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A Literature Review on Ethics and Sustainable Development: Approaches for Qatar

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Prepared By: Abdulrahman Al-Mulla

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Introduction

Sustainable development and business ethics are two concepts that seem to parallel one another. Without the proper business ethics in place, it appears as though it is highly unlikely that any business organization can practice effective sustainable development. There are many concepts and elements that form the overall sustainable development practices that are occurring around the world (Enderle, 2014, p. 725). This paper's overall aim is to discuss and analyze the many different elements of business ethics and sustainable development and how the approaches that are being used in the country of Qatar and in other regions around the globe. Further, the various themes will be discussed through the review of the literature and any gaps in the research will be identified and discussed for purposes of recommending possible explanations. Some of the themes that are present within the literature are corporate social responsibility (CSR), how Qatar is doing in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, leveraging sustainable human resource practices, how the institutional, cultural environment, and distinct ethical traditions of specific developing countries manifest in the ethical conduct and/or CSR policies and practices, and the overall ethical philosophies and ethical decision-making practices occurring and how they relate to Qatar's and other regions' sustainable development.

Review of Literature

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

One of the predominant themes that is present in much of the literature is that of corporate social responsibility (CSR). According to the *Journal of World Business* article, "The social responsibility of international business: From ethics and the environment to CSR and sustainable development," by author Ans Kolk, there was a significant shortage of research and articles that focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) prior to the 2010s. The article states, "Despite the fact that CSR was characterized as not really novel, the

international business (IB) literature has overall not widely reflected this interest. Only a small share of the articles published in the main IB journals in the 1990–2008 period addressed CSR or sustainable development. Publications referring to CSR increased in the 2000s, but this did not apply to sustainable development” (Kolk, 2016, p. 23). Thus, it can be ascertained that, while corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a topic that has been of much interest for many years, the topic of sustainable development and how it is related to corporate social responsibility (CSR), did not conflate—at least within the minds of researchers—until the last 10 or so years. In addition, the article makes claim that one of the biggest gaps in literature, prior to the 2010s, was that a large portion of the articles that were available only pertained to corporate social responsibility in relation to the United States. The article states, “Much of the discussion concerning corporate social responsibility has focused on business in the United States, but it is increasingly clear that managers around the world are being faced with new problems resulting from societal changes” (Kolk, 2016, p. 23).

An additional article that discusses corporate social responsibility (CSR) is from the *Arab Economic and Business Journal* and it is called, “Exploring corporate social responsibility’s global and Glocal practices in Qatar: A practitioner and stakeholder perspective.” The article, written by Ilaria Gualtieri and Martina Topić, also determines that, in many cases, the concept of corporate social responsibility is mainly thought of as a Western-thinking concept. The article states, “CSR remains western-driven in contrast to the scholarly trend that increasingly values national variables” (Gualtieri & Topić, 2016, p. 31). So, although corporate social responsibility (CSR), is a concept that generally applies to all regions, there is still not very much literature available about how it can be implemented in developed countries around the world. This particular article, however, does discuss corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the context of Qatar. One of the elements that the article discusses are the different dimensions of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article lists the dimensions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as economic, social, voluntariness, managerial, ethical, stakeholder, environmental, legal, and philanthropy (Gualtieri & Topić, 2016, p. 42). The article looks at all of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) dimensions as they pertain to Qatar, and then compares them to how Qatar may be different or similar to mainstream (the average of other developed countries around the

world) regions. The findings of the research that was conducted for the paper states, “Qatar CSR practices present similarities and variations from mainstream practice. For example, whilst societal dimension is highly regarded both globally and glocally, the state or institutional factors play a vigorous role in shaping and directing CSR. CSR is moulded by specific national and institutional realities as well as global practices” (Gualtieri & Topić, 2016, p. 47).

A similar topic, related to corporate social responsibility (CSR), that is present in much of the literature is how Qatar compares to other regions around the world with regard to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and overall business ethics. In particular, what are the most important elements of doing business in a socially-responsible manner. The *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* article, “A cross-country comparison of the corporate social responsibility orientation in Germany and Qatar: An empirical study among business students,” by authors Maria Anne Schmidt and Daniel Cracau, examines how business students in both Qatar and Germany are similar or different with respect to different elements of corporate social responsibility (CSR). One of the most interesting elements of this article is the fact that the article, also briefly touches on the fact that, for the most part, “Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a phenomenon of increasing interest. Today, it is practiced in most countries around the globe and studied in various fields of academia. However, the focus still lies on Western developed countries, their understanding, and implementation of CSR” (Schmidt, & Cracau, 2018, p. 69). Thus, it can be determined at this point that one of the main gaps in the literature available for the general topic of this literature review is the fact that most of the available discussion about corporate social responsibility (CSR) is focused on how it can, has, and will affect business organizations, groups, and people who are located mainly in Western regions around the world. In other words, there are not a large number of articles that cover the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and how it can be applied and how it is practiced in the Gulf region. The findings of the *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* article are certainly interesting, to say the least. The article states, “Next to economic obligations, Qataris appear more willing to support philanthropic activities of a business while Germans highly value ethical standards. Moreover, females in both countries value economic responsibilities less important than males do” (Schmidt, & Cracau, 2018, p. 69).

Similarly, the article, “Corporate social responsibility and organizational performance: A preliminary study in Qatari firms,” by Shatha M. Obeidat, Anas A. Al Bakri , Dalia A. Farrag, and Bader A. Al-Esmael, of the Department of Management and Marketing, College of Business and Economics, Qatar University in Doha, Qatar contends that Qatar is one of the countries in the world that is making large strides in the right direction with respect to corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article explains, “Although Qatari companies encounter huge cost from spending on different CSR activities, they do not consider it as unnecessary cost. On the contrary, they view CSR spending as a way to generate value and obtain many benefits, such as financial returns, good company reputation and high-quality product/service” (Obeidat et al., 2016, p. 29). This article is important due to the fact that it was a study that aimed to close the gap in previous literature on how corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the organizational activities have been implemented in the country of Qatar. Many of the previously available articles placed a focus on the Gulf Region, but not specifically on Qatar, which this article successfully accomplishes. Likewise, the article is authored by members of the Qatar University faculty, which also lends to its validity.

A further article that discusses corporate social responsibility and how it specifically affects organizations and patrons of organizations in the country of Qatar is called, “The impact of corporate social responsibility on customer loyalty in the Qatari telecommunication sector.” The article is from the *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research (JBRMR)* and it was written by Ghaith M. Al-Abdallah of Applied Science Private University, Jordan and Ragy S. Ahmed of the University of Liverpool, UK. The article is very specific in its aims because it is focusing on one industry within the country of Qatar. However, while it is a unique study, it is relevant due to the fact that it is specifically, taking into account how corporate social responsibility (CSR) directly affects consumers on the State of Qatar. And because it is about an industry that is ubiquitous—meaning that it is an industry that nearly every adult in the country needs—it is likely relevant to ascertain the overall effects that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has on the general public of the region. The article explains, “The CSR activities that seemed to gain more interest and higher attention [with customers] are those activities falling under the philanthropic, legal, and social umbrella/dimensions, other activities are related to the ethical, economic, and

environmental dimensions are being noticed as well but not on the same level as the previously mentioned dimensions” (Al-Abdallah, & Ahmed, 2018, p. 262).

Women in Relation to Sustainable Development Goals

The last sentence of the aforementioned quote from the *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* article leads the way to another topic that is found in different literature that was collected for purposes of the literature review. The topic of how females are treated within the dimensions of business ethics and sustainable development practices around the world (Paik et al., 2017, p. 843). There are certainly different cultures that can be found around the world, and in each culture, females play a different role. In Western cultures, women are viewed as an integral part of the business world. Therefore, as it pertains to business ethics, women are viewed as an important part of the business organization. The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* article, “Women’s Health and Well-Being in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: A Narrative Review of Achievements and Gaps in the Gulf States” by authors, Suhad Daher-Nashif and Hiba Bawadi, discusses how there are significant differences in how women are viewed and treated in various regions around the world. The article discusses how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have clearly outlined specific goals in relation to women for various regions around the world. With respect to how well Gulf States are doing in accomplishing the outlined goals, the article states, “Based on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states’ reports, the study found that the work on maternal mortality rate (MMR) was stronger than the work on access to sexual and reproductive health care services. This difference can be referred to the socio-cultural values, attitudes, meanings, and perceptions of each of these two issues. The reports indicate the lack of collective vision for wellbeing” (Daher-Nashif & Bawadi, 2020, p. 6). It should be noted the maternal mortality rate (MMR) is one of the top priorities for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as outlines by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

An additional article that discusses the theme of sustainable development and how it is related to women is from *QScience Connect* journal, and it is called, “Sustainable

development in Qatar: Challenges and opportunities.” The author, Renee A. Richter, explains throughout the article how Qatar, as compared to other Western regions around the world, is still somewhat lacking in equality for women. With regard to equality for women and women’s rights, it should be noted that one of the top priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals, as they were outlined by the United Nations and other organizations, is equality for all genders, ethnicities, and cultures in all regions around the world. Regarding Qatar’s place with respect to women’s issues, the article states, “The relatively low score on the Human Development Index (HDI), given the tremendous financial resources of the country, may be attributed in part to the paternalistic society where women and children are generally disadvantaged. Qatar ranked 117 for gender inequality and had scores indicating a lower life expectancy and years of schooling” (Richter, 2014, p. 4). So, it is relatively clear that Qatar and other Gulf regions still have a lot of work to do when it comes to women’s issues and how they pertain to sustainable development. Some further evidence of this can also be found in the article, which explains, “Males surveyed reported an 88% employment rate, but only 54% of women were employed. This may be attributed to the traditional role of women, and the desire for women to work in an environment where they are not working with men. Therefore, the strengths of Qatari women are not being fully realized. This also suggests possible workplace modifications that would accommodate traditional and cultural needs and lead to greater incorporation of women in the workplace” (Richter, 2014, p. 9).

The *International Journal of Business and Social Science* article, “The world of women public relations practitioners in Qatar,” written by Professor Mohamed Kirat, Department of Mass Communication, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University in Doha, Qatar also discusses some interesting elements about how Qatar is performing with respect to not only the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, but also the Qatar National Vision 2030. The Qatar National Vision 2030 is a sustainable development plan that is being adhered to and incrementally implemented throughout the country. As the title of the plan indicates Qatari leadership want to achieve the sustainable development goals that are outlines in the visionary plan by the year 2030. With respect to how Qatar is performing in terms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Qatar National Vision 2030 plan, the article states, “Qatar National Vision 2030 prioritized the empowerment of women through her right to work and enhancing social protection for women. Qatar also remains committed

to all the international and regional agreements it signed on the rights of women led by The UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (Kirat, 2018, p. 82). In addition, there are more positive outcomes that have already come to pass in Qatar, with regard to woman and sustainable development goals. The article explains, “Women dominate Seventy percent of the Technical professions such as physicians, pharmacists, and schoolteachers. Qatari women have participated in many fields and achieved educational excellence in most specializations. Qatari women occupy many important positions in Qatar” (Kirat, 2018, p. 82). So, it appears as though, although it may not be the case in every Gulf Coast state, Qatar is actually ahead of the curve when it comes to some of the issues with women’s empowerment (Lari, 2016, p.23) that are important with respect to sustainable development and ethical treatment of people throughout the region.

In the same context, the *International Journal of Training Research* article, “Women’s participation in technical and vocational education and training in the Gulf States,” by Faryal Khan, Walid Aradi, Wesley Schwalje, Elizabeth Buckner, and Maricel Fernandez-Carag clearly explains that, while Qatar is ahead of the curve in some fields, one of the industries that Qatar, and other Gulf States, as well, are lacking equality in is in technical and vocational education training (TVET) for women. This research article is important because of the importance of women’s equality in the Sustainable Development Goals as laid out by the United Nations. It is also important because the same goals with respect to women, are part of Qatar’s 2030 Vision plan. The article states, “While some GCC countries, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, have viewed TVET as a key element of educational policy for many years, other GCC nations have only relatively recently focused their attention on improving TVET systems” (Khan et al., 2017, p. 229). However, even with that being the case, many countries are actively trying to help women gain employment in technical fields, once they have graduated from technical colleges—which have only relatively recently been available to women in some GCC countries. The article explains, “A recurring theme in many of these long-ranging development strategies is female employment in emerging technical fields expected to grow as a result of knowledge-based economic transitions” (Khan et al., 2017, p. 243).

Moreover, even with all the progress that is being made, with regard to equality for all people—which is a significant element of the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the recurring themes that was prevalent in much of the literature was the continuing gender biases that occur throughout the Gulf region. The *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* article, “Ongoing Gender-Based Challenges in Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Comparative Study between Qatar and Arab States,” by Abdel-Samad M. Ali and Ali A. Hadi Al-Shawi discusses how gender-based discrimination against women and girls is still a problem and it needs to be rectified in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. It should again be noted that one of the most important elements of the Sustainable Development Goals is fighting inequality and injustice. Thus, the article attempts to create a greater awareness of some of the problems that women are facing with respect to equality in all walks of life in Qatar and other Gulf States. The article explains, “Most of the Arab region faces barriers to the ability of women to generate their own income and control assets and resources or what so called ‘economic autonomy’” (Ali & Al-Shawi, 2016, p. 1665). While this is unfortunate, the article contends that it can be remedied by stronger legislation and the strengthening of the public instruments that are responsible for securing compliance to the legislation (Ali & Al-Shawi, 2016, p. 1666).

Furthermore, while it has been mentioned that Qatar and other Gulf Region nations are progressing with respect to equality for all people, there is an article that makes some interesting points about the lack of progress in the region. *The Lancet* journal article entitled, “Who’s been left behind? Why sustainable development goals fail the Arab world,” by Abbas El-Zein of School of Civil Engineering, University of Sydney, in Sydney, Australia, Jocelyn DeJong of the Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut in Beirut, Lebanon, Philippe Fargues of the Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute in Florence, Italy, Nisreen Salti of the Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, American University of Beirut in Beirut, Lebanon, Adam Hanieh of the Department of Development Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in London, UK, and Helen Lackner an Independent researcher in Oxford, UK argues that, while there has been some progress in the region, many of the Arab countries have essentially failed with regard to the sustainable development goals. In particular, the authors contend that the women are some of the most marginalized people in the region. This is due to the

fact that many Gulf nations have a disproportional number of refugees and migrant workers. Additionally, many Gulf nations have high numbers of militarization. Within both of these categories, the women who are part of these groups are the ones who usually encounter the worst effects of the problems. Regarding female migrant workers, the article explains, "The experience of migration driven by labour and war differs for men and women, with female migrants exposed to different kinds and levels of risk compared with male migrants. Female domestic workers often suffer from abuse because they are poorly protected and their working conditions are subject to little public scrutiny" (El-Zein et al., 2016, p. 1-2). And with respect to militarization, the article states, "In conflict settings, women are particularly vulnerable and at risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation" (El-Zein et al., 2016, p. 2). The article continues by stating that, while the issue is dire and unfortunate, there are guidelines that can be developed and followed that will help to alleviate the problems so that Qatar and other Gulf nations can achieve the Sustainable development goals.

Sustainable and Ethical Urban Development

An additional theme that was prevalent while conducting research for the literature review was that of how oil rich regions around the world are doing with regard to remaining sustainable while expanding urban areas throughout the regions. Sustainable development requires that regions that are expanding quickly in terms of urbanization, do so with sustainable development goals in mind (Rizzo, 2016, p. 87). In other words, since the regions are building, growing, and expanding, it is better for all stakeholders to ensure that they are doing so in a manner that will be in line with the future sustainable vision. The *Energies Journal* article, "City Branding, Sustainable Urban Development and the Rentier State. How Do Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai Present Themselves in the Age of Post Oil and Global Warming?" by Martin De Jong, Thomas Hoppe, and Negar Noori, discusses this very topic. With respect to well Qatar is doing in the accomplishing of the sustainable urban development that is occurring at an exponential rate, the article explains, "Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai have formulated policies that aim at preparing for a post-oil economy characterized by a diversification of their industrial activities and preservation of their

natural environment. In addition, they have undertaken action to strengthen environmental protection, promote the development of renewable energy and in the long run reduce carbon emissions” (De Jong et al., 2019, p. 2).

Likewise, the *Smart and Sustainable Built Environment* journal article, “ The social imperative in sustainable urban development,” by Kasim Randeree of Coventry Business School, Coventry University, Coventry, UK, and Nadeem Ahmed of the Department for Communities and Local Government, Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government, London, UK examines social sustainability effectiveness of eco-cities throughout the Gulf Region. Eco-cities are the modern-day answer to rapidly expanding urbanization in many regions around the world. With regard to sustainability, many experts believe that eco-cities are the only way that most regions around the world will be able to successfully deal with the vast number of people who will inhabit smaller and smaller areas of land. Through the research, the article’s findings suggest that, in order for the Gulf Region state to “Stand out as a successfully balanced eco-city, policy and value changes need to be encouraged in UAE society. This could include emboldening existing environmental practices, such as conservation zones for community wildlife sanctuaries, state regulation for more productive land use, land grants in the public interest and the strict protection of water resources” (Randeree & Ahmed, 2019, p. 142). Thus, it appears as though, while many of the regions are doing what they can, with respect to sustainable development, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and many changes that must be implemented.

An additional topic related to sustainability approaches in Qatar is how civil society organizations (CSOs) can utilize their resources and align in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out by the United Nations. The *Development in Practice* journal article, “The contribution of civil society to sustainable development in the Gulf and beyond,” by Rachel Hayman, the Director of Research, Learning and Communications at INTRAC, a not-for-profit organization based in the United Kingdom that supports the development of civil society organizations around the world, discusses how Qatar and other Gulf countries civil society organizations can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Qatar, in particular, has adhered to the guidelines as the article explains, “Taking Qatar as an example, the National Development Strategy presents opportunities for a greater role for CSOs to contribute to social development in the country and therefore to

the collective global agenda. Avenues for influence might include through work in the education sector, in social welfare, in employment, and in environmental sustainability” (Hayman, 2019, p. 648). Therefore, in order for Qatar to fully implement many of the decisions that have already been made, with regard to sustainable development goals, there are specific sectors that need to be examined and addressed. In other words, while all sectors are important, some must be given more emphasis than others—at least initially.

Similar to one of the previous articles, the Sustainability journal article, “Smart Technology Impact on Neighborhood Form for a Sustainable Doha” by Soud K. Al-Thani, Muammer Koc, and Sami G. Al-Ghamdi of the Division of Sustainable Development, College of Science and Engineering, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Education City, Doha, Qatar and Cynthia P. Skelhorn and Alexandre Amato of Sustainability, Qatar Green Building Council, Qatar Foundation, Education City, Doha, Qatar discusses how the State of Qatar is in the process of and in the embryonic stage of building cities that are more sustainable to handle the influx of rapidly increasing urbanization. The article explains how it is important for Qatar to build cities that are self-sufficient and that maximize the neighborhood form. The neighborhood form refers to how a city can improve the overall quality of life of the city’s inhabitants (Al-Thani et al., 2018, p. 1). The article explains, “Neighborhoods are the smallest building block of the city and deserve detailed physical planning, especially when considering issues of city livability and... are a good starting point to commence sustainability and livability enhancement. Mixed-use and self-sufficient neighborhoods and district centers reduce the need to travel to a central city center or from one center to another, avoiding the phenomena of city fragmentation” (Al-Thani et al., 2018, p. 14). Consequently, as Qatar expands and grows, the focus—with regard to sustainable and ethical urban development—calls for an emphasis on expanded livability and accessibility without the need for extended travel. As a result, the city’s inhabitants will enjoy an enhanced quality of life.

Correspondingly, an additional article from the Sustainability journal called, “Urban Sustainability and Livability: An Analysis of Doha’s Urban-form and Possible Mitigation Strategies” by Soud K. Al-Thani, Muammer Koc, and Sami G. Al-Ghamdi of the Division of Sustainable Development, College of Science and Engineering, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Education City, Doha, Qatar and Alexandre Amato of Sustainability, Qatar Green Building

Council, Qatar Foundation, Education City, Doha, Qatar, delves into further depth regarding how the capital city of Doha in Qatar, contains about 80% of the State's population. The authors contend that, due to the fact that so many of the residents of country reside in such a dense area, the livability of Doha is not sustainable in its current form. The article goes on to offer some possible solutions for the problem. One of the methods, by which the city can increase its ranking on the livability index is to increase walkability within the city. Walkability means that the inhabitants of the city do not have to drive a car or motor bike every place that they go. In other words, as was similar to the finding in the previous Sustainability article, reducing the need to travel great distances—in example: having the ability and convenience to walk to do small errands, such as going to the grocery store—greatly enhances a resident's quality of life. And, in turn, enhances the city's sustainability factor. The article states, "Walkability, in a city designed to the human scale, is a common denominator of sustainability and livability" (Al-Thani et al., 2019, p. 24).

Along the same line, the *Sustainability* journal article, "A Holistic Overview of Qatar's (Built) Cultural Heritage; Towards an Integrated Sustainable Conservation Strategy," by Fodil Fadli and Mahmoud AlSaeed, both of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, College of Engineering, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar discusses whether it will be possible for Qatar to maintain its cultural heritage while still implementing the many changes that will be necessary for the State to reach its sustainability goals that it has set. It should be noted that cultural heritage, in the context of the article, refers to architectural structures, such as military towers, mosques, houses, palaces and grand souks. In the respect, Qatar is not doing as well as may be expected. The article essentially states that many of the cultural heritage built structure have become dilapidated due to neglect and it is going to take some concerted efforts by many different groups to remedy the situation. The article explains, "The process of preserving the cultural values is complex and requires the collaboration of several fields of expertise including history, economic, engineering and archaeology. This is needed in order to develop a clear framework adapting the principle of sustainable preservation encompassing the economic and investment factors, environment aspect, social behaviors and cultural meanings and the physical characteristic of the location (Fadli & AlSaeed, 2019, p. 16).

Conclusion

The many different elements and concepts that are part of the framework for sustainable development and ethics for the region of Qatar are very complex. Of the themes explored throughout this literature review, there are some gaps that are curiously underexplored. For instance, with regard to corporate social responsibility (CSR), it seems that although there are a large number of available resource about how corporate social responsibility affects and it practiced by Western regions around the world, there is not a lot of literature available that explores how corporate social responsibility has been implemented and how it is practiced in the Gulf Coast region. With respect to the theme of women's issues and sustainable development—especially in the Gulf Coast region—most of the available literature is based on information that does not specify detailed policies that have been implemented in many regions around the world. In other words, the information is generally gathered from organizational reports and plans, and while the reports, goals, and plans are generally a step in the right direction, there does not appear to be much literature that goes into detail about the actual legislation or policies have been implemented throughout regions around the world. A gap in the literature for the sustainable urban development theme is the fact that there is virtually no available information on how the affected regions have successfully implement the necessary measures (Obeidat et al., 2018, p. 374). However, since the urban development in the region is essentially in its infancy, that information will likely become available as time passes.

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