

# Общественно-политические процессы в прошлом и настоящем

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## Public policies for food sovereignty in Japan and Ecuador: a comparative analysis

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*Abstract.* The article is devoted to the study of agri-food policy in the State of Japan and the Republic of Ecuador. With the help of a case study method and the principle of unity of logical and historical, the author verified the structural characteristics of the functioning of the agricultural sectors of the two states. The models of Food sovereignty policy implementation adapted to the specific socio-humanitarian and political-legal landscapes of the two states were identified and compared based on the cross-cultural analysis and a comparative approach. It was found that the implementation of the strategic principles of food sovereignty is equally a priority not only for the modern countries of the Global South, but also for the countries of the Global North. In particular, the author proves that through the institutionalization of profile models (*Shokuiku* and *Buen Vivir*), the Governments of Japan and Ecuador, are implementing a number of strategically important national tasks. For instance, they strengthen local food systems, reduce the “metabolic rift” between urban and rural areas, protect biodiversity and popularize environmentally sustainable farming methods. At the same time, the author verified the structural shortcomings of the programs implemented in the two states. In particular, the problems associated with the cultivation of synthetically modified organisms, the monopolization of the domestic food market, the re-McDonaldization of the population and gaining independence from large TNCs.

*Keywords:* Japan, Ecuador, food sovereignty, food security, globalization, international relations, world politics

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## Государственная политика обеспечения продовольственного суверенитета в Японии и Эквадоре: сравнительный анализ

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*Аннотация.* Статья посвящена изучению агропродовольственной политики в Государстве Япония и Республике Эквадор. С помощью метода кейс-стади и принципа единства логического и исторического были верифицированы структурные характеристики функционирования сельскохозяйственных секторов двух стран. С опорой на анализ кросс-культурных особенностей и компаративный подход идентифицированы и сопоставлены модели реализации политики продовольственного суверенитета, адаптированные под специфические социогуманитарные и политико-правовые ландшафты государств. Установлено, что следование стратегическим принципам продовольственного суверенитета представляется равнозначно приоритетным сегодня не только для стран Глобального Юга, но и для стран Глобального Севера. В частности, доказывается, что посредством институционализации профильных моделей (*Shokuiku* и *Buen Vivir*) правительства Японии и Эквадора укрепляют локальные продовольственные системы, сокращают «метаболический разрыв» между городом и деревней, защищают биоразнообразие и популяризируют экологически устойчивые методы ведения сельского хозяйства. Наравне с этим верифицируются и структурные недочеты отмеченных программ, связанные с культивацией синтетически модифицированных организмов, монополизацией отечественного продовольственного рынка, «макдональдизацией» населения и обретением независимости от крупных ТНК.

*Ключевые слова:* Япония, Эквадор, продовольственный суверенитет, продовольственная безопасность, глобализация, международные отношения, мировая политика

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### *Introduction*

The modern agri-food system based on intensive agriculture managed by large multinational corporations (MNCs), contributing to a relative increase in food security, stimulated a range of negative consequences

for both the environment and the socio-economic sphere of the world community [Donkers 2014, pp. 89–90]. Verification of the negative factors of the industrial model of food production and consumption, as well as registration of the growing demand for a range of products from the “4-F category: Food, Fiber, Forest and Fuel [Sauer, Borras 2016, p. 9]”, determines the search for more sustainable agricultural models and alternatives to global growth strategies. The concept of food sovereignty occupies a special place among those. The integration of strategic principles of food sovereignty is being carried out today by both economically developed and economically developing countries, equally concerned about domestic agricultural policy and focused on improving the level of national food security. Modern states such as Japan and Ecuador, which adapted the idea of “food sovereignty” [Малов 2018; Чугров, Малов 2019] into the socio-cultural and political-legal landscape, are no exception. This thesis will be devoted to a comparative analysis of the results of the conducted institutional procedure.

### *The case study: The Land of the Rising Sun*

The Japan, despite its economic might and technological superiority, has significant problems in the domestic agricultural sector. Thus, the downward trends of the past six decades (from 1960 to 2022) were: reduction of the share of the agricultural sector in GDP from 12,8 to 1%; reduction of the area of agricultural land from 7,1 to 4,3 million hectares; decrease in the share of the rural population from 35 to 8,1%<sup>1</sup>; the decrease in agricultural workers from 13,4 to 1,4 million people (70% of whom are in the age group of 65 years and older). The noted crisis trends are aggravated by the nation's dependence on food imports by 60%<sup>2</sup>. Japan is only 53% self-sufficient in meat, 98% in rice, 57% in seafood, 79% in

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<sup>1</sup> FAO. The Food and Agriculture Organization Corporate Statistical Database (FAOSTAT). URL: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/110> (Accessed 15 March 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Annual report on food, agriculture and rural areas in Japan. 2022. P. 54–62 / Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). URL: <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publish/attach/pdf/index-69.pdf> (Accessed 15 March 2024); Statistical handbook of Japan. 2018. P. 54–55 / Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan. URL: <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/pdf/2018all.pdf> (Accessed 15 March 2024); Statistical handbook of Japan. 2022. P. 54–62 / Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan. URL: <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/pdf/2022all.pdf> (Accessed 15 March 2024).

vegetables, 17% in wheat, 39% in fruits, 8% in beans, and feed is entirely dependent on imports<sup>3</sup>.

The identified trends, set by the parameters of the Post-War Food Regime [Чыргов, Малов 2019, с. 667] that passed away in the 1970s and supported by the power of the Corporate Food Regime [Малов 2018, с. 136] in force since the 1980s, provoked a number of socio-cultural changes. Thus, under the onslaught of globalization and Westernization, there has been a structural transformation of the Japanese food space, characterized by a regulatory dysfunction [Durkheim 1933, p. 368] of dietary norms and food taxonomies, provoking disintegration, disorientation and aberrant food behavior in all elements of the social system.

The introduction and popularization of foreign food models based on high consumption of meat, wheat and animal saturated fats [Farina 2018, p. 157] provoked the processes of striving for culinary knowledge [Iwabuchi 2002, p. 59] and revaluation of gastronomic ideals. As a response to the growing activity of transnational agents and global food networks distorting the age-old culinary foundations of the nation, members of civil society and government structures initiated a policy of popularization of traditional food culture, which crystallized in the strategy of Food Education (*Shokuiku*).

### *Shokuiku: idea, strategy and national program*

*Shokuiku* translates as Food education and consists of two hieroglyphs: 食 (*shoku*) – edibles, meals, 育 (*iku*) – education, upbringing, enlightenment or “education by nutrition” [Takeda 2014, p. 102]. The concept of *Shokuiku* was promulgated in July 2005, when the Basic Law on Food Education No. 63 (食育基本法 / *Sekuiiku kihon-ho*) was enacted<sup>4</sup>. The *Shokuiku* serves as a “guiding star” by implementing the following functions: respect for nature and promotion of the production and consumption of organic products (Article 3); promotion of symbiotic

<sup>3</sup> Statistical handbook of Japan. 2022. P. 53–62 / Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan. URL: <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/pdf/2023all.pdf#page=1> (Accessed 15 March 2024); Annual Report on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas in Japan. 2015. P. 7 / The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). URL: <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/pdf/fy2014.pdf> (Accessed 15 March 2024).

<sup>4</sup> 電子政府の総合窓口 / 食育基本法 // 平成十七年法律第六十三号 . [E-government general window. 2005. Act no. 63. Food Basic Law] URL: [http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws\\_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=417AC1000000063&openerCode=1#C](http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=417AC1000000063&openerCode=1#C) (Accessed 15 March 2024).

relationship between the city and the rural area (Article 6); revitalization of rural communities (Article 7); strengthening of trusting relations between producers and consumers of food products (Article 7); increasing the level of food self-sufficiency (Article 7); ensuring food safety (Article 8); protection and development of orthodox food culture and autochthonous food traditions (Article 24)<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, the Basic Law obliges the relevant ministries to cooperate with each other (Article 22<sup>6</sup>). Thus, the Cabinet of Ministers is responsible for planning, coordinating and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy (*Shokuiku*). The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is focused on the health and safety of food. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has the authority to involve teachers in improving curricula. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAY) is focused on reducing dependence on imports by promoting domestic production and consumption of products. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) is focused on reducing dependence on imports by promoting domestic production and consumption of products.

### *The case study: The Republic of Ecuador*

The Republic of Ecuador was integrated into the system of the international division of labor with the help of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which gave the Andean state the status of an exporter of exotic goods [Giunta 2018, p. 112]. The Ecuadorian authorities, observing the principles of the Washington Consensus, activated the deregulation option, which favored the import of basic foodstuffs. Thus, in the period between the 1980s and the 1990s, Ecuador confidently advanced towards the modernization of the domestic agricultural sector based on the cultivation of monocultures and export of such exquisite goods as cocoa, shrimp, bananas and flowers [Giunta 2014, p. 1204].

Years of neoliberal transformations and a focus on the global market have contributed to the consolidation of “economic elites” who have strengthened their control over various sectors of the Ecuadorian economy [Iturralde 2013, pp. 83–107]. The agricultural sector of the state is an illustrative example of similar monopolistic impulses that intensified by Corporate Food Regime [Малов 2018]. Today, three Ecuadorian companies (Corporación La Favorita, Corporación El Rosado, Megasantamaria) control more than 90% of the food retail

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

market [Giunta 2018, p. 116]. At the same time, *Pronaca* [Giunta 2018, p. 116] is the sole leader in the meat industry (62,16% of the domestic market), and *Noboa Corporation* is the largest producer of bananas [Brassel 2011, p. 28]. Two other giants (*Agripac* and *Ecuauímica*) monopolistically supervise the production, import and distribution of products related to agricultural business.

Monopoly control over the distribution of licensed agricultural products, threatening the processes of proletarianization and precarization of labor, increases the dependence of small producers on the agri-food oligarchy. Moreover, owners of large livestock processing factories have benefited from the manipulation of public eating habits. So, in 2018, the income of only one owner of poultry and pig farming networks in Ecuador (*Pronaca*) amounted to 800 million US dollars [Giunta 2018, p. 116].

In the process of large-scale reconstruction of the agricultural sector, state support for small farmers sharply decreased, following a decrease in prices for their products. The changed vector of national interests of the Ecuadorian government led to the exclusion of peasants from the general process of “renovation” of the agri-food sector of the state, reoriented to capital-intensive technologies and market competition. For a country where a third of the population historically lives in rural areas<sup>7</sup>, the process of “agri-food globalization” has accelerated the marginalization of villagers. A long cycle of neoliberal transformations aimed at privatizing ecosystems and opening up the domestic economy for the benefit of market conditions ultimately caused a surge of public indignation and provoked an impulse of constitutional and legal reorganization [Giunta, Vitale 2013, pp. 81–83].

### *Buen Vivir: idea, strategy and national program*

The key factors that accelerated the process of institutional modernization of Ecuador were: the collapse of the domestic food market; widespread corruption; the destruction of the country’s environmental potential and the age-old oppression and deportation of indigenous peoples [Giunta 2014, p. 1204].

The institutionalization of the concept of “Good Living” (Span. – *Buen Vivir*) was the official strategy of the Government of Ecuador, which expressed support for the indigenous population. The definition

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<sup>7</sup> FAO. The Food and Agriculture Organization Corporate Statistical Database (FAOSTAT). URL: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/58> (Accessed 15 March 2024).

of *Buen Vivir* is a copy of the Quechuan language construction – *Sumak Kawsay*, which translates as: “Sumak” – sublime, magnificent, beautiful, symbiotic and holistic; “Kawsay” – life, being and existence. As a result, a more correct translation is “abundant life”, although in official documents of Ecuador, *Sumak Kawsay* is synonymous with *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) [Albo 2009].

*Buen Vivir* is a multidimensional concept, of Andean cosmogony based on Native American principles (justice, equality, honor and solidarity [Walsh 2009, p. 104]) and producing a model of harmonious coexistence of man, society and nature. According to this point of view, Nature becomes a subject of law (according to the principle of agrarian and food citizenship) and exists not as an “external” factor of production, subordination and exploitation, but as an “immanent” element of heritage, respect and reproduction of life. Thus, the Indianist idea of *Buen Vivir*, based on the triumph of the “economy without growth”, as well as on the principles of ecocentrism, communitarianism, egalitarianism, pluralism and autochthonous biosocialism, correlates with the ideological module of Food sovereignty [Gudynas 2011].

Consequently, food sovereignty has become a legal instrument used by the Government of Ecuador to achieve a *Buen Vivir* for the entire population of the country. Thus, the status of food sovereignty in cooperation with *Buen Vivir* was officially enshrined not only in the “Constitution of the state” (*Article* no. 281<sup>8</sup>) and in the “Organic law” (*Article* no. 22<sup>9</sup>), but also in the “National development plans” by three presidents of the state: Rafael Correa (in 2007<sup>10</sup>, in 2009<sup>11</sup> and in 2013<sup>12</sup>), Lenin Moreno (in 2017<sup>13</sup>) and Guillermo Lasso (in 2021<sup>14</sup>).

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<sup>8</sup> Constitución del Ecuador. 2008. URL: <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2008/6716.pdf> (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Ley Orgánica del Régimen de Soberanía Alimentaria (LORSA). No. 583 de 5 de mayo de 2009. URL: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ecu88076.pdf> (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).

<sup>10</sup> Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: 2007–2010. Quito. 2007 / Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador. URL: <http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Plan-Nacional-Desarrollo-2007-2010.pdf> (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Plan Nacional de desarrollo Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir: 2009–2013: Construyendo un Estado Plurinacional e Intercultural Versión Resumida. Quito. 2009 / Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador. URL: [http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/07/Plan\\_Nacional\\_para\\_el\\_Buen\\_Vivir\\_\(version\\_resumida\\_en\\_espanol\).pdf](http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/07/Plan_Nacional_para_el_Buen_Vivir_(version_resumida_en_espanol).pdf) (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).



At the same time, special executive authorities were authorized to implement the goals outlined in official documents.

The main ministries, departments and committees focused on the formation and implementation of food sovereignty (in the context of Buen Vivir) are 1) Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries (*Span.* – MAGAP); 2) Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (*Span.* – MIES); 3) The National Institute of Popular and Solidarity Economy (*Span.* – IEPS); 4) National Secretariat for Planning and Development (*Span.* – SENPLADES); 5) Department of General Coordination of Commercial Networks (*Span.* – CGRC); 6) Plurinational and Intercultural Conference on Food Sovereignty (*Span.* – COPISA); 7) System of Food and Nutritional Sovereignty (*Span.* – SISAN).

The profile programs of executive authorities and expert groups are 1) National food storage system (*Span.* – UNA). Objective: regulation of the system of purchase, storage and marketing of basic agricultural products; 2) The National program of inclusive rural business (*Span.* – PRONERI). Objective: to link small agricultural producers and their associations with the agri-industrial complex and the main food distribution companies; 3) School of the Agrarian Revolution (*Span.* – ERA). Objective: transition to agriecological methods of production and provision of educational support to small producers, including the advantages of traditional and innovative knowledge; 4) Lands Plan (*Span.* – *Plan Tierras*). Objective: to provide small family producers with access to land resources.

### *Shokuiku and Buen Vivir: comparative analysis of concepts*

The comparative analysis phase will follow the stage of separate consideration of the two concepts (*Shokuiku and Buen Vivir*) as institutional models for the implementation of food sovereignty policy. Thus, according to the codified data in Table No. 1, we note that both models,

<sup>12</sup> Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo. Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador. Buen Vivir Plan Nacional 2013–2017. Quito. 2013. URL: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ecu139396.pdf> (Accessed 17 Oct. 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir: 2017–2021. Quito. 2017 / Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador. URL: [https://extranet.who.int/countrypplanningcycles/sites/default/files/planning\\_cycle\\_repository/ecuador/ecu\\_plan\\_nacional\\_buen\\_vivir\\_2017\\_2021.pdf](https://extranet.who.int/countrypplanningcycles/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/ecuador/ecu_plan_nacional_buen_vivir_2017_2021.pdf) (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Plan de Creación de Oportunidades: 2021–2025. Quito. 2021 / Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador. URL: [https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/Plan-de-Creación-de-Oportunidades-2021-2025-Aprobado\\_compressed.pdf](https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/Plan-de-Creación-de-Oportunidades-2021-2025-Aprobado_compressed.pdf) (Accessed 15 Aug. 2024).



which equally protect the principles of environmentalism, locavorism, subsidiarity, multiculturalism and self-sufficiency, seem to be equivalent to the strategy of Food sovereignty.

Table 1

Comparative analysis of Shokuiku and Buen Vivir  
as institutional models for the implementation  
of food sovereignty in Japan and Ecuador

Food sovereignty (strategic principles)	Buen Vivir (Good Living)	Shokuiku (Food Education)
Environmentalism / Coevolutionism	Provision and implemen- tation of ecological and organic technologies in ag- ricultural production and protection of agricultural biodiversity.	Upbringing a sense of respect for nature and pro- moting environmentally sustainable food produc- tion/consumption.
Localization of production and consumption	Strengthening and as- sisting organizations and networks of producers and consumers (including mar- keting and distribution) of food products to achieve a fair balance between rural and urban areas.	Revitalize rural communi- ties and strengthen the information system for producers and consumers of food products.
Decentralization of power / Subsidiarity	Integration of competen- cies of ministries, depart- ments and committees: MAGAP; MIES); IEPS; SENPLADES; CGRC; COPISA; SISAN.	Integration of the min- istries' competencies: MHLW, MEXT, MAFF.
Multiculturalism / Polycentrism	Conservation and restora- tion of agricultural bio- diversity and related folk wisdom (including the use, conservation and free exchange of seeds).	Protection of the autoch- thonous culinary culture ( <i>Washoku</i> ), popularization of joint meals with the family ( <i>Kessoku</i> ), promotion of the Japanese diet and lifestyle.
Food self-sufficiency (Reaching level 100 %)	Regulations: increase Standard: 100% Fact: from 70 to 97%	Regulations: increase Standard: 100% Fact: 38%

Note: Compiled by the author.

Table 2

Strategic principles of Food Sovereignty  
and their practical implementation  
(compliance/non-compliance) in Japan and Ecuador  
(comparative analysis)

No	Strategic principles of Food Sovereignty ( <i>setting of the ideal model</i> )	Compliance / non-compliance with food sovereignty standards ( <i>practical compliance with the ideal model</i> )	
		Japan	Ecuador
1.	The rejection of synthetically modified organisms and the prohibition of genetic engineering.	non-compliance	non-compliance
2.	Abandoning energy-intensive monocultures and industrial farming.	non-compliance	non-compliance
3.	High level of food self-sufficiency.	non-compliance ( <i>low</i> )	compliance ( <i>high</i> )
4.	Decentralization of power / Subsidiarity	non-compliance	non-compliance
5.	Reduction of the “metabolic rift”	compliance	compliance
6.	Multiculturalism / Polycentrism	compliance	compliance
7.	Environmentalism / Coevolutionism	compliance	compliance
8.	Deactivation of the forces of “agri-food ultra-imperialism”	non-compliance	non-compliance
9.	Demonopolization of the domestic food market.	non-compliance	non-compliance
10.	The priority of the “internal” food market over the “external” one	non-compliance	non-compliance
Result ( <i>proportion: Compliance/ Non-compliance</i> )		3/6 (30% of 100%)	4/6 (40% of 100%)

*Note:* Compiled by the author.

However, after declaring and postulating strategic standards, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the degree of their practical implementation. Thus, according to the codified data in Table No. 2, we note that according to the 10 established criteria of the ideal model of food sovereignty, Japan corresponds only by 30%, Ecuador by 40%. The structural tasks contributing to the successful implementation of Food

sovereignty are: the abandonment of synthetically modified organisms and energy-intensive monocultures, the demonopolization of the domestic food market, re-macdonaldization and gaining independence from large TNCs.

## *Conclusion*

The list of scientific studies devoted to topical issues of international political economy is increasingly correlated with the analysis of global food relations, which justifiably strengthens the discursive authority of the specialized academic school of Critical Agrarian Studies. One of the key topics of this interdisciplinary field is the problem of ensuring food sovereignty, prompted by the “binomial crisis of ecology and economics [Sehn Korting 2023, p. 74]”.

A symmetrical “binomial response” capable of averting the prospects of a global socio-ecological catastrophe should be formulated on the epistemological platform of “recovery economics” (a large-scale transformation in which the discourse of global ecology dominates the ontology of natural capital [Corson, MacDonald, Neimark 2013, p. 3]) and “environmental justice” (equal interstate responsibility related to projects that have a negative impact on the environment [Busscher, Parra, Vanclay 2020, p. 502]). The proposed solution to the problem, which corresponds to the Food sovereignty, seems equally relevant for both the countries of the Global North and the Global South. As confirmation of the hypothesis, let us refer to the results of our research, which proved that the State of Japan and the Republic of Ecuador, having different potentials of geo-economic power, equally use the principles of food sovereignty.

However, the implementation of strategic programs, adjusted for the peculiarities of the cultural and political-legal landscape, can be qualified as satisfactory. Thus, along with the successful reduction of the “metabolic gap” and the popularization of environmentally sustainable farming methods, a number of unresolved problems remain. For example, deviations from the cultivation of synthetically modified organisms and energy-intensive monocultures, the demonopolization of the domestic food market, the re-McDonaldization of the population and gaining independence from large TNCs. The solution of these tasks will allow to reconstruct the neoliberal project of the current Corporate Food Regime [Малов 2018, с. 135]. The advent of a new “International regime of food Sovereignty”, in turn, will act as a paradigmatic alternative to conventional programs of privatization of life, commodification of nature and monetization of unconditional human reflexes [Малов 2018, с. 140].

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