

X versus Reality: Orbán content dominates X, but was 420% inconsistent with vote totals

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ABSTRACT: This follow-up study from Montclair State University researchers in the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication in the College of Communication and Media shows (again) that the volume of political posts on X (formerly Twitter) may not reflect actual voter behavior. The gap between post volume about candidates and real election votes was 420.7% in the analyzed case of the April 12, 2026, election in Hungary. This reflects an even greater gap than the Center's previous study of the New Jersey gubernatorial election where X posts favored the losing candidate by a margin of nearly 40%. Similarly, contributing factors to this particular gap may include the volume of specific ideological accounts, bot-based activity, and overall platform infrastructure/algorithms. Results identified 798,038 posts in the month preceding the election mentioning Péter Magyar with 4,155,106 posts that

mentioned Viktor Orbán in the period studied. Sentiment analysis showed similar levels of favorability between the two candidates in X posts. Despite this, final vote totals for the election favored Magyar's Tisza party by more than double. Findings of this study and the previous study of the New Jersey election indicate that the generation of posts for a candidate on X (formerly Twitter) may no longer correlate expected electoral outcomes.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Historically, Twitter was a significant social media space for the discussion of political topics and themes. In 2022, Twitter was purchased by Elon Musk and renamed X with a host of controversial alterations to the platform's previous iteration (Benton et al., 2022; Bond, 2022; Dang, 2022; Lorenz, 2022). More recently, the authenticity of many politically active accounts has been called into question (CBS News, 2025; Sardarizadeh et al., 2025; Yerushalmy, 2025). This is in addition to ongoing concerns about the proliferation of bot-based and AI-based accounts on X (Rothke, 2025; Taylor, 2023). Cumulatively, these items raise questions about the extent to which activity on X reflects authentic political sentiment and voter behavior.

X VERSUS REALITY: RESEARCH METHOD

As this study is a continuation of research previously conducted about the 2025 New Jersey gubernatorial election, it is important to contextualize the approach utilized. Substantial scholarship suggests that visibility of a term or brand in social media can affect consumer behavior (Oumayma, 2019). The success of political campaigns has also been correlated to social media activity related to specific topics and issues (Ahmad et al., 2024; Digrazia et al., 2013). That said, the items previously noted about X may indicate a growing cleavage between authentic public sentiment and platform activity. With that in mind, the following exploratory questions emerge:

- **Do posts about political candidates mirror voter behavior?**
- **Does post volume reflect negative sentiment for political candidates?**

To answer these questions, this study utilizes the Tweet Binder analytics program.

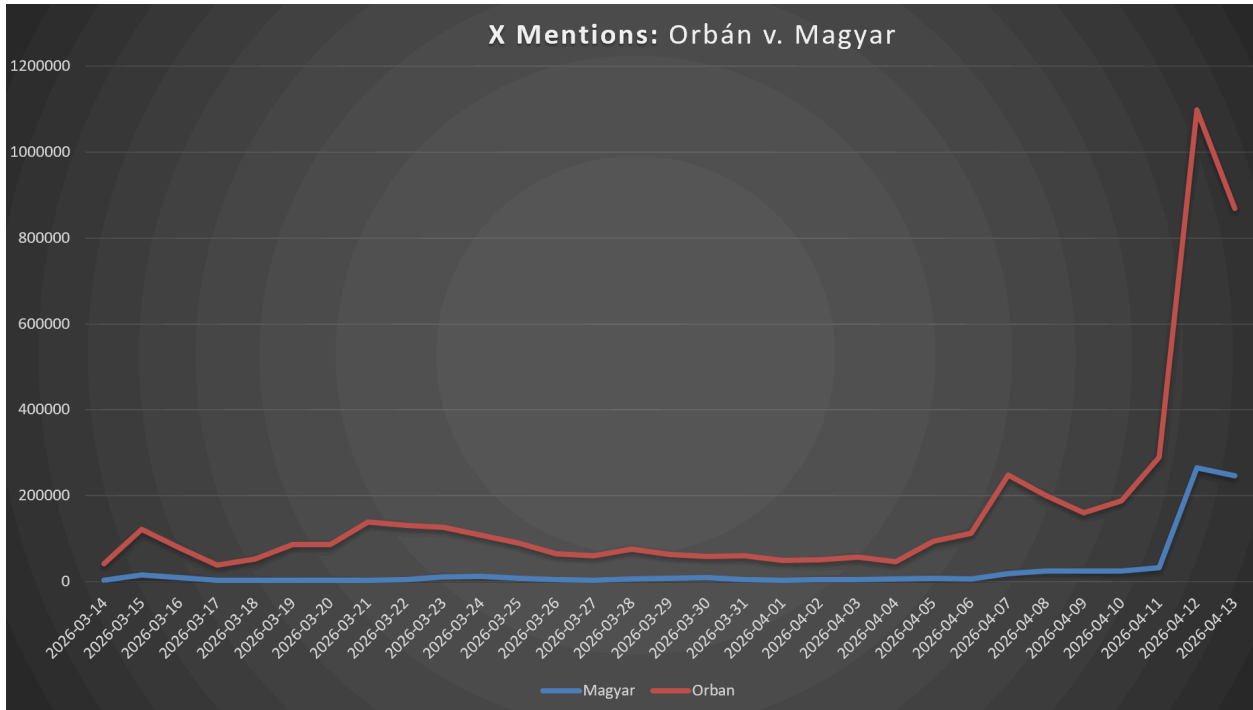
Tweet Binder represents a robust data collection and analysis service focused exclusively on activity on the X platform. Collected data using Tweet Binder can include both the frequency with which a specific term appears along with

sentiment analysis of posts including that term (*Tweet Binder*, 2019; *Tweet Binder*, 2020). Posts using the term Orban (or Orbán) were identified in a thirty-day period prior to the 2026 Hungarian election. Posts using the term Magyar, the leader of the opposing party, were identified in the same period. A 10,000-post sample was then taken to assess the positive and/or negative sentiment about each candidate using Tweet Binder's AI analytics tool for sentiment assessment.

By analyzing frequency and sentiment on X regarding the two candidates and comparing this data with final election vote totals, insight can be discovered about the relationship between platform activity and real-world voter behavior.

RESULTS

Data from 4,953,14 posts was collected for the period of 3/13/2026 - 4/13/2026 (selected as a crucial period in the run up to the election) with the number of posts about each candidate identified. A sizable gap in post totals related to each candidate appears notable, with Orbán posts eclipsing Magyar posts by some 420.67%.

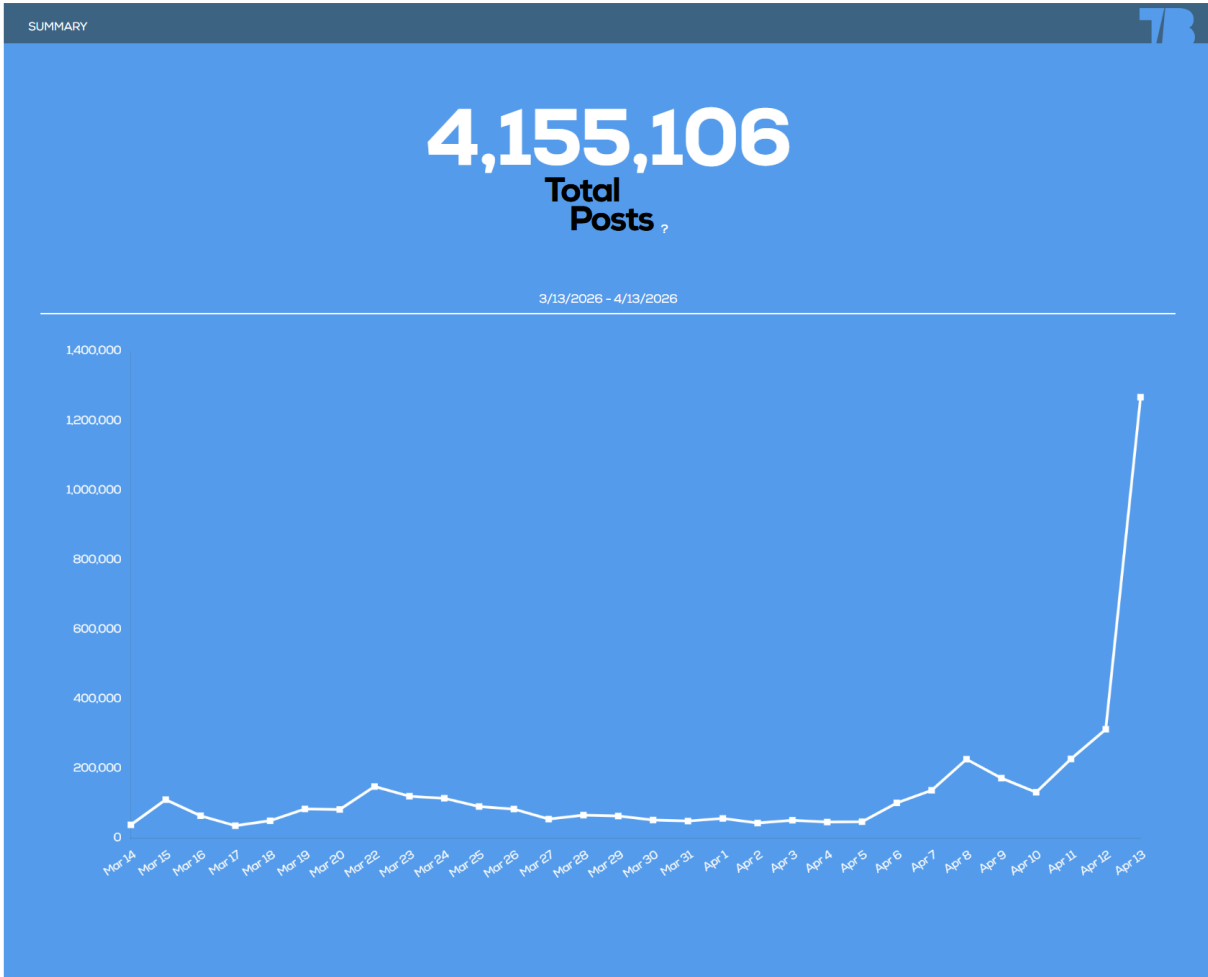


Total Posts: 30-day comparison

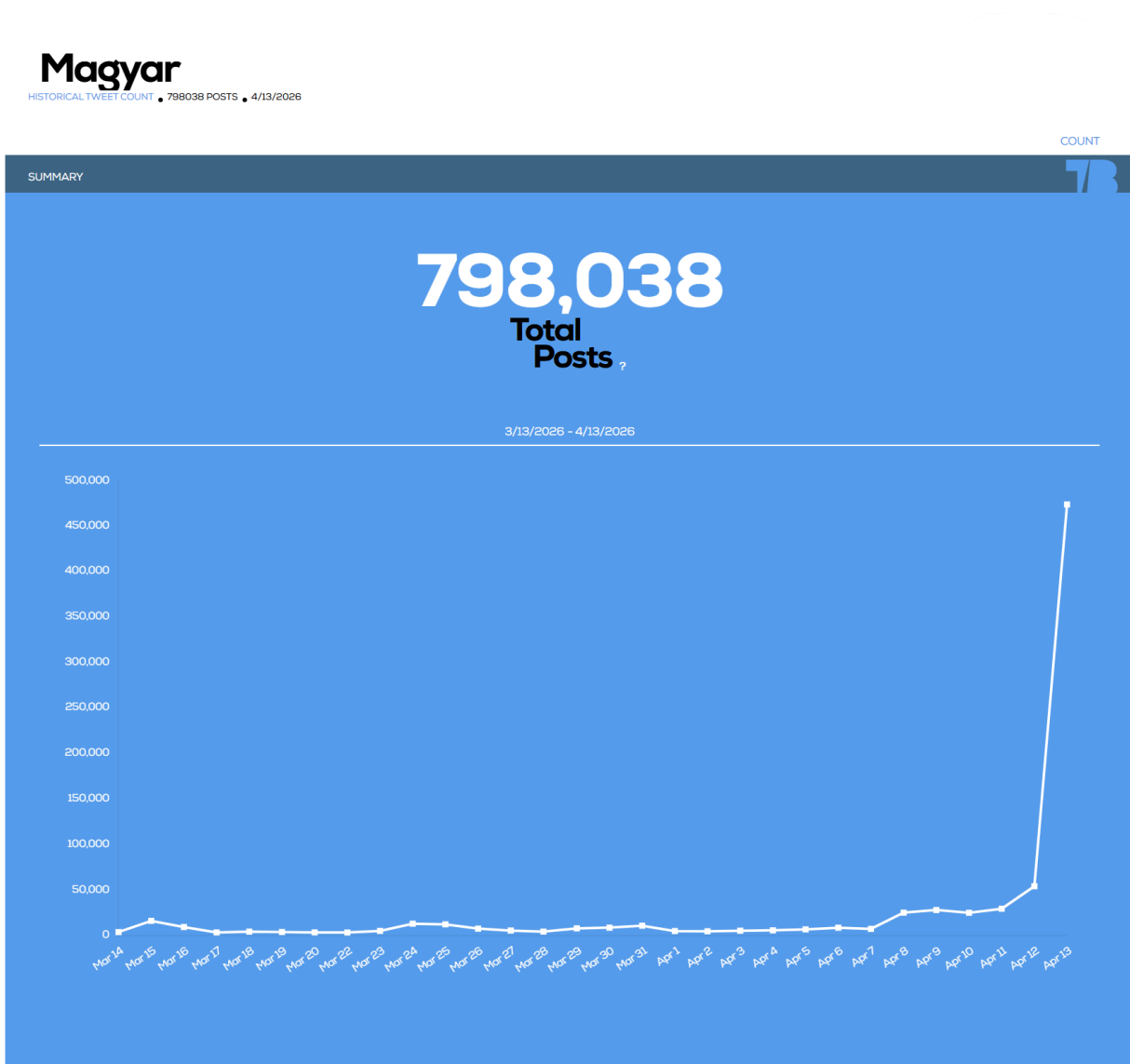
Orbán OR Orban

HISTORICAL TWEET COUNT • 4,155,106 POSTS • 4/13/2026

COUNT



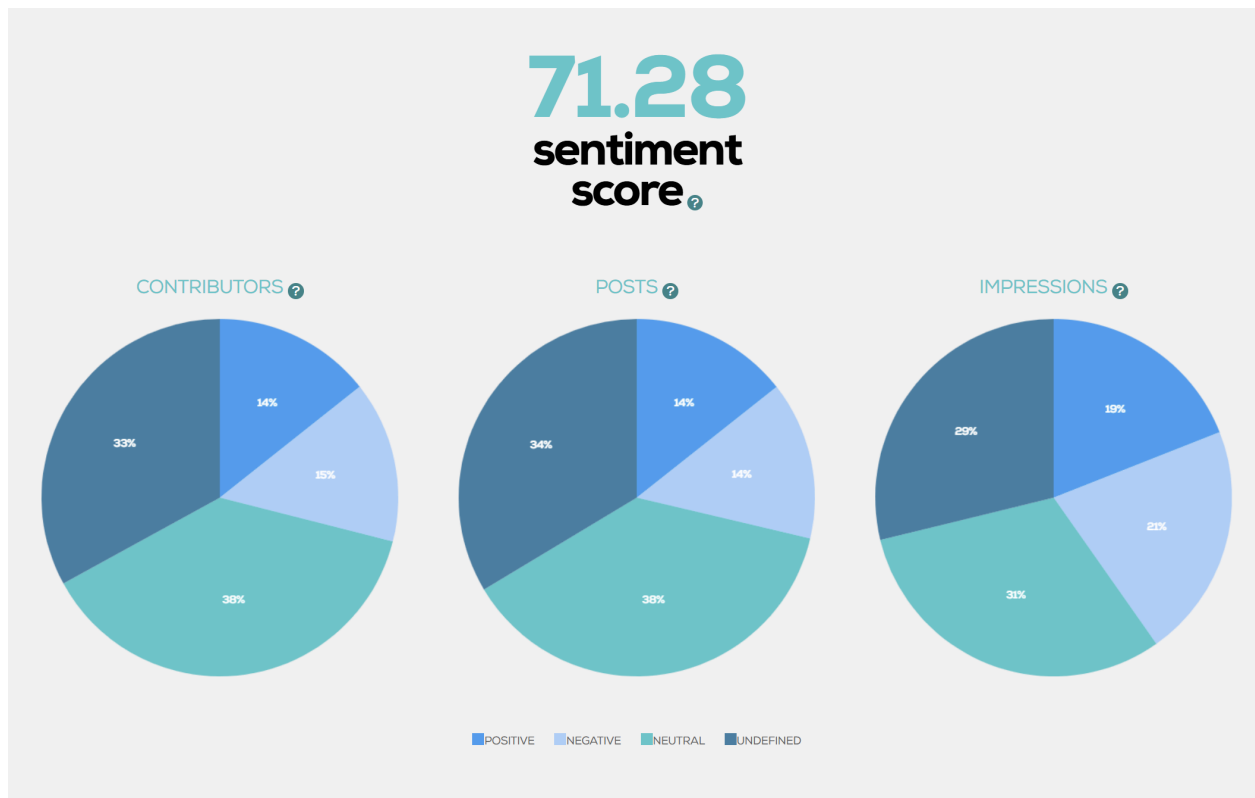
Total Posts: "Orbán"



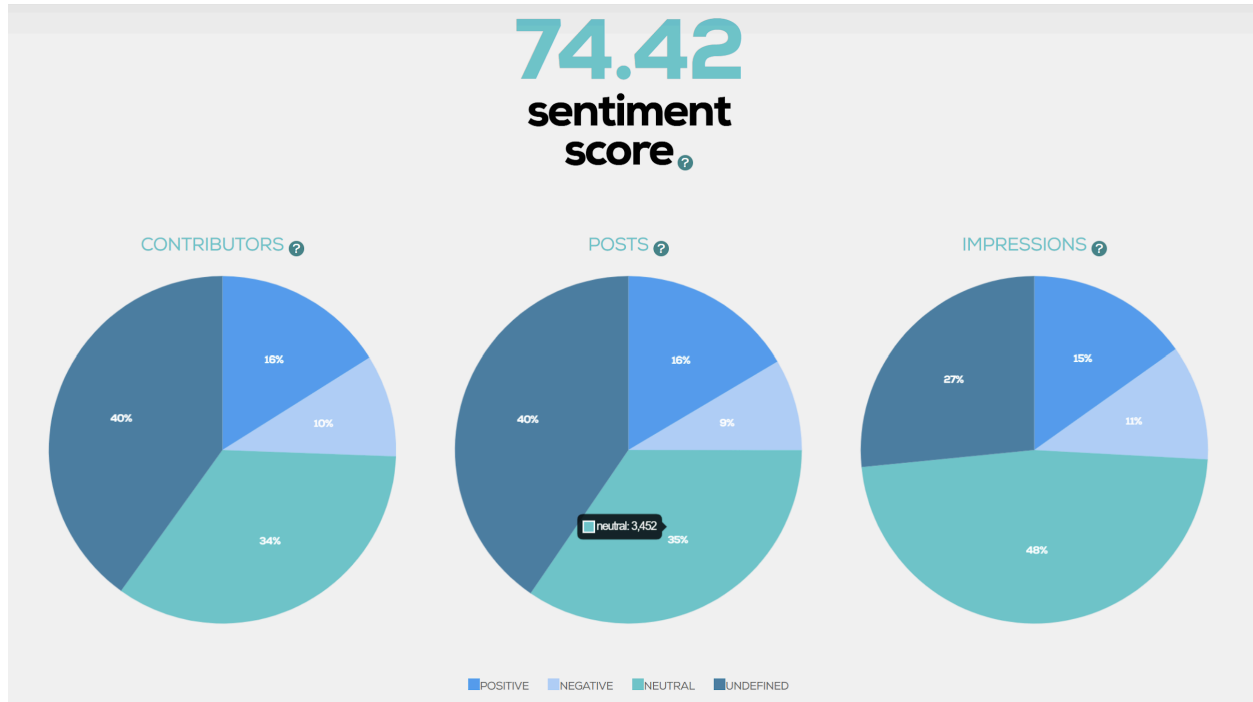
Total Posts: "Magyar"

It is plausible that the distinction in volume could potentially reflect an interest from social media users in posting negative content about Orbán. Scholarship has validated the fact that negative themes and topics can generate more posts, replies, and shares online (Tsugawa and Ohsaki, 2015). Given this possible

explanation for the discrepancy in content volume, a 10,000 post sample was taken from each of the above data sets and assessed based on sentiment analysis. Findings suggest there was no meaningful difference in negative post frequency for either candidate, with only a 4% difference in sentiment score.

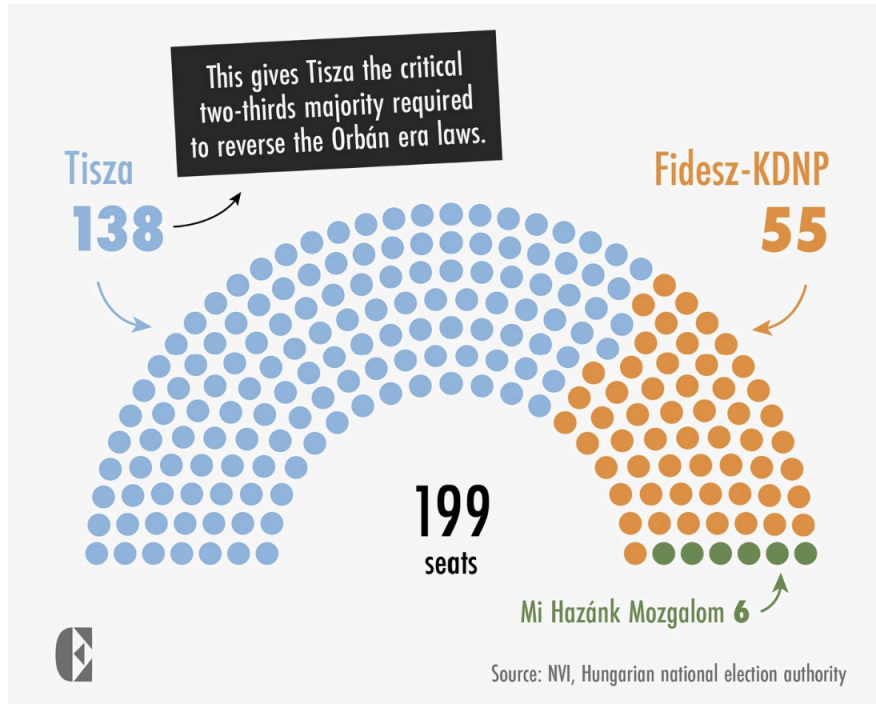


Sentiment Score: "Orbán"



Total Posts: "Magyar"

Cumulatively, this would seem to indicate a race favoring Orbán, given the substantially higher number of posts his candidacy generated with visibility and name recognition crucial to electoral success. There was no indication of a significant difference in post sentiment between Orbán and Magyar on X further reinforcing the apparent advantage held by the former. The actual vote outcome, however, shows a significant gap between activity and sentiment on X and real-world voter behavior, with Magyar's party winning by a seemingly unexpected wide margin.



In sum, activity related to this election on X was significantly incongruent to the election outcome. There was a gap of over 400% between X posts totals for candidates and the results generated by actual voters.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

As was the case in the previous investigation of the New Jersey gubernatorial race, ascertaining the cause of this disparity is beyond the scope of this study, as well.

It is possible that the number of politically focused accounts on X (real users or bot-based) creates an impression that does not match the perceptions and actions

of actual voters. It is, additionally, also possible that online advocates for specific candidates and themes may post more frequently to facilitate the impression that they represent a majority view (despite being in the minority). Likewise, it is similarly plausible that platform structures offer outsized visibility to specific political viewpoints (Booth, 2025).

While a clear answer on the causes of this discrepancy is not immediately clear in either study undertaken, future research should endeavor to assess the reason for this discrepancy with ongoing assessment in future elections. Minimally, this study suggests that social media users should take caution when content on a platform would seem to indicate a widely held belief or value. There may be a significant gap between what is happening online and what is happening in reality.

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