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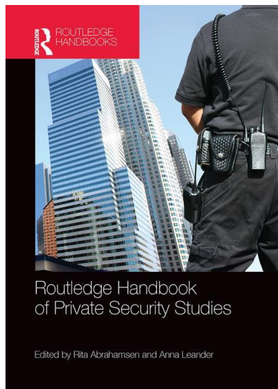

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POSTCOLONIALITY AND RACE IN GLOBAL PRIVATE SECURITY MARKETS

Amanda Chisholm

The political and economic phenomena giving rise to private military and security companies (PMSCs) and broader trends of security commercialization are attracting the attention of academics from the disciplines of international relations (IR) and security studies, feminist security studies and criminology. These literatures have filled important gaps in research on PMSCs by making visible the ways commercial security is a product of larger neoliberal narratives and norms, how commercial security operations remasculinize security, how they impede women's participation, and how the security industry creates a gendered division of labour.

Importantly, emerging analyses also shows how these same practices are racialized and rest upon existing colonial relations, which result in material and social inequalities for the people who participate as security contractors. Such investigations have focused on the experiences of third country national (TCN) security contractors and have not only revealed the increasing role of labour from the global South in security operations, but also how racial logics of what constitutes good security underpins how global security is practised. Making visible TCNs' labour conditions and how these men (and sometimes women) are naturalized into particular roles highlights the vast differences in experiences among security contractors globally and illuminates the culture of whiteness that pervades the industry, privileging some men and masculinities while marginalizing others. This chapter draws upon the scholarship on TCN security labourers to demonstrate how bringing in postcolonial analysis to the study of PMSCs, shows the interconnecting colonial histories, racial and gendered practices intimately that bind security participants and security narratives across geopolitical regions and markets.

Seeing commercial security through a postcolonial lens

Much like the feminist concerns over the absence of gender in the current discussions on private security (Eichler 2015; Chapter 16, this volume), postcolonial authors argue that colonial histories and race have been largely overlooked (Chisholm 2015). As a result the current literature fails to capture how colonial geographies and histories continue to mediate the experiences of security labourers but also how securities and insecurities are articulated. Postcolonial scholars pay particular attention to how colonial histories and racial practices shape how we understand and live in the world. More accurately, they have envisioned IR as constituted

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through many worlds with interweaving histories and a multitude of knowledge sources (Agathangelou and Ling 2009). Drawing upon imagery of flowing water, Ling (2014) describes postcolonial IR as constituted through multiplicities of intertwining histories flowing and merging together. Like Ling, other postcolonial scholars understand knowledge production as constituted through a fluid multidirectional exchange rather than a top down or lineal process. Consequently, such an understanding of IR necessitates postcolonial inquiry to look to the margins of mainstream IR, to use these marginal experiences and positions to re-evaluate dominant understandings of history and to reveal the particularities of these global practices.

Applying a postcolonial analysis to PMSCs allows one to ask in what ways colonial histories and colonial legacies constitute private security markets and who and what knowledge is silenced in the current configurations? By focusing on the colonial relationships that inform security practices, postcolonial scholars make visible how the intersection between colonial histories and race with gender establishes white privilege in commercial security and how the value of labour from the global South is determined by how it relates to normalized 'white' security.

Postcolonial analysis speaks to the ways in which power is established by paying attention to how colonial histories and colonial legacies constitute and make intelligible gendered and racial subjectivities in contemporary political, social, and economic landscapes. Postcolonial gender scholars have employed the concept of racial masculinities to explore the intersectionality of gender and race in asking how the subjectivities of men and women remain relational, how racial logics work to value and naturalize particular masculine knowledge claims. Postcolonialism also stresses that all subjects are complicit in the production of these overarching gender-based hierarchies. Consequently, by conceptualizing private security and the marketing of military and guarding labour through a postcolonial gendered lens, we can begin to observe the ways colonialism reinvents itself in the representations and experiences of the global South labourer, referred to by the security industry as TCNs and naturalizes them into lesser valued labour roles. We can also ask how a culture of whiteness works to privilege the experiences and subjectivities of the white security contractor and how both TCN and Western security contractors are complicit in these security practices.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the current postcolonial analyses of the industry, illustrating the argument mainly with reference to the place of Gurkha, and contains four sections. The first section below discusses how martial race remains a foundational logic underpinning the use of TCN labour in PMSCs. I then highlight how colonial histories of the British and the Gurkhas have mediated current security practices surrounding the use of Gurkhas as TCN labourers in Afghanistan. The following section draws upon the work by Joachim and Schneiker (2012, 2015), concerning how PMSCs use racial language in reproducing white and Western privilege in security practices and security knowledge production. Finally, I suggest possible future directions for postcolonial research on PMSCs that involve engaging with feminist global political economy (GPE) in order to understand PMSCs as a global industry that connects to other globalized industries.

Orientalism, martial race and white privilege

Practices of colonialism have constituted Western military recruitment of global South labour since the British Empire. They have been underpinned by a particular martial race logic that purported that some races were more suited for military service than others. Martial race communities include, for example, the Highlanders of Scotland, the Gurkhas of Nepal, the Fijians, and the Sikhs of India. The idea of martial races was used by the colonial administra-

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tion to turn these indigenous communities into colonial militaries and police forces the colonizer could trust. The logics of martial race were rooted in larger Victorian ideas around race, that we could know people through their biological attributes. Establishing the 'martial' of a particular community was as much about constructing trusted indigenous soldiers as it was about reasserting colonial superiority. Such practices were not confined to the British, but appeared in French colonial administration practices as well (Womack 2006).

While not seamless, there are continuities in the colonial logics that determined global South military labourers today. The legacies of colonialism are observed in the UK/US and among other national recruitment strategies. Basham (2013: 112–37) discusses practices of race and ethnicity in the contemporary British military landscape. Through interviews with racial minorities in the military, Basham traces how their experiences are shaped by race and colonialism to produce different 'ethnic' soldiers within the British military, and how these men and women negotiate and make sense of their respective representations. Basham reveals how colonialism 'as a practice and as a set of assumptions' (ibid.: 112), is reflected in the ways in which the British military conducts its operations, and in how racism is reproduced through constructions of different ethnic soldiers. Similarly, Ware (2012; Chapter 15, this volume) details the racial and colonial logics that underpin the experiences of the British 'military migrants'.

PMSCs, independent of nationality, follow similar colonial practices when hiring 'military migrants' from the global South. Barker (2009) shows how colonial economic models underpin the gendered and racial divisions of labour among US security operations. Taking the US operations in Iraq as an example, Barker demonstrates how Indian labour is taking on the feminized administration work leaving the manly soldiering to the US soldier. Yet the marketization of military labour is not only about getting post-colonial 'martial' men to perform the feminized labour. It is also a part of a larger neoliberal restructuring of military operations whereby these individuals are characterized through a flexible work model, a model that the individual military migrant is complicit in. Men from the global South sign up to these contracts in the belief that their sacrifice and risk will result in economic gain for their families. MacLellan (2007) and I (Chisholm 2014a) both build on Barker's work. Drawing upon interviews with global South security labourers we trace how these men are seduced to participate in an industry that rests upon their marginal status. We contextualize these men's choices with reference to an overarching neoliberal promise that seduces them, a promise that claims to increase economic, political and social prosperity for those who work hard.

For the military migrants, their desperate situations not only shape their ability to freely choose to work in the commercial security industry, it also limits their ability to demand better work conditions once employed by the industry. MacLellan (2007) makes specific reference to Fijians' experiences in private security. Drawing upon interviews and local newspaper commentary, MacLellan takes the personal accounts of Fijian security labourers to illustrate the human cost in marketing migrant labour (ibid.: 53–5). Through the interviews, he gives voice to the Fijian contractors who speak of their individual navigation in choosing to take up dangerous and poorly managed work in order to support their families. Fiji, a country dependent upon foreign remittances and with a large population of underemployed military labour resulting from a downscaling in peacekeeping operations, is ripe for military recruitment. By highlighting the position of the Fijian military labourer and his family, MacLellan demonstrates how choice is severely restricted and how these workers' opportunities to demand better conditions are almost non-existent. His analysis is reinforced in my own interviews with Gurkhas and the white men who manage them in private security (Chisholm 2014a).

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Taking the martial soldier to market

Postcolonial analysis of the security industry became important to me during my fieldwork in Kabul, Afghanistan. I was interested in how race and gender produced a hierarchy of global security labourers. To answer this question, I conducted participatory observations and interviews with Gurkhas and the white men who managed them. Both the observations and interviews demonstrated the many ways race is present in the representations of Gurkha security labour.

Gurkhas are men from Nepal with an over 200-year military history with the British. Their identities as military labourers are the product of British colonial enterprise. Gurkhas' 'natural' suitability for dangerous work was described to me during interviews with security company managers of TCN labour during my fieldwork in Afghanistan, because of their 'martial' raced culture and their 'heartiness' and 'sheer determination'. Their martial histories provide them access to the security industry but at the same time position them in subaltern roles; roles requiring the management of their white counterparts in order for their labour to be properly professionalized (Chisholm 2014a). Consequently, as I was repeatedly told during interviews with private security managers that Gurkhas can endure long and monotonous tasks. This made them more suitable for positions as static guard and convoy protection than their Western counterparts. This language produces the Gurkha as static. Their martial security identities are made intelligible through their intimate connections to colonial histories in which their communities are 'ethnicitized' as 'martial', making them more suitable for colonial military labour.

Security company managers' use of colonial language naturalizes the Gurkha into lower status, poorly paid and dangerous roles. Such naturalization hampers their possibilities of reaching managerial positions or achieving greater economic, political or social opportunities. For example, in my interviews, Gurkhas and their managers alike repeatedly acknowledged a pay-gap (Chisholm 2014b). The Gurkhas would receive \$1500 a month, compared with their white counterparts receiving \$8000–\$10,000 per month. Some of the pay gap could be explained by different roles these men were contracted to perform (although not always). Importantly, and what appeared to concern Gurkhas the most in interviews was the difference in contractual obligations and the work environment of Gurkhas and Westerners. Some Gurkhas complained about having their passports confiscated for the duration of their contract. Others mentioned restrictions on movement through the compound and the city of Kabul, restricted access to eating times and the limited variety of foods available for them to choose from. Their ability to advance in their security career from static guards/convoy protection to management was also limited as a result of their 'martial' characteristics popularly understood to make them amenable to certain roles. Positioning Gurkhas, and other TCN workers, as 'natural' security labourers in the industry is a reflection of the growing trend to recruit global South 'martial' labourer for the lesser valued security work – such as static guards and convoy protection – at the periphery to the commercial security market in order to maximize profits and drive down security prices.

Highlighting TCN experiences does more than demonstrate how race works to naturalize these men into particular roles, it also makes visible how colonial histories and race constitute and perpetuate inequality among labourers and global economies. Private security, captured through a postcolonial gender lens that takes the intersectionality of gender, race and colonial histories seriously, raises different issues and questions that so far the literatures on commercial security has yet fully to address. Such scholarship is, for example, questioning the ways commercial security rests upon and reproduces raced and gendered logics that sustain global divisions of labour among security contractors.

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The pattern of global South security labour recruitment follows colonial imaginings of these 'martial' men whereby the Western security companies see these men as the more desirable military labourers. This colonial logic is not unique to the security industry, but perhaps is foregrounded in existing military procurement practices whereby colonial histories mediate the employment of 'ethnic' soldiers such as the Gurkhas and Fijians within the British military (Ware 2012). Colonial histories and raced practices not only shape who gets recruited, they also produce a division of labour among soldiers whereby soldiers from the global South are deemed 'ethnic'.

Such realities of the global South labourer counter the 'freeness' of the market and highlight how race continues to produce a masculine hierarchy of global labourers. Emerging critical gender research offers important insights into how on the one hand the US has used neoliberal logic of freeing military labour to pave the way for marketizing the military and on the other hand, how the US draws upon colonial geographies and desperate global South economies that result in cheap, and at times unfree, labour (Stillman 2011). Higate (2012) describes how these colonial geographies are legitimized and sustained through martial race that naturalizes these men into these positions. Eichler (2014) expands this work by describing the economic desperation of many men from the global South that mediate their contract negotiations. In many cases, these men would simply put up with bullying and intimidation in their employment because they felt they had no alternative (ibid.: 608–9) or, as Higate (2012: 37, 40–41) argues, because they strike an 'ethnic bargain' with the security industry; a bargain that is understood as a necessity for short term individual gain, but which also reinforces their subaltern and marginal status within the industry. However, as I have written elsewhere (Chisholm 2014b: 38–9), these Gurkha's bargains with the industry are not just individual conscious choices mediated through a sense of economic desperation. Their decisions to take on these roles are also rooted in their own emotional attachments to these martial histories. Repeatedly in interviews, Gurkhas explained that they saw their roles as security labourers as a calling. They claimed it was their job to take on dangerous work in order to protect the white managers and their clients.

Gurkhas intellectually and emotionally drew upon the language of their martial masculine empowerment, located in their 'protector' of the white contractor subjectivity as a reason to take on the more dangerous (and less remunerated) work. Such an identity, as I was told in interviews with Gurkhas, is rooted in a long tradition of Gurkhas protecting the white men from the dangerous of war and insecurity. Yet at the same time their protector identity, situated within the larger political economy geographies of global security, is also a precarious one. This was highlighted during a focus group I had with four Gurkhas who were recently injured when an improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated beside their compound in southern Afghanistan. These men spoke about the anxiety of having to leave their employment to seek medical treatment and their inability to financially provide of their families. They expressed concern over being able to come back to work in Afghanistan given the tightened Afghan regulations towards contracting foreign labour at the time. Their financial security was in maintaining a strong and healthy body in order to maintain the employment they were contracted to perform. Unlike many Western countries where white contractors come from, in Nepal, there is little social security or health care measures offered to those who cannot pay and the men, in varying degrees, expressed worry about being a financial burden on their families. This lack of social protection from home countries place Gurkhas, and other TCN labourers, in precarious positions in the global security market(s).

Overall these analyses of the industry and the experiences of TCN labourers show how neoliberal globalization of military labour ensures that some foreign nationals will almost

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always be excluded from access to social and economic rights that are granted to Western labour. This is not to say that white Westerners taking on employment in private security do not face precarity in their work environment or job insecurity observed in the flexible and short-term work contracts. They certainly do. But the juxtaposition of the global South labourer labour experiences, next to the Western labourer where their skills are more financially valued and their job location is generally behind guarded walls or armoured vehicles, demonstrates how the degrees of risk and sacrifice are significantly different and how race and colonial relations underpin the degrees of sacrifice and the differences in overall labour experiences of the two contractor subjects. White privilege is also reinforced in how the market assigns value to security contractor skillsets – observed in the establishment of the white security expert.

The white security expert

Racial constitutions of the professional security contractor remain integral in shaping security labour hierarchies in private security markets. Feminist security studies scholars have argued that appeals to professional/expert status are also appeals to authority and that these appeals remain masculinized and therefore reproduce the gender dichotomies separating public/private and skilled/natural labourers (Sjoberg 2010: 4–5). The use of 'professional' is a reference to the masculine subject who acquires skills through training. Conversely women are naturalized into particular roles, such as the role of caregiver. Women are said to have a natural ability and aptitude for these particular caring roles and therefore do not require the same value assigned to the professional 'acquired' skills. Importantly, feminist scholars have reminded us that masculine privilege is formed through a variety of subject-forming intersections inclusive of race, religion, age, sexuality and class (Higate and Henry 2004: 481–98). Accordingly this same practice also has a racial dimension. As in the case of the TCN labourer, the racialization of their labour happens through forms of constructing semi-skilled, deviant and dangerous masculinities, embodied, for example, historically in the colonial native subject and contemporarily in security labour from the global South.

Within private security markets, professional versus natural labour binaries generate racial hierarchies among men. To claim to be an expert is also a claim to masculine white privilege. It allows the person to have authority and decision-making power over their particular subject-matter. When we consider global security contractors, privilege does not function in isolation but is relational to the 'subaltern' subjectivities. These relational power practices are present in PMSCs, whereby a particular masculine whiteness (embodied in the western contractor), as I have argued elsewhere (Chisholm 2014a) underpins the constitution of the expert private security contractor and legitimizes hierarchies among all security labourers because it is distinct and separate from the 'subaltern', seen as semiskilled or unskilled global South security labourer.

Joachim and Schneiker (2012, 2015) have documented a privileged white masculinity through examining how PMSC use particular language in their marketing strategies and training programmes, which they argue employ gendered and raced language of flexibility, empathy, and cultural awareness to describe their services and their contractors.

To highlight the white privilege in constituting the security expert, and the construction of the subaltern masculine other, embodied in the TCN and local national (LN) labourer, Joachim and Schneiker draw upon the language PMSCs use to describe the training of LNs and TCNs. In such cases, PMSCs use a narrative of the highly skilled western military trainers working closely with and mentoring the TCN labour. PMSCs narrate how the 'unskilled' or 'semi-skilled' TNC labourer becomes professionalized through training conducted by 'professional'

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western contractors; such professionalization positions the western labourer as the manager and mentor of the TCN labourer. It also works to reinforce that it is the West that has the acquired (valued) skills and necessitates them to professionalize the global South's 'natural' talents through mentoring and training – a process reminiscent of colonial encounters and martial race.

Postcolonial gender analysis in IR has demonstrated that colonialism was a gendered and racial practice, whereby the devaluing of indigenous men and women, and indigenous femininities and masculinities, was a particular strategy adopted in order to subordinate indigenous peoples and knowledge (Sinha 1995). The racialization of local men and women worked to impede them from exercising political and military power and positioned the colonizer in a place of authority, as a superior race that would mentor and develop the colonized. These colonial gendered relations were brought into existence and made intelligible through the larger colonial practices of accumulation and dispossession used in re-shaping African and Indian economies for the benefit of colonizers (ibid.). Contemporary applications of postcolonial analysis demonstrate that the practice of devaluing the colonial subject through racialization does not end with the political independence of former colonies. Scholars particularly concerned with postcolonial masculinities focus on the ways colonial histories and contemporary neo-colonial global processes rest upon and reproduce raced and gendered subaltern subjectivities locally and globally.

Seeing security through a global political economy lens

While the postcolonial analysis of the security industry has lent attention to the ways in which hierarchies among men are constructed and divisions of labour established, it says very little about security as work and in comparison to other global markets relying upon global workforce. What does it mean when we understand the security industry as one that is supported by a global workforce? Such questions direct attention to how race, gender, and colonial histories condition and discipline the global South security labour supply chains – a particular concern with feminist GPE scholars. As such, there is much to be gained by exploring these supply chains through a GPE lens.

While just emerging, research on this topic has shown that global labour is constituted through racial and gendered practices, how these practices inflate differences and hierarchies among labourers and naturalize people into particular devalued work. Postcolonial gender scholarship has thus far demonstrated how certain men were devalued in order to draw upon indigenous labour for colonial power, and how these practices have certain continuities in the postcolonial moment. Yet, there is not an explicit engagement with how these colonial conditions are also foundational to global markets and how such markets rest upon naturalizing race and racial labour. The racialization and colonial constitutions of global markets are made clearer when we apply postcolonial critiques of contemporary security and political practices to existing feminist GPE research that explores contradictions within capitalist and neoliberal discourse and the growing economic disparities between men and women of the global South and global North (Elias 2005). Such examinations connect to the ways colonial histories impact upon how Gurkhas are represented within the global political economy of private security.

By further exploring the security industry through a global political economy framing, current postcolonial and racial analysis of the industry can shift focus from PMSCs constituted through a process and marketization of security, to offer analyses that sees the security industry as composed not just of racialized security providers, understood in terms related to the state (as exploited victims, professionals or rogue mercenaries) but as workers in global markets

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as well. GPE can highlight how security markets relate to other globalizing markets in how they reproduce colonial geographies and dual economies to ensure a global supply of cheap and compliant labour. Taking security markets out of an exceptional security space, we can begin to further question how this security work is conditioned by both culture and neoliberal economics to explain variations of capitalist experiences among men and women from the global South. Such analysis can focus on the specific techniques applied to condition and discipline global labour chains and how military labour practices also inform other commercial industries.

Feminist GPE scholarship pays attention to the ways men and women are conditioned to perform particular labour, and how their labour is commodified. McDowell (2009) discusses how gender, race, and class intersect to produce a multitude of labourers for the market, and examines how women's work is feminized in order to offer cheap labour to the market. She further shows how masculinities and race work in tandem to produce working class, tough, men and business class (white) men. Elias (2005) complements this gender assessment of the market by exploring how the textile industry was feminized and labour in it was devalued through its association with 'women's work', in order to reduce labour costs by having women take up work in the textile industries. Cowen (2014) uses postcolonial and global political economy scholarship to demonstrate the similarities in logistical planning between the military and other expeditionary industries such as oil and gas and mining. Such explorations highlight further the blurring between military and security supply chain procurement practices and those of commercial global industries.

Emerging research and ways forward

Current postcolonial and feminist scholarship on PMSCs is moving in interesting directions. Both are engaging more with feminist GPE literatures on global labour supply chains (Chisholm and Stachowitsch 2016). This empirical and theoretical move enriches research on race, colonial histories and labour within private security in two key ways. Firstly, it allows us to compare security markets with other markets to see the ways in which these racial, colonial histories and gendered practices connect to the creation and disciplining of global workforces in other industries. It shifts our thinking towards a questions regarding how security is also found in the unexceptional, the mundane and the everyday. Such conceptualization of security allows us to re-think the ways in which militarization and neoliberalism interact within and beyond military arenas. By extension, a synthesis of feminist security studies and global political economy of private security studies also allows us to see military and private security service as racial, gendered work. By placing primacy on the concept of work, we can begin to track how this work is shaped by and shaping larger practices of militarization and neoliberalism and how individual labourers negotiate these practices in their everyday lives. Such conceptualization allows us to consider, for example, how PMSCs are constituted through affective labour, that is the emotional and supportive labour (generally done by women). We can begin to consider how security contractors draw upon emotional support from their former military colleagues and how security contractors' families use established military communities to maintain a sense of belonging once transitioned into the private security industry. By engaging with feminist GPE scholarship, more deeply, postcolonial and feminist analysis of PMSCs can ask how does/can the militarization of private security labour also operate as a space and site for resistance to neoliberalism: although military communities are not immune to neoliberalization, the military's sense of community underpinned by personal obligations to other comrades continues to offer a different subjectivity to celebrated enterprising neoliberal individual. Such

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engagement with security as work, and a synthesis of feminist security studies and global political economy develops understandings of how security markets are enmeshed with these neoliberal practices in other global capitalist enterprises. By moving research away from an exceptional military/security space to include issues of labour, future analysis can potentially open avenues of exploration into not only the men and women who participate in private security work (actual security contractors), but also those who support the private security industry. These emerging research trends are important as they allow us to explore the far reaching militarization within and outside traditional military and security spaces and how racial, gendered and colonial practices within PMSCs impact upon but also are informative of our everyday lives.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literatures that have contributed to discussions around postcolonial and raced practices in commercial security – specifically, PMSCs that operate globally. Much of this literature uses postcolonial insights to explain and reveal the vast differences and experiences of the TCN labourer when compared to his Western counterpart. By doing so, this scholarship has demonstrated how the security industry draws upon colonial logics and practices to sustain hierarchies among global labourers and devalue labour from the global South. While such examples are important to highlight the global divisions of labour and the racial and colonial logics that reinforce them, postcolonial analysis of the security industry has the potential to reveal much more about the security industry.

The chapter has focused on how, by engaging with postcolonial and feminist analysis within global political economies, we can begin to ask new questions surrounding the global political economy of security and security labour chains. Consequently we can see how race and gender underpin global security markets as well as demonstrate how such practices are prevalent in other global markets linking culture to capital in both particular and general ways. Overall by developing postcolonial insights into how security and insecurity are constituted, we stand to gain much more understandings of the various ways colonial pasts continue to inform our colonial present(s).

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