



ENEMY CONSTRUCTION IN THE DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST JAPANESE EMPIRE: CDA PERSPECTIVES

Ahmad Idris Asmaradhani 

Institute of Teacher Training and Education (IKIP) Mataram, Jl. Pemuda No.59A, Dasan Agung Baru,
Mataram, Nusa Tenggara Barat

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Abstract

This paper seeks to identify and describe the linguistic priming work that President Roosevelt employed in overcoming isolationism in the United States. In his Declaration of War against the Japanese Empire, President Roosevelt asked the American people to trust him with the American forces and American determination using the strategy of enemy construction. Making courageous statements packed in political discourse, he framed the people's minds into a state of patriotic country defenders and that the Japanese Empire was an enemy and a real danger to the life of the country. His statements are a formulation that America is ready for war with an assurance of a near-absolute victory. Applying the method and theories of Critical Discourse Analysis centered around the framework of "ideological square" and "socio-cognitive approach" for building in-group and out-group as one major aspect of CDA supported with other linguistic theories, this paper aimed at analyzing and describing such linguistic priming to get out of the country isolationist slumber. Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it is argued that in terms of CDA and socio-cognitive as well as other linguistic theories the enemy construction was inter-textually successful in winning the American people's consent.

INTRODUCTION

President Roosevelt (hereinafter PR)'s speech "Declaration of War against the Japanese Empire" (hereinafter DWJE) lasted just over four minutes but had a significant impact that persists to this day. This speech was one of the most famous and moving speeches in American history (see: [Moser, 2013, pp. 1-4](#)). This critical discourse analysis will exhibit the fact that PR's war declaration was an effective speech due to his ability in converting the American isolationist historical background using language priming containing some elements of CDA packed in political discourse in the speech. The discussion, therefore, will partly include: (1) how the domestic and international political situation prior to the speech during the period, (2) how the speech itself linguistically capable of eliminating the status of isolationism of the United States (hereinafter US), and mostly (3) how the speech was, in terms of CDA, capable of affecting the minds of the American people which ultimately lead to constructing a cognitive view that Japanese Empire (hereinafter JE) the enemy of the US.

In American history, World War II (hereinafter WW II) was a wide scope and a large-scale war that brought far more of the American population directly in contact with it. The war also killed and wounded far more American youth than any other war ([Spanos, 2008, p. 131](#)). In political views, any single decision to go to war is a process that needs to look back at the lessons of the past to see what a nation is capable of and what it is willing to do with the war. In the US, WW II is remembered as "The Good War" and a pillar of morality in America's past. The generation who fought in it is remembered fondly for their courageous involvement and sacrifices abroad as well as on the home front. All of this had been remembered as the foundation and shared memories in maintaining the country's core values ([Bostdorff & Goldzwig, 2005, p. 661](#)).

It can also be seen that American people's minds and values need to be linguistically primed to be moved out of their isolationist slumber. During the period before the declaration, the US was still at peace and tried to maintain a status of not to get involved in any war ([Wills, 2006, p. 9](#)). With the effects of the "Great Depression" and the "Banking Crisis" of 1933 was still felt, the American public was not concerned much about what was happening overseas. Up to 1940, Americans were still living through one of the most difficult times in the nation's history. The economic crisis led millions of people to lose their jobs, their savings, and their homes (see also: [Flynn, 1948, pp. 16-32](#)).

National security had not even been a concern because geographically the US had an ocean on either side to protect them from the dangers of war. In such period, most Americans sympathized with Britain and France in their fight against Nazi Germany, but—in many

views—that did not mean they wanted the United States to get involved in the war. Americans were more concerned about problems at home, especially the lingering depression. There was also a general feeling that this was Europe’s war and that the US should stay out of it (Wills, 2006, p. 15). Such attitude—in American history was known as isolationism—made the government and the people are reluctant to get involved in any war (for a detailed discussion about isolationism, see: Weber, 2010, p. 6).

DWJE was selected because there in the speech was an explicit naming of the JE as the enemy to the American public. The speech was also PR’s most memorable ones about a war that American Rhetoric (also known as American Speech Banks) nominated this speech as the fourth-best speech of the twentieth century (see: Eidenmuller, 2019, pp. 1-2). It is argued that the implications of linguistic priming were, in terms of CDA, helpful in relation to national identity, memory, enemy construction, and justificatory political discourse because it offered a way of cognitive grasp that PR addressed to the public. Linguistic priming is a linguistic strategy that makes the public see what is heard and thereby make the listener more involved in the vision put forward. In Firth’s view (1957, p. 155), “A language is not merely a community of sounds or even of grammar and dictionary. It is also a community of usage and idiom - - -.” (Firth in Pace-Sigge, 2013, pp. 149-173).

For linguists, rhetoricians, historians, or even politicians looking at PR’s presidency, linguistic priming is another way to explore the immense amount of changes that took place while he was in office as well as contribute to understanding his popularity. Just a few days before the declaration, PR felt that public sentiment was malleable enough to label the threat against the US, which enables PR prime the situation for war. Before the declaration, American public did not know much about their president. Despite the fact that PR spoke to the American public quite often and was regarded as an American rhetorician, American audience did not know that PR had polio and was confined to a wheelchair (Adams, 2016, pp. 1-3). When Japan had just brutally attacked Pearl Harbor, and America was filled with terror, disbelief, and confusion, PR delivered his speech to several target audience segments: House and Senate; the military; the American public to reassure them and give them faith that things would be okay, especially the people who would have loved ones affected by it. While addressing the rest of the world, specifically Great Britain to get across the message, he also wanted to gain (American) public support for his declaration of war (Freidel, 2019, pp. 1-7).

The occasion of such speech was a major historical event because it was the first attack on American soil, so PR might have known it would become an important speech. The audience knew very little about the topic, prior to the delivery of such declaration because

information traveled pretty slowly back in those times. The audience found out the news from the radio, newspaper, or even schools' loudspeakers (Lange, 2004, pp. 1-3). The American public received the news only after listening to the addresses on the radio on Sunday evenings when the public finally opined that war was the only option. At such home political situation, the America First Committee (AFC) was promptly disbanded, and at the same time the public opinion swung toward support of the war effort, and many isolationists in Congress found themselves outvoted on new legislation (Weber, 2010, p. 12).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Enemy Construction in CDA

Linguistic priming—to linguistically construct who the enemy is—is essential in PR's DWJE. Enemy construction facilitates national identity, group cohesion, and justifies force against the named enemy; JE. Effective use of enemy construction would also assist PR in overcoming some of his obstacles, both politically and historically, domestically as well as abroad. Unity and cohesion of citizens can be secured through the introduction of who the common foe is. The situation abroad early in WW II needed to be explained through the antagonist to fully demonstrate the threat to the US and the military action that PR wanted the American army and the people to take.

In terms of rhetoric, Bates (2004, p. 451) offers insight into war justification and how enemy construction lends itself well to such efforts: "In war rhetoric, metaphors are often used to reshape public perceptions of the enemy so that there is no alternative to war. Rather than seeing metaphors as illustrative, they become constitutive of reality". The use of metaphors enable comprehension of a complex situation in simple terms, so comparing the foreign enemy to something the American people are familiar with is highly effective in enemy construction.

Enemy construction constitutes the enemy, but it also reconstitutes the historical situation. Enemy construction often shapes realities, creates the need for force, and then demands that force be taken up against the enemy constructed. For their analysis of the Cold War, Hinds and Windt (1991, p. 9) argue, "Language itself is a creative act, not an added-on interpretation that comes from an act. This process of uniting the two, we call a language event, a unity of political language and actual events that create political reality both in perception and in the expression". The construction of an enemy is not isolated; it sends rational and civilized in comparison to the 'Other' and is in the position to create the distinction as well as place the 'Other' into a dichotomous category (Hinds and Windt, 1991,

p. 18). According to [Bhatia \(2007, p. 516\)](#), "... the notion of good evokes something absolute and unquestionable. Evil is personified rather than simply being an 'intensifier or adjective.' This is where 'evil' is fleshed out as a useful term in the discursive strategy of enemy construction. The term 'evil' is value-laden, not just the opposite of 'good'. It includes all the facets of moral life and connotes that the 'Other' is deprived in every possible way, which enables forgetting the consequences of using force".

Unlike other linguistic approaches, CDA openly advocates for the critical analysis and evaluation of language practices that result in, or are the result of, what [Fairclough \(2012, p. 12\)](#) calls 'critical standpoint'. CDA, therefore, aims to extend forms of critique familiar in critical social science to discourse, and there it can be seen that argumentation analysis as potentially increasing the capacity of CDA to do so in offering powerful ways of analyzing argumentative discourse.

It is argued that CDA is suitable to identify and describe the work of discursive linguistic priming that PR employed in overcoming isolationism in the US. In his DWJE, PR asked the American people to trust him with the American forces and American determination using the strategy of "enemy construction", a term used by numerous CDA theorists. PR's statements were constructed strategically and packed in a political discourse designed to alter the American people's state of isolationist minds into a state of patriotic defenders who saw that JE was "the real enemy" who was putting the American land into grave danger. His statements in the DWJE were formulated so effectively that Americans felt ready for war with an assurance of a near-absolute victory.

In van Dijk's view, CDA is a type of analytical research on discourses which basically looked at how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk within social and political context (in [Tannen and Hamilton, 2003, pp. 352-371](#)). In [Chouliaraki and Fairclough's view \(1999, p. 113\)](#), CDA of a communicative interaction describes the semiotic and linguistic features of the interaction that are systematically connected with what is going on socially, and indeed partly or wholly, semiotically, or linguistically. In their observation, CDA sees language as social practice and considers the context of language use is essential in seeing the relation between language and power.

The term 'critical' in [Wodak and Meyer's view \(2001, pp. 1-2\)](#), is presently and conventionally used in a broader sense to show the practical linking of social and political engagement with the construction of society. They view that in human matters, the relations between causes and effects can be 'distorted' in some ways. They conclude, therefore, that

‘critique’ means making visible such interconnectedness. CDA, thus, can be seen as basically concerned with analyzing cloudy and crystal clear structural relationships of the domination, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language. That is, CDA aims to critically investigate the social inequality in what expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by the use of language in (mainly political) discourses.

In discussing “Theory of Ideology”, [van Dijk \(1995, pp. 47-142\)](#) states that theory of ideology is perceived as a multidisciplinary approach which is the fundamental framework for organizing multiple ideological concepts and consumptions. Ideologies usually control the thoughts of a social group which then represent the basic social characteristics of a group based on their identities, goals, norms, values, positions, and resources. In respect of ideological consumption, both cognitive and social factors are involved in this process. He claims that social cognition is a system with shared sociocultural knowledge by members of a specific group, society or culture. For instance, feminists share ideas or beliefs on principles such as abortion, positive actions and stereotypes by men ([1995, pp. 47-142](#)). Therefore, these principles lead to the emergence of ‘feminist’ ideology.

It is perceived that ideologies are acquired by members of a social group through the long-term process and other forms of social information processing ([van Dijk, 1995, pp. 47-142](#)). He states that an essential component in the ideological representation in the presence of the term ‘us’ versus ‘them’. The relation between these two components is significant as the term ‘us’ is associated with ‘positive properties’ and ‘them’ is associated with ‘bad properties’. Cognitive functions are the basic form of ideological properties which organize, monitor, and control attitudes of a social group (in this particular discussion—the American attitudes).

Every ideological representation is accompanied by experiences of a person which is referred to as models. [Van Dijk \(1987, pp. 161-196\)](#) also claims that models represent personal experiences such as particular information about each event or action which is processed in short-term memory. In other words, models are parallel to cognitive functions as they observe the thinking of a person and personal knowledge that one possesses. Models are uniquely formed as they hold the ability to control experiences of a social actor ([van Dijk, 1995, pp. 47-142](#)) as well as being influenced by the cognitive process of other member groups in society. Concerning this, it is perceived that models are the primary unit which controls the various acts of human life as multiple ideologies are discovered.

Van Dijk’s discussion about the theory of ideology above manifests in his very influential framework which is known as van Dijk’s ‘ideological square’ or van Dijk’s ‘conceptual

square' ([van Dijk, 2000, p. 44](#)). In such framework, he formulates the four principles which enable hidden ideological analysis in expressing various ideological statements. They are:

- Emphasize positive things about 'Us';
- Emphasize negative things about 'Them';
- De-emphasize negative things about 'Us'; and
- De-emphasize positive things about 'Them'.

These four angles play a vital role in a broader contextual strategy of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation". Self-presentation displays the individual's action as a member of the group while firmly expressing various ideological notions. Positive self-representation emphasizes individuals' positive behavior as in saying positive things about 'Us' and saying negative things about 'Them'. This positive stance is an abstract characteristic of group conflicts and as the interaction pattern opposes the other groups. While the negative other-presentation depicts that no negative saying should be directed to 'Us', no positive saying should be directed to 'Them' ([van Dijk, 2000, p. 44](#)). This implies that the term 'Us' always refers to positive saying and beliefs in a social context while, the term 'Them' refers to negativity, condemnation and other negative stances.

In his discussion about socio-cognitive approach, van Dijk states that CDA integrates the various linguistic theories and approaches in producing a social and discursive process to "highlight the assumptions made by the more powerful on the less powerful". His socio-cognitive approach attempts to link cognitive theories and approaches with linguistics. He proclaims that critical discourse studies are an essential 'perspective', 'position' or 'attitude' within the multidisciplinary approach as it intends to shed light on covert ideologies in the social practice. As such he proposes a triangulation of the interrelationship among 'discourse', 'cognitive' and 'society' ([van Dijk, 2009, pp. 62-86](#)). This triangulation emphasizes the cognitive phenomena which are connected to the discourse structure and ways in which social inequality, domination, and ideologies occur. In efforts of discovering the 'social representations', 'attitudes' and 'ideologies' of social actors, the connection between the structure of discourse and the structure of society should be viewed (see also: [van Dijk, 1998, pp. 126-128](#)). [Van Dijk \(2009, pp. 62-86\)](#) points out that a certain group's domination (in his discussion, the white) leads to social inequality, racism, and domination in certain countries. Moreover, the top-down model in CDA is focused as discourse reveals the typical form of injustice in society (see also: [Fairclough, 1995, pp. 23-26](#)).

METHOD

A descriptive-analytic method of research was utilized in this study, and the data were selected from the (full) text of the DWJE. To examine the how the enemy building is represented in the address, some statements containing the “positive things about ‘Us’” and “negative things about ‘Them’” were selected and analyzed in terms of CDA. The reason behind the selection of such statements was that they were the elements of the enemy construction. The linguistic features used in the text of the DWJE were analyzed at the levels of discursive features of (a) lexical choice, (b) topicalization, (c) passivization, and others that lead to the sense that Japanese Empire is the true enemy of the United States based on van Dijk’s theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In that very influential political speech called DWJE, which lasted just over four minutes, it can be seen that PR was trying to emphasize the ‘bad things’ that JE was the American enemy. About a third of the speech was directed to talk about the ‘bad’ things related to the JE. Another third was directed to talk about the ‘good’ things about the US and the American people. The other third was about other things to support the making of “how bad JE was” and “how good US and the American people were” during the time of hours before the war. In other words, what PR made in DWJE was trying to construct who the American enemy by making a ‘topic’ of the discourse. That is to say that—as part of his statement—America was at peace at that moment. But then, it was the Japanese Empire who suddenly attacked the peaceful land.

According to [van Dijk](#), the ‘topic’ of the discourse may be characterized as the most ‘important’ or ‘summarizing’ idea that underlies the meanings of a sequence of sentences in a discourse (1984, p. 55). He further states that it defines the ‘gist’ or ‘upshot’ of such an episode and at the same time assigns global coherence to such an episode. He further defines using other terms that it is what such a passage is about. A topic—in his view—is derived from the meanings of the sentences of an episode, that is, from a sequence of propositions defining that episode, by a number of macro-rules ([van Dijk](#), 1984, p. 56).

In van Dijk’s view, topics are not just ‘there’, but maybe suggested, introduced, negotiated by the parties of a conversation. It assumed here that the conversation is between PR and the American people during the day of the declaration. They may be challenged and changed under specific conditions, or changes may be interactionally ‘refused’ by the other participant in the exchange ([van Dijk](#), 1984, p. 57). In this respect, it could be seen that

American people were not interested in war due the lingering economic condition. From the relations between propositions as expressed by subsequent sentences in such DWJE, it can be seen that the topic of the speech is “JE is the US Enemy and is Now Attacking the US Land”. By making such topic of the speech PR is at the same time building the American enemy.

In history, the actual events of the attack on Pearl Harbor began that infamous day, December 7, 1941, when Japanese Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida signaled for the general attack at 07.50 (A.M. Pacific time). By ten o’clock that morning, the attack was over. It is noted that in just under two hours over 2,400 (twenty-four hundred) American people—both military personnel and ordinary citizens—were either killed, missing, or died due to wounds suffered in the attack, and 1,178 (eleven hundred and seventy-eight) people suffered non-fatal wounds of varying degrees. In comparison, the Japanese attack force lost only 55 (fifty-five) men. These are not included battleships, vessels, and aircraft that were destroyed in the attack, while the Japanese lost only twenty-nine planes (see: [Robert & Brian, 2003, p. 7](#)).

On December eighth, at 12:30 in the afternoon and less than thirty hours after the attack rained down upon Pearl Harbor, PR addressed both Congress and the general public in a nationwide radio cast. Capitalizing on the overwhelming outrage at Japan’s attack, PR used strong language and calculated diction to incite an emotional response from Americans, culminating in an appeal to Congress to declare a state of war between the US and the JE due to the “*unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh*”. As the Commander in Chief, PR was a self-confident leader in conveying his aura to the public in his numerous formal addresses. That did not include the informal radio chats (commonly known as fireside chats) and frequent press conferences while he was on the wheel-chair due to polio he was suffering (see: [Adams, 2016, pp. 1-3](#); [Powaski, 2017, p. 172](#)).

PR was very smart and careful in selecting the dictions and construction his statements to construct a socio-cognitive view in the American minds that JE was their enemy and that the US was at peace then. PR utilized Americans’ righteous indignation at the Japanese attack to inflame them into accepting America’s entrance into WW II, a direct inversion of the previously strong isolationist sentiment lingering since WW I (see: [Stuckey, 2018, pp. 1-3](#)). For more detailed analysis, some key statements are analyzed here below (the data [in sentences or statements] selected from the DWJE are typed in italic and numbered to distinguish them from the text).

To begin his DWJE on addressing the joint session of Congress on December 8, 1941, PR announces, *Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United*

States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan (2). In terms of an ideological square (proposed by [van Dijk, 2000](#), p. xx), the positive things about the US in this particular statement are emphasized while the negative things about JE are also highlighted. The United State—as the ‘Us’—is stressed by using passive voice where the US is the patient, the object, the target, or the victim of the action (the attack) made by the JE as the agent, the subject, or the doer of the action (for the use of these terms, see: [Hurford, Heasley & Smith, 2007](#), pp. 244-257). At the same time, this statement also cognitively emphasizes the ‘social representation’ of the American people and the JE during the time (see: [van Dijk, 1998](#), pp. 126-128).

That statement was supported with the *United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific (3)*. While the content of this statement socio-cognitively leaves a good impression about who the US is, the use of the determiner ‘that’ and the pronoun ‘its’ are capable of leaving an impression that the statement ‘thingifies’ the JE as a ‘thought’ into a ‘thing’ or ‘something’. It is usually intended to ‘objectify’ a person or a ‘character’ to deny a fuller series of relations forming that ‘thing’. At the same time, it means that JE is being treated as a thing-in-itself and possibly with animate, anthropic characteristics, and or highly separated, made unrelated or non-contingent on its existence in relation to other relations or ‘things’. In Grovier’s view ‘thingification’ is also related to ‘alienation’, which, in his view, “It is a mind-bending concept and for that reason not so much in common use, but very powerful as a concept to apply to all manner of events in daily life” (see: [Grovier, 2017](#), pp. 1-7). Thus, this particular statement supports the previous one by emphasizing the positive things about the US and de-emphasize positive things about the JE ([van Dijk, 2000](#), p. 44). It can also socio-cognitively be felt that the impression and the emphasis in this particular statement are supported by the socio-cognitive impressions of the next two statements (4 and 5).

More serious emphasis on the bad things about JE is given in the next two statements. While *the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago (6)*, *the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace (7)*. At this point, there is a clear contrast between the ‘deliberate planned attack’ and the ‘deliberate deceit’ that the JE made on the US. Socio-cognitively, this clear contrastive impression can be seen as the strongest emphasis on the bad things about the JE. As such, it may be the biggest part of the enemy construction in this DWJE. This emphasis is further stressed with the next four statements (8, 9, and 10) that are

capable of leaving an impression that the attack made by the JE has caused real damage to the US.

The following statements—from statements 11 up to 16—seem to be expressed to leave a socio-cognitive impression that the JE's attack is not only targeted to US lands but also the surrounding Pacific area such as Malaya (11); Hong Kong (12); Guam (13) The Philippine Islands (14); Wake Island (15) and Midway Island (16). The impression can be felt as JE continues and surprise offensive that extends throughout the Pacific area (17) as the statements were initiated with the use of 'yesterday'; 'last night'; and 'this morning' as the time indicators. The construction of the JE as the US enemy can socio-cognitively be felt sufficient as PR states that *the facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves* (18). These facts are reiterated by stating that *the people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation* (19).

After those statements are sufficient enough to make American people's minds see that the JE is their real enemy, PR *as commander in chief of the Army and Navy, directed that all measures be taken* (20) for defense. As commander in chief, PR also assures that *the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory* (22). Of course, such assurance is made *with confidence in the armed forces and with the unbounding determination of American people US will gain the inevitable triumph*(26). PR's conclusion was just as compelling, and he closes the DWJE by stating *I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire* (27).

As a declaration as well as a request to go to the war, this DWJE needs a kind of approval from the Congress. In many sources it is known that the Congress responded with a near-unanimous Declaration of War (also well known as: Pearl Harbor Address to the Nation) which in the end of 1999 was nominated the best number 4 (four) out of 100 (one hundred) best American Speech of the Twentieth Century (see: [Eidenmuller, 2019, pp. 1-2](#)). In Congress, it is also noted that there was only one single dissenting vote respectively (see: [Powaski, 2017, p. 170](#)).

The success of winning the vote in the Congress; however, in the earlier time was not as easy as assuring the American people. In [Powaski's](#) view (2017, p. 204) PR's deviousness in protecting the nation's security nevertheless set a precedent that in the long run would undermine Congress's role in the war-making process. In relation to this home political situation, the America First Committee (AFC) was promptly disbanded, and at the same time the public opinion swung toward support of the war effort (see: [Weber, 2010, p. 12](#)), and

many isolationists in Congress found themselves outvoted on new legislation (see also: [Baum & Kernell, 2001, pp. 198–229](#)).

CONCLUSION

The linguistic priming by PR in the DWJE was intended to make the American people see who the real enemy was. It is proven very effective in many ways. Such priming is capable of facilitating the national identity, group cohesion, and justifies force against the targeted enemy; JE. Furthermore, the statements in the DWJE are proven as linguistically capable of assisting PR to overcome some or even most of his obstacles in terms of political and historical presidency, domestic and abroad. In terms of CDA and socio-cognitive theories, it is proven that the minds of the citizens can be secured by introducing who the common American enemy during that very moment. That is to say that in terms of CDA the linguistic priming that PR made in the DWJE could be seen as capable of eliminating the burden of bolstering American morale that—during that moment—was seen (by many historians) still in two unpleasant conditions. Not only that America was in the great lingering economic depression but also stood as the isolationist slumber. It is this DWJE that was seen as capable of linguistically constructing the common enemy and is potential to swing the American people’s minds from such situations into patriotism, unity, and American dominance to foster optimism and American pride.

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