

The Resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan: Future Prospects of Peace and Stability

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The resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan in a very short span of time by defeating the Afghan security forces made a new landmark in the history of the country. It was next to the 9/11 episode that struck the whole world by the strikes of the Al-Qaeda, a non-state actor that compelled the US and her allied partners to take action against them at the global level. The victory of the Taliban is not only the defeat of the Afghan security force but also the defeat of the US and the allied partners that have been there in Afghanistan for the last twenty years. Objective of the study is to analyze the resurgence of Taliban and their future policies in shaping the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Research questions include people rushing to Kabul for safety, Pakistan's stance over the victory of Taliban, the future of civil rights in Afghanistan, and the impact of Taliban on the security paradigm of Pakistan. The study is based on qualitative approach utilizing the secondary sources of data for the documents analysis. The study is very significant for focusing on a very important issue of the present day that has caught the attention of the whole world.

Key words: *Resurgence, Taliban, Stability, Security, Implications*



Introduction

The current takeover of Taliban in Afghanistan makes an important landmark in the history of the modern world after the 9/11 syndrome. Their victory over the whole country in just eleven days prognosticates the triumph of non-state actors over the state actors and global hegemonic order led by the United States and allied partners. The most embarrassing thing was the inability of the Afghan National and Security Forces to surrender before the Taliban without putting any resistance is an area of great concern for the regional and international community. Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran has called it as the victory of the Taliban for breaking the chains of slavery (Tribune, 2021). US President Joe Biden, calls it the failure of the internal security machinery of Afghanistan since they failed to fight against the Taliban and handed them over the throne of the government to them (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan , 2021). Soon after the capture of Kabul, Taliban started patrolling over the whole country and named the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). The resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan when the US forces regained their strength after fighting against almost 48 countries of world for a period of twenty years, will have greater implications for internal stability and security dynamics of the country as well as the regional and international community.

Problem Statement

The long twenty years in Afghanistan against the Al-Qaeda and Taliban came to an abrupt end on August 15, 2021 with the capture of Kabul by Taliban and the resignation of Afghan President from the office of Presidency followed by his leaving the country on the same day. The rise of Taliban to power will have great implications for both the internal dynamics as well as the neighboring countries and global politics. The focus of this paper is to analyze the emergence of Taliban by declaring the state as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and its impact on the internal and external politics of the country.

Objective of the study

To analyze the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan and their future policies in shaping the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

Research Questions

- i) Why do the people go to the Kabul Airport for safety?
- ii) How does the Pakistan see the rise of Taliban to Power?
- iii) What is the future of civil rights of people in Afghanistan?
- iv) How do the Taliban affect the security paradigm of Pakistan?



Methodology

The study is based on qualitative approach relying on secondary sources of data, particularly on latest updates and news from different sources. For relevance books and research papers have also been studied to reach at an objective approach.

Significance of the study

The study is significant for focusing on the very burning issue that has caught the attention of the entire world. The capture of the whole country in just 11 days made the Taliban the unconquerable force that established their authority in the country by declaring the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The study takes into account the different internal and external paradigms that will bear its direct impact on the regional and global politics.

Capture of Kabul

The US forces have not yet been completely withdrawn from Afghanistan when the Taliban entered the capital of the country and ascended the throne of the Kabul (Tribune, 2021). Soon after entering the capital, the Taliban tightened control of the Afghan capital. At present, Kabul seems to be the safest place for the refugees fleeing from the insurgent's relentless offensive since they flooded the capital where the Kabul International Airport is the only option for leaving the war-stricken country (Tribune, 2021). A large number of people had to wait for hours outside the terminal to buy tickets and flee to some safer country. The Kabul International Airport known as the Hamid Karzai Airport was built in the post-2001 scenario and has a single runway long enough to accommodate military aircraft, with the airfield having the capacity of accommodating round about 100 planes on the ground (Tribune, 2021). The airport is the most secured one, surrounded by perimeter fencing and secured by multiple check posts, the airport presents a look of the mountains ringing the capital of Kabul.

According to reports, the Afghan Taliban are now camped just 50 km away from the Capital leaving space for the United States and allied partners to airlift their nationals out of the Kabul to go ahead of a feared all-out assault. The US officials have been ordered to destroy and burn the sensitive materials, as units from a planned redeployment of 3,000 American (Press, 2021). Those foreign troops at the airport had to pay \$375 and more for journeys from the northern Kunduz on unpaved roads by avoiding Taliban check posts, which normally costs \$40. It is important to mention that during the US fighting against the Al-Qaeda, the Bagram Air Base was the main hub of the American forces in Afghanistan ahead of the final pull out of the US forces but now the US forces have to rely on the flying of people through Kabul Airport (Tribune, 2021). But the most important during the capture of Kabul by Taliban commercial flights still continue at the airport. Those countries that carry on their flight operations in Kabul include the Air India, Dubai-based Emirates, Pakistan International Airlines and the Turkish Airlines having their flights either en routes or planned for Kabul (Tribune, 2021).



Pakistan's PM stance over Taliban's capture of Capital

Pakistan's Prime minister, Imran Khan is of the view that the takeover of the country by the Taliban is "breaking of the chains of slavery" (Sharma & Sanya, 2021). Taliban had already ruled the country during 1996 to 2001 but due to their strict policies the international community turned against them particularly depriving many sections of people of their due rights including women in terms of education, jobs and other rights (Tribune, 2021). The Prime Minister further adds that, "You take over the other culture and become psychologically subservient. When that happens, please remember, it is worse than actual slavery. It is harder to throw off the chains of cultural enslavement. What is happening in Afghanistan now, they have broken the shackles of slavery" (Tribune, 2021). This statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan is a direct reference to the victory of Taliban against the current Afghan government supported by the western powers but the Taliban have been successful in capturing the key provinces in just a few days. This shows the military might and potentiality of the Taliban to capture the whole Afghanistan as per their own resources. Despite the fact that some of the US forces are still there in the country but such is the military strength of Taliban that the US forces ask for safe escape.

It is a matter of great concern for the western powers that the Taliban had to take control over the entire Afghanistan over a short period of 11 days, more than two weeks ago than the stipulated time frame of August 31, 2021 the dead line for the complete withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan. It is also a threat to the western powers that the Taliban are a well-organized force equipped with the modern warfare and latest technology to cope with any untoward situation with a strong potential to take over the country even in the presence of the US forces and the allied partners. Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani testifies the strength of the Taliban stating that the Taliban have won the 20-year war (Tribune, 2021). Even his resignation from the office of Presidency and flight into Tajikistan on August 15, 2021 testifies the fact that no force on the earth can subdue Taliban though they may be suppressed for some years as in the present case because they re-emerged on the scene after a period of twenty years with complete vigor and zeal. Those who had supported the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 are now fearful about the loss of hard-won civic rights over the last twenty years (Tribune, 2021).

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres has urged the Taliban and other parties for exercising utmost restraint in order to protect lives by ensuring that humanitarian needs can be addressed. He remains greatly concerned about the future of women and girls whose hard-won rights need to be protected at all costs (Tariq, 2021). The Taliban managed to capture much of the northern, western, and southern Afghanistan in a very swift way during a period of less than three weeks before the US is about to withdraw her forces from the country keeping in view the fears of a full militant takeover or another Afghan civil war (Tribune, 2021). The Taliban have been successful in seizing the Logar Province, Char Asyab District, Paktika, Paktia, Gardez, and Mazar-e-Sahrif (Tribune, 2021). Though the Taliban have warned all the people regardless of their gender not to flee from Afghanistan and stay at home as they

would be given complete protection in the country yet nothing can be prognosticated in advance about the future of women and their rights (Tariq, 2021). Though the Taliban have reiterated regarding providing security to the people of Afghanistan and the foreigners yet the bot the native as well as the foreigners are afraid of them and want to feel secure in another country (Tariq M. , 2020).

Taliban's spokesman, Amrullah Saleh is of the opinion that the Taliban faces neither internal nor external enemies (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan , 2021). Taliban opine that they seek no revenge and would forgive all the Afghans. The rise of Taliban to power within a very short period of time is not less than a miracle and has divided Pakistan over the success of Taliban into two poles; one favoring their success as a sign of good omen for them while the other faction is against their victory stating it may jeopardize the security of Pakistan. Even the foreign officials and security forces are very much embarrassed over their success. Afghans who provide security to the embassy of the United Kingdom (UK) fears for life after visa refusal. Security will remain the main concern in the country for a long time unless an interim government is established by the Taliban to reduce the fears of the people. Uncertain situation will hover over the minds of the people because the in the post Russian withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan in 1989, the country was dragged into the quagmire of civil war and leadership vacuum where the non-states actors (Taliban, Al-Qaeda the Haqqani network and other warlords) had to make the people make dance to own tune as per their vested interests (Tariq, 2021).

Biden's Criticism of the Afghan Security Forces

US president Joe Biden is highly critical of the Afghan Security Forces for their failure to combat the Taliban and surrendering before them in a very short span of time. This force has been considered as normally well-equipped, but dependent on the support of NATO, though led poorly and riddled with corruption (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan, 2021). Keeping in the lacunae in the Afghan security forces, the US forces would not be in a position to fight a war which the Afghan forces are not willing to fight. The Afghan forces are not willing to die for the sake of their motherland hence the US and allied partners denied to get engaged further in fighting against the Taliban (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan, 2021). This denial on part of the US forces to leave Afghanistan to her own fate leaves a question mark on the US interest in Afghanistan that has almost spent 20- years while fighting against the Taliban and other groups (Tariq, 2021). It is really questionable as to why the US administration under Joe Biden decided to evacuate Afghanistan and leave her security to the Afghan National and Defense Security Forces that have been dependent on the US skills, including aerial fighting, logistics, maintenance, and training the ANDSF by assisting in ground vehicles and aircraft (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan , 2021).

Whether the US administration wants or does not want the Taliban have been struggling for the last twenty years to strengthen their military might and fighting potentiality against the



foreign troops. They have learnt practical experience of fighting and running the affairs of the state in a tactful way which fact seems to be clear from the very first initiative by asking the Afghan people to carry on their routine activities of life without any fear. The main difference between these Taliban and that of the previous ones are very clear. Now, they are well trained, well organized, cool and calculating in handling the people and running the country. It is quite in their benefit if they show patience and tolerance in the face of opposition and show a little bit flexibility in order to avoid the wrath of the regional and international community. This will also make them rule the country for longer without turning away any power against them. Moreover, the most important thing is the respect for human rights particularly the civic, political and education rights of girls and employment opportunities of women. It is also worth mentioning that women have enjoyed full liberty during the last twenty years and they fully participated in almost all sorts of affairs of the state.

Taliban's Patrolling Kabul

Taliban are in complete control of the capital city of Kabul occupying all important check points with their rifles slung over their shoulders walking through the streets of the Green Zone (Davies, Gayle, & Sullivan, 2021). Co-founder of the Taliban, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar ensuring the international community that the Afghans don't need to fear them rather they need to ensure that they could serve the nation in a better way by providing greater security to the people at large. It is important to mention that China was the first major country by flagging support to the Taliban with 'friendly-relations', followed by both Russia and Iran to establish diplomatic ties (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). Even the State Department of the United States announced to keep ties with the Taliban in case they respect human rights and reject extremism. But at the same time, US President Joe Biden threatened to take stern action against the insurgents if the US interest is jeopardized in the region (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). However, the whole world is witness to the video whereby the US military transport aircraft evacuating the 640 Afghans during the panic at the Kabul airport (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). It is a fact that hundreds of people crowded on the cargo plane and is believed to be the most over flown in the C-17 military cargo despite the fact that the crew did not intend to fly the aircraft but had to fly out of compulsion (Al-JAZEERA, 2021).

Since Taliban's capture of the Kabul, they have issued the first ever conference on their success stating that they have been successful in throwing out the foreign troops from Afghanistan (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). Taliban's Vice President stated that they were going to install a strong Islamic and inclusive government where everyone will be enjoying all educational, civil, economic, cultural and political rights as per Islamic law irrespective of any gender (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). He further opines that there has not been any casualties since the Islamic Emirate entered Kabul at a very critical juncture of the history of the world. According to the Taliban security has been improved and keeps on increasing day by day and Kabul will remain open for embassies as their security will be ensured at all costs. They also urged the international community to keep their embassies open, their missions, international

organizations, aid agencies, their missions and properties will be protected for which the security agencies of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan function around the clock (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). Criticizing the previous government, the Taliban opine that they were incompetent to ensure security in the country besides being the abusers, and the rioters. They misused the name of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan by entering the houses, harassing the people or stealing and that became the main reason for their entry into Kabul and taking the control of the government (Al-JAZEERA, 2021).

It was on that ground that the Taliban entered Kabul for stopping the criminals and the abusers for ensuring the safety and security of the people at large. Moreover, all the citizens should be certain that they have no fear from the Taliban or other insurgents as the government of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan would ensure the security of the people. All the international community including the United States should know that they would not be harmed in Afghanistan and would remain safe over there. It was also assured that the soil of Afghanistan can, in no circumstances be used against any other country or the regional powers. The Taliban would act on the basic principles of their religion, their culture, for which they have given many sacrifices (Al-JAZEERA, 2021). Referring to the other countries regarding their rules, different policies, different viewpoints, different approaches and policies by using different rules and regulations, the Afghans have also the same rules and regulations for regulating the entire system of the country (Al-JAZEERA, 2021).

Women have an important role to play in the education, economic, social, cultural and political system of the country. They are the pillars of the economic development and political stability of the country. The Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan is committed to the rights of women within the framework of the Sharia. The women can be allowed to carry on their activities in different walks of life including the educational sector, health sector, and other areas as per the rules and regulations set out in the Islamic Sharia. The women are required to work with men shoulder to shoulder while the international community should know that there is not going anything to happen against the women nor are they going to be discriminated but would be given full opportunities of life and participation in all activities of life (Tariq, 2021). The Taliban also pledged to improve the economic system of the country and is going to be top most priority of their policies. For this, they will contact the international community and regional powers to continue their economic activities and investment in the country. This would aim at revitalizing the economy of Afghanistan meant for the rebuilding and reconstruction in line with the needs and requirement of people.

Turkey is supposed to run the Kabul airport and has been urging to continue the same status of running the airport even during the regime of Taliban (India, 2021). Though rumors circle in the regional community that Turkey has left running the Kabul airport yet the same has been denied by the Turkey stating that being NATO-member, whereby some 600 troops provided security at the international airport in Kabul, even want to run and protect the airport following the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan (India, 2021). The most dramatic

turn in the country came when all of a sudden the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani left the country soon after the country was taken over by Taliban. He is now in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the host country has confirmed this news (Oman, 2021). This was also confirmed by the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation that the UAE has welcomed the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his family into the country on humanitarian grounds (Oman, 2021). It was on August 15, 2021 that Ghani entered the presidential palace and resigned by stating that he did so to prevent “bloodshed” (Oman, 2021). Soon after the Taliban’s victory several countries evacuated their diplomatic personnel from the country while thousands of people rushed to the Kabul airport for safe passage to other countries. During this, the only airport that seemed to be safest one to the people was the Kabul airport while the Taliban have reiterated all the people that they are not going to harm anybody even the foreigners including the US. It is also worth-mentioning that during the previous regime of Taliban, strict Islamic law was enforced in the country from 1996 to 2001, introducing punishments in line with the strict interpretation of law (Oman, 2021). Convicted murderers and adulterers and those convicted of theft were publicly executed and amputated publicly. Moreover, men were required to grow beard while women were asked to wear the all-covering *hijab*. This public punishments and strict policies of the Taliban brought them in direct confrontation with the international community and global actors. But the world is greatly surprised with the sudden victory of Taliban within a period of just eleven days where the Afghan National and Defense Security Forces did not offer any resistance but rather surrendered before them.

Implications for Pakistan

Although Pakistan has a good experience of cordial relations with the Taliban during the previous regime still security remains the most important concern with Pakistan. Most of the regional and international actors criticize Pakistan for supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan that has mainly gained a bad reputation for Pakistan. From the viewpoint of Pakistan, Taliban’s ascendancy would provide them some leverage over India and would help in subsiding the Pashtun separatism (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021). It is an admitted fact the India concentrated more on Afghanistan during the post-9/11 scenario which rather led to the creation of rivalry between both Pakistan and India (Tariq, 2015). The US and the allied partners had to adopt the policy of drawdown in Afghanistan rather than using the policy of total withdrawal (Tariq, 2016). This is what Pakistan perceives about the government of Taliban in Afghanistan, despite this, Pakistan may be faced with these challenges:

- The regional and international community may turn against Pakistan though the whole world is an eye witness to the victory of Taliban to which the US forces and the allied partners and the Afghan security forces were just spectators.

- Pakistan may face sanctions and pressure from the United States and other western powers for siding with them against the Taliban regime as it happened in 2001 when the US government made a direct reference to be either with them or with the terrorists.
- The fear of internal threats from the clerics and religious parties by urging the government to adopt such policies and practices.
- The initiation of another military operation by the United States and other regional powers to weaken Pakistan and the Taliban.
- The creation of counter blocks against the Taliban for weakening Pakistan by some of the countries including India, Russia and Iran.
- The danger of a civil war in Afghanistan as Ahmad Masud has declared to fight against the Taliban and has appealed the western powers to help him against the Taliban. In such a case, Pakistan is going to be directly affected by the instability and worsening law and order situation in the country.
- In case of civil war and the application of strict interpretation of the Islamic law, the western powers may group unite against the Taliban and may seek help from Pakistan by providing them airbases and logistic support.

But it is also an admitted fact that Pakistan may feel more secure during the reign of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan on account of their close ties with the religious sects of the Pakistani brethren. There are also fears that the Taliban may side with the supporters of the Pashtun movement and may help them in their movement but such a case would place them in direct confrontation with the government of Pakistan. This would lead to another war between the Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, between the Sunni and Shia and between the Taliban and the Pakistani government. This scenario seems quite improbable as the members of the Taliban group maintain close associations with the Pakistan-based madrassas and clerics (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021). This provides an opportunity to the establishment in Pakistan to assert influence over the Taliban through religious channels regardless of the area and country which they belong to. In case the Taliban go to the help of the Pashtun community regarding the issue of “Greater Pashtunistan” then Pakistan would keep her national interest in primacy and would develop an anti-Taliban contingent inside Afghanistan so as to strengthen their position vis a vis the Taliban. But this scenario seems quite improbable since the Taliban have close contacts with the religious scholars and military establishment of Pakistan. Owing to the landlocked nature of the Afghan country, Pakistan will be in a better position to exercise its leverage over Afghanistan through its trade and transit facilities. Moreover, the close links between the Pakistani ISI and the Haqqani network, including through Taliban deputy leader Sirajuddin Haqqani, provides Pakistan more secure influence over the group that is likely to endure (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021).



Russian President Putin is very optimistic about the rise of Taliban to power and has urged the international community should not impose their will upon the Taliban (Tribune, 2021). He stated this in a televised press conference along with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Kremlin while expressing his views that the Taliban are almost in control of the whole country and is becoming a popular movement in the country (Tribune, 2021). Further expressing he opined that these were the realities on ground and it is from these realities that they must proceed, preventing the collapse of the Afghan state. But it a great strategy that the external powers have always imposed their will on Afghanistan by directly interfering in the internal affairs of the country. Putin criticized the “irresponsible policy” of imposing “outside values” on war-torn-Afghanistan (Tribune, 2021). The Russian President also urged not to impose standards of political behaviour on other people from outside by highlighting the importance of preventing “terrorists” from entering neighboring countries from Afghanistan under the guise of refugees.

Discussion and Conclusion

The emergence of Taliban on the scene of Afghanistan at a very juncture of the country can be seen through the two sides of the same coin. The bright face of the coin may look at as the victory of the Taliban within a period of just eleven days is beyond the understanding of a lay man. The failure of the Afghan security machinery by not offering any resistance to the Taliban is the total failure of the combating capabilities of the Afghan forces. But at the same time it was the failure of the United States and the allied partners that did not focus more on strengthening the security paradigm of the country. In this context, this refers to the failure of the theory of ‘Realism’ and triumph of the non-state actors (Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Haqqani network) over the state actors (government of Afghanistan) and the global actors (the US and allied partners). The bleak side of the coin refers to the internal and external threats that may pose the survival of the Taliban at jeopardy. Since their capture of the Capital city of Kabul on 15 August, 2021, they have not been agreed upon a consensus-based government in the country. They still lack coherence and consensus over the formation of a transition government that could include all the stakeholder in the country so as to show transparency in their running the government. This shows the authoritarian nature of the Taliban by ruling the country to the utter exclusion of the other stakeholders and political parties in the country.

The resurgence of Taliban after a period of twenty years is really a great achievement by defeating the Afghan government and the US along with the allied partners but this victory may or not last for long. Ahmad Masud, son of Ahmad Shah Dostam has declared to fight war against the Taliban and has appealed to the western world to help him in fighting. This is the first step towards the challenging writ of Taliban within a period of just less than a week and may lead the country towards another civil war may last for a long time. Now, this would usher in a new era for the Taliban and the regional dynamics since it was the clash of interest that compelled both the US and the western world to wage a war against terrorists for adopting



policies which were against the interest of the US and the entire region. Moreover, the policies adopted by the Taliban were not in consonance with the norms and customs of these powers.

Despite Taliban's control over the Kabul on August 15, 2021 they have not been able to carve out a viable solution to the political stalemate of the country. They have not been able to form a transition government including the different stakeholders in the country. But the people of Afghanistan have been through the experience of being ruled by the Taliban during the period from 1996 to 2001 when they had been deprived of their civil and political rights nor were they allowed to participate in the political affairs of the state. But now the Taliban have grown in maturity and strength which distinguish them from the Taliban of their previous period. They are well educated and well trained and have the potentiality to cope with all sorts of circumstances through tactful means. Even on their capture of the country they vowed not to harm anybody from any political party or religious sect. Urging the people not to leave the country for their fear and stay at the country as they are determined not to harm the people and provide them safety and security irrespective of their caste and creed.

When the NATO forces and the US entered Afghanistan in 2001, they thought that the Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban have been weakened but they were not weakened but remained dormant to make their entry emerge with new zeal and courage. For two decades, the US forces kept the Taliban at bay and focussed on training the Afghan security forces so as to be prepared for the combat operations against the insurgents. But before the last of the US troops had to leave the country, the Taliban took control of the country within a period of just 11 days which was not less than a miracle for the global actors. May was the month of victory for the Taliban when most of the US forces left Afghanistan and set out for their country. The Taliban have used strategic positions during the whole scenario as during the last month they focussed on seizing the borders, rural areas and captured provincial capitals while isolating the capital city of Kabul for strategic purposes. The most embarrassing fact is the loss of confidence by the Afghan Security Forces which presently stands at 307,000 personnel including the Afghan Army, the Air force and the Police. Another unfortunate point for the Afghan security forces was the point that most of the sensitive and crucial junctures the untrained and professionally unsound personnel were stationed though found it very difficult to face the uncontrollable situation in the country. The Taliban seized weapons and equipments as a booty left by the US troops and the Afghan security forces. But the most significant point for the Taliban was the fact that as per the US-Taliban deal, the Taliban did not attack the NATO or US forces but only concentrated on the Afghan forces which weakened them to a greater extent resulting in their loss of confidence.

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