STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE EU'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN TERMS OF THEIR RELEVANCE TO EUROPEAN SECURITY NEEDS

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CZU: 327:061.1UE:355(4)

Abstract: *The European Union (EU) has been actively working to strengthen its military capabilities in recent years, with a focus on improving its relevance to European security needs. However, there are still notable strengths and weaknesses to these capabilities. One strength is the EU's ability to conduct a range of military operations, from peacekeeping and crisis management to combat missions. The EU has also made strides in improving its defense industry and developing common defense procurement policies. On the other hand, weaknesses include a lack of interoperability between member state militaries, limited defense budgets, and a heavy reliance on the United States for military support. Furthermore, the EU's military capabilities may not fully address emerging security threats such as cyber and hybrid warfare. Ultimately, a comprehensive and cohesive approach to European defense is necessary to address these strengths and weaknesses and ensure the EU is able to meet its security needs in an evolving global landscape.*

Rezumat: *Scopul acestui studiu este de a analiza punctele forte şi punctele slabe ale capacităţilor militare ale UE, în ceea ce priveşte relevanţa lor pentru nevoile de securitate europene. În timp ce UE a făcut progrese semnificative în consolidarea capacităţilor sale militare, există încă provocări şi deficienţe care trebuie abordate pentru a face faţă ameninţărilor de securitate din regiune şi din afara acesteia. Printre punctele forte se numără, de exemplu, capacitatea de a opera într-un spectru larg de scenarii de securitate, iar printre punctele slabe se numără dependenţa de statele membre pentru resursele militare şi lipsa unei strategii coerente şi comune de apărare. Înţelegerea acestor aspecte poate contribui la dezvoltarea unei abordări mai eficiente şi mai integrate a securităţii europene.*

Key words: *European security, military resources, defense technology, European Union, NATO.*

Introduction. Security within Europe is closely connected to events occurring outside the EU's borders. In today's fast-changing world, security challenges have become more complicated, varied, and unpredictable. No individual EU Member State can tackle these threats on their own. The security interests of all Member States are intertwined and cannot be separated. The EU

has prioritized security in its Global Strategy and has been striving to create conditions for greater cooperation among Member States in defense matters.

One of the points underlined in the article is related to the military capabilities of the Union that are contributed by several bodies, including the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Defense Agency (EDA), and the European Union Military Staff (EUMS).

Another topic that is an integral part of the research is investments that have been made in military technology, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, and cyber capabilities. These investments have enhanced the EU's military capabilities and allowed it to respond more effectively to emerging security threats.

Despite these strengths, the EU's military capabilities also face several challenges. These include insufficient defense spending by some member states, lack of interoperability among member state militaries, and limited military mobility across borders. These challenges limit the EU's ability to respond quickly and effectively to security threats.

The methodology for this study involves conducting a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of EU's military capabilities in relation to the current and emerging security needs of Europe. The research is based on the analysis of available data from official sources and relevant reports from reputable organizations, as well as consultations with experts and practitioners in the field of security and defense. The objectives will be achieved through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and document analysis.

Background information on the EU's security policies and military resources. The EU's security policies and initiatives aim to ensure the safety and protection of its citizens, as well as promoting stability and security in its neighboring regions. The main security policies are guided by the European Security Strategy, which was first adopted in 2003 and revised in 2016[26], and by the European Security Union Strategy for 2020-2025[27].

The EU's security policies cover a wide range of areas, including counterterrorism, cybersecurity, border security, crisis management, and defense. The EU has established various agencies and institutions to implement these policies, such as Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, and the European Defense Agency.

In recent years, the EU has also been actively engaged in security initiatives in its neighboring regions, such as the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. These initiatives aim to promote stability and security in these regions, as well as address issues such as terrorism, organized crime, and migration.

[26] A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en (visited on 15.03.2023)

[27] European Security Union Strategy 2020-2025 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1596452256370&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0605 (visited on 10.03.2023)

The EU has also been increasing its cooperation with NATO in the field of security and defense. The EU-NATO cooperation aims to enhance the interoperability and effectiveness of their respective military capabilities, as well as to promote stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The EU's military resources consist of both personnel and equipment. In terms of personnel, the EU has several institutions and bodies that contribute to its military capabilities, including the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EEAS is responsible for conducting the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, while the EDA supports the development of defence capabilities among EU member states.

In terms of equipment, the EU has a few assets at its disposal, including air, land, and sea-based capabilities. The European Union Military Staff (EUMS) is responsible for overseeing the development and deployment of these assets, which include several air assets such as transport and fighter aircraft, as well as land-based assets such as armored vehicles and artillery.

The EU also has access to naval assets, including warships and submarines, which are used for a range of missions such as maritime security and counter-piracy operations. Additionally, the EU has established a number of multinational battlegroups, which are designed to provide rapid response capabilities in crisis situations.

The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) refers to the collective capabilities of the European Union's (EU) defense industry. It encompasses all the activities, companies, and institutions involved in the production, research, and development of defense-related products and technologies, including defense equipment, armaments, and services.[28]

Furthermore, the EDTIB is seen as a critical component of the EU's security and defense capabilities, as it enables the EU to maintain strategic autonomy in defense matters and reduce reliance on foreign suppliers. It also contributes to the EU's broader economic and industrial policy objectives, creating jobs and generating growth in the defense sector.

The EU has taken several initiatives to support the development of the EDTIB, including the establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the creation of a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework. The EDF provides funding for joint defense projects, while PESCO enables EU member states to jointly develop and procure defense capabilities.

However, the EDTIB faces several challenges, including fragmentation, limited funding, and a lack of cooperation among EU member states. These challenges have hindered the EU's ability to develop and produce defense capabilities independently and compete with major defense industry players such as the United States and Russia.

[28] R. Bossong the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: Learning Communities in International Organizations. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 240 p.

To address these challenges, the EU has called for greater cooperation and coordination among member states, increased investment in defense research and innovation, and the establishment of a more integrated and resilient defense industrial base.

Analysis of the EU's ability to conduct peacekeeping missions and crisis management operations. The EU has numerous mechanisms for conducting peacekeeping missions and crisis management operations. These include the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) [29] , which was established in 1999 and is the main framework for EU military missions. Under this mechanism several successful peacekeeping missions were conducted in the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East.

One of the strengths of the EU's ability to conduct peacekeeping missions is the leverage of the resources of its member states. The EU has a large pool of trained military personnel, and many member states have specialized military units that are well-suited to peacekeeping operations.

Another strong point of the EU's peacekeeping process is its ability to operate in diverse environments. The EU has conducted missions in both urban and rural settings and has experience in both low and high-intensity conflict situations.

However, there are also weaknesses to the peacekeeping missions conducted by the EU. One of the challenges is coordinating the contributions of member states, which can have different priorities and capabilities. This can result in a lack of coherence and unity in terms of effort.

Additionally, the EU has limited capabilities for conducting large-scale operations, such as those required for intervention in major conflicts. This is due in part to the lack of political will among member states to commit significant resources to military operations.

The adoption of the Strategic Compass on 24 March 2022 by the European Council [30] is a major milestone in the development of collective European military action capability. This unprecedented event stems from a thorough and shared analysis of the nature of our strategic environment. Competition between powers, in all environments including the exo-atmospheric and cyber ones as well as in the information domain, possibly even reaching the confrontation stage, is indeed considered in this paper.

Over the last 12 months, the European Union has increased its assistance in security to partner countries worldwide. During this time, the EU and its member states have demonstrated greater ambition and credibility in their approach. The Strategic Compass, which guides the EU's actions on security and

[29] Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, OJ C 340, 10.11.1997, p. 1–144 EUR-Lex - 11997D/TXT - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu) (visited on 15.03.2023)

[30] Council of the EU, A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence for a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security. 21.03.2022 A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade - Consilium (europa.eu) (visited on 21.03.2023)

defense across four pillars - act, secure, invest, and partner - has been successfully implemented.

For the first time, the EU is providing lethal equipment to a partner country that is under attack. The European Peace Facility has contributed €3.6 billion in military supplies to Ukraine and established a Military Assistance Mission aimed at training 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers by the end of 2023. Data was presented by the annual report of the Strategic Compass implementation.

Simultaneously, the EU remains a reliable global security provider, increasing its assistance to the Gulf of Guinea, the Indo-Pacific, the Western Balkans, and the South Caucasus, among others. According to the annual report the EU launched two new missions in Niger and Armenia while utilizing the European Peace Facility to supply its partners with military equipment.[31]

The European Union is committed to intensifying its partnership with Moldova in the field of defense and security, considering the new strategic stage of EU-Moldova relations since the European Council granted Moldova candidate status for accession. A statement to this effect was made by the Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Director of Political Affairs at the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora, during the second EU-Moldova high-level dialogue on political and security issues, according to IPN news agency.[32] A civilian security mission of the European Union will be sent to Moldova. The subject was discussed during the meeting of the Council of EU Foreign Ministers.

Overall, the EU's peacekeeping and crisis management capabilities are an important part of its security strategy, but there are limitations to its ability to conduct large-scale operations and to ensure unity of effort among member states.

Evaluation of the EU's defense spending and military innovation. The EU's defense spending has been increasing in recent years, with a goal to reach 2% of GDP by 2024. However, this goal has not yet been achieved by all member states. This increase in defense spending is seen as a positive step towards improving the EU's military capabilities and addressing security challenges.[33]

In terms of military innovation, the EU has been investing in research and development of new technologies, such as drones and cyber defense systems. The European Defense Fund has been established to support the development and procurement of defense equipment and technology.

However, there are concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of defense spending, as well as the coordination and coherence of defense policies

[31] Strategic Compass: EU HR presents first annual report on its implementation. 20.03.2023 https://portal.ieu-monitoring.com/editorial/strategic-compass-eu-hr-presents-first-annual-report-on-its-implementation/403243?utm_source=ieu-portal (visited on 21.03.2023)

[32] UE este angajată în intensificarea parteneriatului său cu Moldova în domeniul apărării și securității. 25.03.2023 https://www.ipn.md/ro/ue-este-angajata-in-intensificarea-parteneriatului-sau-cu-moldova-7965_1095986.html#ixzz7xBaGFuqV (visited on 26.03.2023)

[33] EUROSTAT: Government expenditure on defence. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_defence#Expenditure_on_.27defence.27 (visited on 15.03.2023)

among member states. Some argue that greater cooperation and integration in defense procurement and development could lead to cost savings and improved capabilities.

European governments have announced significant increases in defense spending in 2022. However, for the first time in decades, European defense is not limited to achieving more with less. With the urgent need to fill capability gaps in their military arsenals, caused in part by arms exports to Ukraine, it makes sense to coordinate weapons purchases.

This presents an opportunity to modernize European militaries, ensure equipment interoperability, and build a stronger European defense industrial base. However, joint defense procurement is often slow and challenging. Governments tend to allocate their budgets to domestic defense firms or purchase off-the-shelf from third-country suppliers instead of coordinated procurement. Currently, only 18 percent of all defense investment by member states is conducted in cooperation with other EU countries, indicating that coordinated defense procurement is not yet happening.

The European Commission has proposed using financial incentives to encourage cooperation and good practices that will minimize delays and extra costs in joint defense procurement efforts among EU member states. To this end, the commission has proposed the European Defence Industry Reinforcement Through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA), a short-term fund with a total budget of €500 million from the end of 2022 until 2024. The fund is designed to incentivize actions that address urgent and critical defense product needs and must be carried out by a consortium of at least three EU member states. However, €500 million is not enough money to have a significant impact.[34]

The Commission has also launched a defense innovation scheme, announced in May 2022, which has been allocated a €2 billion package over five years, with most of its funds coming from the European Defence Fund. The fund, a €7.9 billion program to support EU defense R&D over the next seven years, had its budget nearly halved after member states cut it during the last round of EU budget negotiations.

These initiatives represent a policy shift for the EU, which is technically forbidden to directly procure or deliver defense equipment. The focus on using financial incentives to motivate member-state behavior is a departure from the EU's early years in defense policy, where it primarily used regulatory instruments to prevent defense market fragmentation. The commission's 2009 European Commission directive on defense procurement, for example, allowed it to launch infringement proceedings against countries that unduly prioritize their national defense firms. However, the regulatory "sticks" approach was not successful in

[34] EUROSTAT: Government expenditure on defence. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_defence#Expenditure_on_.27defence.27 (visited on 15.03.2023)

changing the behavior of governments that valued their sovereign decision-making over defense matters.

During a meeting on March 20, 2023, EU ministers of foreign affairs and defense approved a proposal by the High Representative and Commissioner Breton that suggests three ways to quickly supply Ukraine with artillery ammunition, either by using existing stocks or by making a joint procurement.[35]

Despite these new initiatives, the EU still has a long way to go in catching up with the underspending of the financial crisis. While the EU's new approach to defense policy may represent progress, the initiatives' limited funding and political attention make them feel like small steps in the context of ongoing conflicts in Europe.

Weaknesses of the EU's military capabilities.

Since its establishment in the late 1990s, the EU's defense policy has not met expectations. The EU has minimal military intervention capacity and is not a significant player in most conflicts in Europe's neighboring regions. Experts attribute the EU's limited role in European security to various factors, including the lack of a shared European perception of threats, insufficient financial resources, a shortage of innovative policy proposals, opposition from successive US administrations to EU ambitions, and member states' reluctance to relinquish control over defense to a supranational level. Consequently, NATO, with its intergovernmental decision-making structures, US security guarantees, and comprehensive approach to defense, has been the principal organizational framework for European defense.

When Russia first invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea in 2014, European governments turned to NATO, and the EU's defense ambitions took a backseat. However, since then, disruptions caused by Donald Trump's presidency and the UK's Brexit vote have reinvigorated EU defense efforts. EU member states and Brussels have committed to demonstrating the union's continued relevance, including in defense matters, and have established a bureaucratic defense infrastructure that leverages the EU's regulatory and budgetary powers for defense industrial policy.[36]

In 2022, as the war with Russia continues, this new bureaucracy is developing policy proposals on how to utilize the EU's defense industrial tools in the context of war. The most promising proposals focus on organizing Europe's rearmament efforts and building a stronger European defense industrial base, which can complement NATO's defense and deterrence efforts. However, these initiatives require financial resources and political support to have an impact.

[35] Note on Delivery and joint procurement of ammunition for Ukraine, as approved by the Council on 20 March 2023. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7632-2023-INIT/en/pdf (visited on 15.03.2023)

[36] Ukraine War Confirms Need to Define a Long-Term Strategy to Ensure The Defence Of Europe December 2022. https://eda.europa.eu/webzine/issue23/interview/ukraine-war-confirms-need-define-long-term-strategy (visited on 15.03.2023)

Without adequate resources and support, even the most promising proposals will fall short of their potential.

Discussion of the EU's lack of strategic autonomy in military affairs and limited cooperation among member states. The concept of strategic autonomy in military affairs refers to the ability of a country or region to make independent decisions about its military strategy and operations without relying on external powers. In recent years, there has been increasing discussion about the EU's lack of strategic autonomy in military affairs, particularly considering its dependence on the United States for defense and security.

One major factor contributing to the EU's lack of strategic autonomy is its reliance on American military capabilities, such as intelligence, logistics, and advanced weaponry. This dependence has become especially apparent in recent conflicts, such as the 2011 intervention in Libya, where the EU relied heavily on US military assets and intelligence to conduct the operation.

Another factor is the fragmentation of European defense industries, which makes it difficult to achieve economies of scale and develop advanced technologies. This has led to a situation where EU member states are often unable to provide the necessary funding and resources for large-scale defense projects, and instead rely on American or other external partners.

Additionally, the EU's reliance on NATO for defense has also been a factor in its lack of strategic autonomy. While NATO provides an important framework for collective defense, it also limits the ability of EU member states to act independently in military affairs.[37]

One of the main reasons for this dependence is the fact that most EU member states are also NATO members. Article 5 of the NATO Treaty[38], which states that an attack on one member is an attack on all, provides a strong security guarantee for the EU member states. In contrast, the EU's defense and security policy is primarily based on the notion of cooperation and solidarity among its members, rather than a binding security guarantee.

Moreover, NATO has a much larger military capability and resources than the EU, which makes it a more reliable partner for collective defense. The EU's defense spending is also significantly lower than NATO's, which further reinforces its dependence on the alliance.

However, the EU has been working to increase its defense capabilities and cooperation among member states. The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy aims to develop a more autonomous and capable European defense, including the establishment of a European Defense Fund and the Permanent

[37] S.Besch EU Defense and the War in Ukraine. 21.12.2022 https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/12/21/eu-defense-and-war-in-ukraine-pub-88680 (visited on 15.03.2023)

[38] The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (visited on 15.03.2023)

Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework for defense cooperation among member states.

In recent years, there have been calls for the EU to develop its own defense capabilities and to move towards greater strategic autonomy in military affairs. This includes initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which aim to increase defense spending, improve military cooperation between member states, and develop cutting-edge defense technologies.

However, achieving strategic autonomy in military affairs will require significant investment and coordination among EU member states, as well as a shift in attitudes towards defense and security. It remains to be seen whether the EU can successfully develop its own military capabilities and achieve greater strategic autonomy in the years to come.

One of the major challenges for the EU's defense capabilities is the limited defense cooperation among member states. While there have been efforts to promote collaboration and integration in the field of defense, progress has been slow and uneven. This has resulted in fragmented defense capabilities and redundancies in procurement and research.

One obstacle to deeper defense cooperation is the reluctance of member states to share sovereignty in this area, as defense is seen as a core state responsibility. There are also different strategic cultures and interests among member states, which can complicate efforts to align defense policies and capabilities.

Moreover, there is a lack of common standards and interoperability between member states' military equipment, which can hinder joint military operations. The EU has attempted to address this issue through initiatives such as the European Defence Agency (EDA) and PESCO framework, which aims to promote cooperation in research, procurement, and training.

However, PESCO has faced criticism for its limited scope and lack of binding commitments, with some member states preferring to pursue bilateral or multilateral defense cooperation outside of the EU framework. The EU's defense industry also faces challenges in terms of competitiveness and innovation, as it is highly fragmented and lacks the scale and resources of its global competitors.

The issue facing EU defense policy is not a lack of potential or ideas, but rather a lack of leadership. In the past, progress on defense in Europe was dependent on agreement between France and the UK. However, with the UK no longer part of the EU, attention has shifted to France and Germany. Unfortunately, Paris and Berlin have different visions for Europe's rearmament. France believes that Germany lacks ambition to create an EU defense industrial base, while Germany disapproves of France's "buy European" policy and insists on filling arsenals quickly, even if it means relying on U.S. suppliers.

In addition to their disagreements, Paris and Berlin have lost credibility with the rest of Europe due to their actions during the war in Ukraine. French

President Emmanuel Macron's attempts to position himself as a mediator with Russian President Vladimir Putin have earned him a reputation for being too lenient with Russia, while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's reluctance to abandon the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline has caused resentment. Both countries have also been criticized for not providing enough arms to Ukraine. Even if Paris and Berlin were able to come to an agreement on EU defense, it is uncertain whether the rest of Europe would follow.

Europe's northern and eastern frontline countries have been at the forefront of the EU's response to the ongoing war, but they are unlikely to take on a larger role in EU defense efforts due to their focus on NATO's territorial defense and deterrence efforts. These countries have been skeptical of EU defense initiatives, suspecting that only large defense firms in France, Germany, or Italy will benefit, and not their own small and medium enterprises. Moreover, they are concerned about alienating the United States, which has shown openness to EU defense efforts only if they are "complementary to and interoperable with NATO." Most U.S. officials are skeptical of what they perceive as European defense protectionism.

The leadership vacuum extends to Brussels as well, as Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has not shown much interest in defense policy.[39] Although her predecessor Jean-Claude Juncker prioritized strengthening the EU's role in Europe's defense and made groundbreaking initiatives to fund defense R&D and improve military mobility in Europe, von der Leyen's September 2022 State of the Union address, which was delivered in the midst of the ongoing war, did not even mention EU defense cooperation.

Thus, the limited defense cooperation among member states is a significant impediment to the EU's efforts to develop a more coherent and effective defense posture. Without greater collaboration and integration, the EU is unlikely to achieve its goal of strategic autonomy in military affairs.

In conclusion, this analysis has shed light on the current state of the EU's military capabilities and their relevance to European security needs. The strengths and weaknesses of these capabilities have been identified, highlighting the importance of addressing emerging security challenges and threats. The EU's ability to conduct joint military operations and cooperation among member states has been assessed, particularly in crisis situations, emphasizing the need for continued improvement in this area.

The European Union has a significant military capability in terms of personnel, equipment, and resources. There are highly trained and experienced military personnel who have served in various missions and operations around the world. These personnel come from various EU member states and work together to achieve common objectives. In addition, the EU has a significant

[39] State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. September 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_5493 (visited on 15.03.2023)

defense industry, which provides advanced technology and equipment for military use. This includes aircraft, ships, and other military hardware.

Moreover, the Union has established partnerships and alliances with other countries, which can enhance its military capability. In this context, the EU's dependence on NATO for collective defense has been a subject of debate and criticism. While the EU has been developing its own defense capabilities and initiatives, it still heavily relies on NATO for collective defense. In the same time the EU has a range of military assets, including aircraft and ships, which can be rapidly deployed to conflict zones. This has been demonstrated in operations such as the EU's anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia, where it has been able to rapidly deploy naval assets to combat piracy in the region.

However, the EU's military capabilities are also subject to several weaknesses. One of the most significant weaknesses is the fragmentation of the EU's military capabilities. Different member states have different levels of military capabilities, equipment, and training, which can make it difficult to coordinate operations effectively. This has been evident in some EU operations, where member states have been reluctant to commit resources or have not been able to provide the necessary equipment and personnel.

The EU also has limited intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, which are critical for situational awareness and effective military operations. The EU has been working to address this weakness by developing new ISR capabilities, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, but progress has been slow.

Finally, the EU's military capabilities are constrained by budgetary pressures and competing demands for resources in other policy areas. This has led to cuts in defense spending in some member states, which has had a negative impact on the overall military capability of the EU.

In this regard, the EU have to work to coordinate its member states' military capabilities more effectively, invest in new technology and equipment, and prioritize defense spending to ensure that it can meet the security challenges of the future. While there are certainly challenges and weaknesses that the EU must address in order to enhance its military capability, there is also reason to be optimistic about its prospects. The EU has shown a commitment to collaboration, has made progress in developing new capabilities, and has a track record of participating in important security missions around the world. With continued investment in its military capabilities, the EU has the potential to become a major player on the global security stage.

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