. ASEAN was then appointed as facilitator, a role which Indonesia took on (Ibid, pp. 30-31). Member states saw Indonesia as being the facilitator rather than ASEAN as an organisation (Ibid). Della-Giacoma (2011, p. 32) states that ASEAN's approach to the 2011 Cambodia-Thailand border conflict has been described by some observers and analysts as successful preventive diplomacy. However, he notes that much of the momentum was the result of Indonesia's engagement and he speculates that the outcome might have been very different if a less confident member had been ASEAN Chair that year (Ibid, pp. 32-33).

Legal frameworks/agreements

The 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, signed by China and ASEAN is an example of preventive diplomacy, as the signatories expressed their desire to pursue their territorial claims by peaceful means (Emmers & Tan, 2009, p. 17). Moreover, the OAS has established a legal framework for preventive diplomacy, which includes declarations on trust and security, as well as resolutions on hemispheric security, small arms and light weapons, landmine-free zones, chemical weapons, nuclear-weapon-free zones, transparency in conventional weapons acquisitions, confidence building, non-proliferation, military expenditure and arms registers, and clandestine arms trafficking (Borda, 2011, p. 18).

Norms as leverage for prevention

According to Babbitt the OSCE's HCNM often uses norms as leverage for conflict prevention. The aim of this approach is to 'change the preferences of states by encouraging compliance with norms as a way of gaining international and/or regional approval, and at times opening the door to political or even economic benefits.' In some cases norms-based frameworks have been used as 'cover' for governments following potentially contentious advice provided by the HCNM. This approach was used successfully in both Macedonia and Ukraine, and the structural changes which were implemented as a result have remained in place, such as autonomy arrangements in Crimea (Babbitt, 2012, p. 375.)

Quiet diplomacy

According to Babbitt (2012, p. 374), quiet diplomacy means 'not holding states up to public ridicule and shame because of their behaviour, but instead using private consultations and confidential exchanges of letters to provide advice. An example is that of Ukraine, where the OSCE's HCNM advised the government and the Crimean authorities on the language for a new constitution with the aim of meeting Crimean demands for autonomy while also acceding to the Ukrainian government's demands for unity (Babbitt, 2012, p. 374).

Preventive military intervention

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework states that the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)'s deployment may be authorised by ECOWAS's Mediation and Support Unit, in order to prevent conflict becoming violent, and to act as a buffer between belligerents during times of high tension, mediation, or peacekeeping operations (ECOWAS, p. 18). The AU also has its African Standby Force (ASF).

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