AI AND CYBERSECURITY - NEW THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

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Abstract:

In the realm of technological advancements, the corresponding methods and techniques employed to exploit these advancements also progress. The pervasive integration of artificial intelligence (AI) across various domains, including cybersecurity, introduces a spectrum of novel threats and opportunities. On one hand, AI possesses the potential to assist organizations in the more effective and efficient detection and response to cyber threats. Conversely, malevolent actors can exploit AI to devise and execute sophisticated and targeted attacks. Notably, AI technologies such as machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and computer vision have existed for several decades; however, their widespread utilization and recognition have only recently emerged. As proficient professionals in the realm of information and communication technologies, it is incumbent upon us to explore the prospective applications of these AI technologies in the context of cybersecurity, while concurrently examining the associated risks and challenges. The present article critically examines the contemporary status of AI in cybersecurity, elucidates the latest advancements in this field, and deliberates upon the potential threats and opportunities engendered by this burgeoning technology.

Keywords: Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, AI-powered cyberattacks, Explainable AI, Data Protection, Generative Adversarial Networks

AI-Powered Cyberattacks: A New Threat Landscape

The profound influence of artificial intelligence (AI) on the cybersecurity landscape encompasses both the vulnerabilities it exposes and the prospects it offers for enhancing security measures. As previously mentioned, AI technologies such as machine learning and deep learning are progressively utilized for detecting threats and responding to incidents, exhibiting potential in complementing human capabilities within these domains. Nevertheless, the rise of AI-powered cyberattacks poses a growing concern, as malicious actors aim to exploit these very technologies to automate and amplify their assault capabilities.

To mitigate the risks associated with AI-powered cyberattacks, the development of transparent, explainable, and accountable AI technologies and tools assumes critical importance. These endeavors foster trust in AI systems and ensure responsible utilization. Furthermore, effective

strategies for managing the risks associated with AI necessitate collaboration among industry, government, and academia.

An illustrative instance of an AI-powered cyberattack involves the application of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) to generate counterfeit images, videos, and audio with malicious intent. GANs represent a category of machine learning models that acquire the ability to generate authentic-looking images or other data types through training on extensive datasets. However, when exploited by nefarious individuals, GANs can generate persuasive forged media, thereby facilitating phishing attacks, disinformation campaigns, and other cybercriminal activities.

The widespread media attention garnered by the so-called "deepfake" videos during the 2019 general election in India exemplifies a GAN-based attack [Jain, S. & Jha, P., 2020]. Deepfakes, created using GANs, merge genuine and counterfeit audio and video footage to fabricate convincing yet fraudulent videos. In this particular case, deepfake videos were disseminated to propagate false information and political propaganda.

Another notable illustration involves a group of researchers employing GANs to fabricate a "deepfake" video featuring former US President Barack Obama, manipulating audio and video elements to craft a persuasive yet counterfeit speech. This experiment underscored the potential perils associated with AI-generated disinformation, especially within the political sphere.

These examples elucidate the capacity of GANs and other AI-powered attacks to be exploited for malicious purposes, emphasizing the imperative need for effective countermeasures and the responsible development and governance of AI technologies.

Another prospective threat lies in the automation of social engineering attacks through AI, such as personalized phishing emails that exploit data gathered from social media and other sources. AI can generate highly convincing phishing emails that evade detection by human recipients, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful attacks.

To address these and other potential threats, substantial investment in research and development of novel AI technologies and tools for cybersecurity is essential, accompanied by their design with paramount consideration for security and privacy. Such endeavors necessitate collaboration among AI researchers, cybersecurity experts, and policymakers to establish and implement best practices for responsible AI development and deployment.

Conversely, AI assumes a crucial role as an imperative tool for defending against cyber attacks. AI-based cyber defense entails the utilization of artificial intelligence algorithms and tools for detecting, preventing, and responding to cyber threats. These tools employ machine-learning techniques to analyze extensive datasets and discern patterns indicative of malicious behavior. Given the escalating complexity of cyber attacks, AI-based cyber defense constitutes a vital realm of research and development.

An exemplification of AI's applicability in cyber defense lies in anomaly detection, a technique employed to identify anomalous behavioral patterns within a system. AI-based anomaly detection systems utilize machine-learning algorithms to identify potential threats based on deviations from anticipated behavioral patterns. Furthermore, predictive modeling, facilitated by machine learning algorithms, serves as another valuable approach to AI-based cyber defense. It involves analyzing

historical data to identify patterns that can predict future attacks, enabling proactive identification of potential threats and preemptive measures.

In addition to anomaly detection and predictive modeling, AI can expedite real-time threat detection and response. AI-based systems can monitor network traffic, swiftly identifying and responding to potential threats, thus enabling cyber defense teams to promptly counter emerging and novel attack vectors.

Overall, AI-based cyber defense systems possess substantial potential in fortifying the battle against cyber attacks. Leveraging machine learning algorithms and extensive datasets, these systems enable real-time threat detection and response, thereby enhancing the overall efficacy of cyber defense strategies.

Privacy concerns with AI and cybersecurity

In the realm of AI-enabled cybersecurity, privacy concerns emerge as a significant consideration, as is customary with any technological advancement. The utilization of AI algorithms necessitates substantial amounts of data for learning and enhancing accuracy, thereby raising questions about the collection and utilization of this data. Furthermore, the implementation of AI-based cybersecurity systems introduces apprehensions regarding the security of personal data. Certain systems powered by AI rely on the gathering and analysis of user device data, potentially exposing sensitive information to malicious actors. Additionally, the decision-making processes of AI-powered systems are often rooted in personal data, leading to concerns regarding the potential for misuse or mishandling of such data.

To address these concerns, numerous global and country-specific regulations have been established to protect personal data in the context of AI-based cybersecurity. These regulations vary across different regions, reflecting the diverse approaches taken by countries to safeguard privacy.

Notably, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) mandates the implementation of technical and organizational measures by organizations to protect personal data processed using AI algorithms. Similarly, in Australia, the Privacy Act of 1988 governs the handling of personal information and includes provisions that apply to AI technologies used in cybersecurity. The Act requires organizations to handle personal data responsibly and provides individuals with rights and remedies concerning their personal information [Australia – Privacy Act of 1988, 2023].

In Brazil, the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) came into effect in 2020. This law establishes rules for the processing of personal data, including data processed using AI algorithms. It emphasizes transparency, purpose limitation, and accountability in data processing and grants individuals rights over their personal information [Brazil – General Data Protection Law, 2023].

In Singapore, the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) regulates the collection, use, and disclosure of personal data. The PDPA includes provisions for the responsible use of AI in cybersecurity and mandates organizations to obtain consent, ensure data accuracy, and provide individuals with access and correction rights [Singapore – PDPA, 2023].

Russia has implemented the Federal Law on Personal Data, which regulates the collection, storage, and processing of personal data, including data processed using AI algorithms. The law imposes strict requirements on data controllers and processors, including provisions for data security and individual consent [Russia – Federal Law of Personal Data, 2023].

Similarly, Azerbaijan has the Law on Personal Data Protection, which regulates the processing of personal data, including data processed using AI algorithms. The law requires organizations to obtain individual consent for the processing of personal data and ensures that the data is processed only for specific and legitimate purposes [Askerov, I., 2023].

These examples demonstrate the global effort to address privacy concerns in the context of AI-based cybersecurity through legislation and regulations. By establishing legal frameworks and guidelines, countries aim to ensure the responsible use of AI while protecting individuals' personal data.

In addition to these country-specific regulations, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also developed principles for the responsible use of AI. These principles outline guidelines for ensuring that AI is used in a way that promotes human rights, democratic values, and transparent decision-making. The OECD's principles for AI recommend that AI systems should be designed to be transparent, explainable, and auditable. They also call for the protection of personal data and the promotion of diversity, non-discrimination, and social responsibility in the development and deployment of AI systems. By adhering to these principles, organizations can ensure that their use of AI in cybersecurity is both effective and ethical [Medeiros, M., 2020].

It should be noted that while AI-based cybersecurity systems have great potential to improve our ability to protect against cyber threats, they also pose significant privacy concerns. To address these concerns, global and country-specific regulations have been put in place to protect personal data in the context of AI-based cybersecurity. However, as demonstrated by the Cambridge Analytica scandal, even with regulations in place, privacy breaches can still occur [4]. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to prioritize data privacy and security when deploying AI-based cybersecurity systems, and for governments to continually assess and update regulations to ensure they keep pace with the evolving threat landscape.

The human factor in AI and cybersecurity

AI-powered cybersecurity systems have the potential to significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of security measures; however, they should not operate in isolation. The indispensable role of human oversight and intervention becomes evident in ensuring the accurate and effective functioning of AI-powered cybersecurity systems.

Within this context, human involvement plays a crucial role in identifying and rectifying errors or biases in AI algorithms, thereby mitigating the risks of erroneous decisions and actions. Moreover, human experts possess the capacity to provide contextual understanding and make intricate judgments that may surpass the capabilities of AI systems. While AI-powered systems may excel

at identifying known threats, their limitations in recognizing novel or emerging threats necessitate human expertise for timely identification and mitigation.

Furthermore, human intervention assumes paramount importance in upholding the ethical operation of AI-powered cybersecurity systems, in adherence to prevailing regulatory and legal requirements. The inadvertent collection and utilization of personal data by AI algorithms, potentially in violation of privacy regulations or giving rise to discriminatory practices, underscore the need for human experts to ensure that AI algorithms are meticulously designed and operated in full compliance with relevant regulations and ethical standards.

While AI-powered cybersecurity systems hold tremendous potential for enhancing security measures, the integration of human oversight and intervention is paramount to their effective and ethical operation, in accordance with regulatory requirements. One effective approach for achieving the symbiotic collaboration between humans and AI lies in the "human-in-the-loop" process, a term commonly employed in the domain of artificial intelligence and machine learning. This concept, frequently cited in research papers and industry reports, emphasizes the indispensability of human involvement in establishing parameters, providing guidelines, and monitoring the performance of AI systems, thereby ensuring alignment with human values and objectives.

Another way that humans and AI can work together effectively is through the use of explainable AI. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) is a term used to describe a set of techniques and methods that enable humans to understand and interpret the decisions made by AI systems. The need for XAI arises from the fact that many modern AI systems, such as deep neural networks, are highly complex and operate in ways that are difficult for humans to comprehend. XAI methods can be broadly classified into two categories: model-based and post-hoc. Model-based approaches involve designing AI systems with transparency and interpretability in mind from the outset. Post-hoc approaches involve applying techniques to existing AI models to increase their transparency and interpretability.

Nielsen [Carter, S. & Nielsen, M., 2017] argues that XAI is essential for ensuring that AI systems are used ethically and responsibly. He states that "without XAI, we cannot know how AI systems are making decisions, and we cannot hold them accountable for their actions." Nielsen also argues that XAI can help to build trust between humans and AI systems. He states, "When people understand how AI systems work, they are more likely to trust those systems."

Some examples of XAI techniques include visualizations of model decision-making processes, feature importance measures, and natural language explanations of model outputs. The goal of XAI is to enable humans to understand and trust AI systems, thereby increasing their adoption and impact in various domains.

To elucidate the notion of XAI, let us consider an illustrative example. Suppose a conversational chatbot is deployed to address customer inquiries. This chatbot utilizes an AI algorithm trained on a substantial dataset of customer interactions. In conventional AI systems, discerning the rationale behind the chatbot's recommendations may prove challenging.

However, with the integration of XAI, the AI system proffers an explanation for its recommendations. For instance, it may explicate that the recommendation was based on alignment with the customer's preferences derived from previous interactions or the product's superior rating among similar options. Such explanations serve to illuminate the grounds upon which the recommendation was made, fostering comprehension and trust in the AI system.

A further instance of XAI can be observed in image recognition systems. Consider an AI system designed to identify objects within images. In the event of detecting a feline entity, the AI system can provide an explanation by highlighting salient features or discernible patterns that informed its decision. It may specify the recognition of pointed ears, whiskers, and a tail, which are characteristic traits typically associated with feline creatures. This explication enables human users to comprehend the underlying reasoning employed by the AI system for object identification.

The significance of XAI extends to numerous domains, including healthcare, finance, and autonomous vehicles. For instance, in the context of healthcare, when an AI system recommends a specific treatment plan for a patient, it becomes imperative to furnish explanations elucidating the reasoning behind such a recommendation. These explanations empower physicians and patients to comprehend the rationale underpinning the decision and evaluate its efficacy.

Conclusively, the use of XAI in cybersecurity is still in its early stages, but it has the potential to revolutionize the way we protect our systems from attack. XAI strives to render AI systems more transparent and explicable, engendering human understanding and trust in the decision-making processes of AI algorithms. Through the provision of lucid explications, XAI enhances accountability, fosters trust, and facilitates collaborative engagement between humans and AI systems.

Having explored the concept of Explainable Artificial Intelligence and its significance in enhancing the interpretability and trustworthiness of AI systems, we now shift our focus towards the challenges associated with integrating AI into existing cybersecurity teams and workflows. While XAI provides valuable insights into the inner workings of AI algorithms, it is imperative to address the complexities and considerations that arise when AI is implemented in real-world cybersecurity scenarios. In this section, we delve into the multifaceted challenges that organizations face in successfully integrating AI technologies into their cybersecurity practices, examining issues such as skill gaps, data availability, integration complexity, trust and XAI requirements, adversarial attacks, ethical considerations, and organizational resistance. By comprehensively understanding and tackling these challenges, organizations can pave the way for a harmonious collaboration between human experts and AI systems, bolstering the overall cybersecurity landscape.

Challenges of integrating AI into existing cybersecurity teams and workflows

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into existing cybersecurity teams and workflows presents a myriad of challenges that necessitate meticulous attention. These challenges encompass the following aspects:

1. Skill gaps and training: The assimilation of AI technologies into the realm of cybersecurity demands specialized knowledge and expertise. Consequently, the extant cybersecurity teams might exhibit deficiencies in the requisite skills to effectively harness and manage AI systems. Thus, the provision of adequate training and opportunities for upskilling becomes imperative to facilitate the seamless integration of AI.

2. Data availability and quality: AI algorithms are heavily reliant on copious volumes of high-quality data for training and decision-making purposes. However, procuring pertinent and reliable cybersecurity data often engenders arduousness due to the involvement of sensitive information and intricate data sources. It is therefore essential to ensure data availability, integrity, and privacy, while simultaneously adhering to legal and regulatory mandates, to bolster the efficacy of AI integration endeavors.

3. Integration complexity: The integration of AI into prevailing cybersecurity workflows and infrastructures is characterized by its intricacy. Successful amalgamation necessitates the seamless incorporation of AI systems with extant security tools, processes, and technologies, while circumventing disruptions and optimizing efficiency. Ensuring compatibility, scalability, and interoperability between AI systems and legacy systems assumes paramount importance, albeit posing technical challenges.

4. Trust and explainability: The credibility of AI-powered cybersecurity systems is contingent upon garnering trust from human operators and decision-makers. However, the opaqueness and non-interpretable nature of certain AI algorithms impede the comprehension and confidence of cybersecurity professionals in the decisions rendered by AI systems. According to Mathew R. Voke, humans are expected to remain superior in areas related to operational planning and strategic decision-making in warfare in the foreseeable future. AI is expected to assist human decision-making across different levels of warfare, from partial assistance to full autonomy, and used strategically to exploit the weakness of an adversary [Voke, M.R., 2019]. Consequently, ensuring the explainability and interpretability of AI models, along with the provision of lucid explanations for their outputs, assumes a critical role in fostering trust and facilitating harmonious human-machine collaboration.

5. Adversarial attacks and vulnerabilities: AI systems themselves can become susceptible to targeted attacks. Adversaries may exploit vulnerabilities inherent in AI algorithms or manipulate input data to deceive or compromise AI-powered cybersecurity systems. To mitigate these adversarial threats, comprehensive testing, validation, and continuous monitoring of AI models are essential to identify and address potential vulnerabilities.

6. Ethical considerations: The integration of AI into the domain of cybersecurity engenders ethical concerns. Unintentional biases, discriminatory tendencies, and violations of privacy rights can manifest within AI systems if not meticulously designed, trained, and tested. Upholding principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency in AI decision-making processes becomes indispensable for alleviating ethical challenges that may arise.

7. Organizational resistance and change management: The introduction of AI into existing cybersecurity teams and workflows may encounter resistance from stakeholders who are

accustomed to traditional approaches. Reluctance towards change, apprehensions regarding job displacement, and cultural barriers can impede the successful adoption and integration of AI technologies. Mitigating organizational resistance necessitates the employment of effective change management strategies, clear communication, and proactive measures to address concerns and reservations.

To effectively address these challenges, organizations must formulate comprehensive strategies for the integration of AI, encompassing technical considerations, training and upskilling initiatives, data management frameworks, governance policies, and stakeholder engagement. Collaborative efforts between cybersecurity experts, AI specialists, and organizational leadership are instrumental in navigating these challenges and ensuring a seamless and efficacious integration of AI into cybersecurity workflows.

The increased use of AI in cybersecurity has not only revolutionized the way organizations defend against cyber threats but has also created new and exciting job opportunities within the field. The integration of AI technologies in cybersecurity has given rise to a range of specialized roles that require expertise in both AI and cybersecurity domains. Professionals with the right skill set and knowledge can pursue careers in areas such as AI security analysis, AI ethical hacking, AI privacy consulting, AI security architecture, AI incident response, AI forensics analysis, and AI policy and governance.

The adoption of AI in cybersecurity has led to the emergence of AI security analysts who leverage AI algorithms and tools to detect and analyze potential threats. These analysts play a critical role in maintaining the effectiveness of AI-based threat detection systems. Additionally, AI ethical hackers are responsible for testing and assessing the security of AI systems, ensuring their resilience against cyber attacks. Their expertise lies in identifying vulnerabilities and weaknesses within AI-powered security systems and providing recommendations for improvements.

In light of the growing concerns about data privacy, AI privacy consultants have become essential in the field of AI-powered cybersecurity. They focus on ensuring that AI systems adhere to privacy regulations and ethical standards. These consultants develop frameworks, assess data usage practices, and provide guidance on responsible AI implementation. Furthermore, AI security architects are involved in designing and developing secure AI systems and infrastructures. They integrate AI technologies into existing security frameworks while addressing potential risks associated with AI implementation.

The utilization of AI in incident response has given rise to AI incident responders who leverage AI-powered tools for real-time threat analysis and rapid response. These professionals play a crucial role in mitigating cyber risks and minimizing the impact of security incidents. Moreover, AI forensics analysts specialize in investigating and analyzing cyber incidents involving AI technologies. By examining digital evidence and identifying the use of AI in attacks, they provide insights that support incident response efforts and legal proceedings.

Given the complex ethical and regulatory landscape surrounding AI, AI policy and governance specialists have become instrumental in ensuring responsible AI deployment in cybersecurity.

These specialists develop policies and governance frameworks that navigate the legal, ethical, and social implications of AI. Their expertise ensures compliance with regulations while promoting transparency, fairness, and accountability.

The integration of AI in cybersecurity has expanded the workforce in the field, offering diverse career paths that combine AI expertise with cybersecurity knowledge. As AI continues to advance, it is expected that new roles and opportunities will emerge, further strengthening the synergy between AI and cybersecurity in the workforce. This underscores the importance of preparing and upskilling the workforce to harness the potential of AI in tackling evolving cyber threats while maintaining ethical practices and regulatory compliance.

Future directions for AI and cybersecurity

This chapter delves into the promising prospects of future directions in AI and their far-reaching implications for the field of cybersecurity. Through an academic lens, we explore key areas where AI is poised to make substantial contributions, examining their potential impact on bolstering security measures and mitigating emerging challenges in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Additionally, we highlight opportunities for further research and collaboration between academia and industry to drive advancements in AI-driven cybersecurity.

Adversarial AI Defense: As the sophistication of AI-powered attacks continues to increase, the urgent need arises for robust defense mechanisms against adversarial AI techniques. Extensive research efforts will focus on countering attacks targeted at AI systems, with specific emphasis on adversarial machine learning. The development of AI models resilient to adversarial attacks and the integration of adversarial training techniques will be paramount to fortifying the security of AI systems.

Explainable AI in Cybersecurity: Transparency and explainability in AI algorithms remain critical challenges within the realm of cybersecurity. Augmenting the explainability of AI models is imperative to comprehend the reasoning behind their decisions and to identify potential biases or vulnerabilities. Future research endeavors will concentrate on advancing techniques that provide interpretable explanations for AI-based cybersecurity decisions, enabling human experts to trust and verify the outcomes.

AI-Driven Threat Intelligence: The exponential growth of data generated by cyber threats necessitates advanced techniques for effective threat intelligence. AI offers immense potential in automating the analysis of vast volumes of security data, identifying patterns, and detecting emerging threats. By leveraging AI-driven threat intelligence platforms, organizations can gain real-time insights into potential threats and proactively enhance their security posture.

Collaborative AI Systems: The escalating complexity and dynamic nature of cybersecurity challenges call for collaborative AI systems capable of pooling resources and sharing intelligence. Building AI systems that can seamlessly collaborate with one another and with human experts will enable more efficient threat detection, incident response, and decision-making. This entails the development of interoperable AI frameworks, standardized data formats, and secure communication protocols.

Privacy-Preserving AI: Striking a balance between the benefits of AI and individual privacy rights is a pressing concern. Future research will concentrate on developing privacy-preserving AI techniques that enable organizations to harness the power of AI while safeguarding sensitive data. Techniques such as federated learning, secure multi-party computation, and differential privacy will play a pivotal role in facilitating collaborative AI models without compromising privacy.

Ethics and Governance of AI in Cybersecurity: As AI becomes increasingly embedded in cybersecurity systems; ethical considerations and responsible governance assume paramount importance. The establishment of ethical frameworks and guidelines for the use of AI in cybersecurity, encompassing aspects such as accountability, fairness, transparency, and bias mitigation, will be crucial. Collaborative efforts among governments, organizations, and researchers will be essential to establish regulatory frameworks that ensure the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies.

In conclusion, the future of AI in cybersecurity holds great promise. Advancements in adversarial AI defense, explainability, threat intelligence, collaborative systems, privacy preservation, and ethical governance are set to reshape the cybersecurity landscape. By harnessing the potential of AI while proactively addressing its associated challenges, organizations can build more resilient and secure digital environments, empowering them to stay ahead of emerging threats in an ever-evolving cyber landscape. Furthermore, fostering research collaborations between academia and industry will be instrumental in driving innovation and advancing the field of AI-driven cybersecurity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the field of cybersecurity offers immense potential for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the evolving digital landscape. By exploring potential future developments in AI and their implications for cybersecurity, we have identified key areas where AI can make substantial contributions. Adversarial AI defense, explainable AI, AI-driven threat intelligence, collaborative AI systems, privacy-preserving AI, and ethical governance of AI are all areas of significant research and innovation.

To fully realize the benefits of AI in cybersecurity, it is crucial to foster ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange between academia and industry. Academia plays a vital role in advancing theoretical foundations, developing novel algorithms, and investigating ethical and privacy-preserving AI techniques. Industry contributes practical insights, real-world data, and operational expertise, facilitating the translation of research findings into practical solutions.

Interdisciplinary collaborations between academia and industry are particularly valuable in addressing the complex challenges at the intersection of AI and cybersecurity. These collaborations enable the formation of interdisciplinary teams comprising experts in AI, cybersecurity, ethics, law, and policy. Such collective efforts promote the development of comprehensive solutions that balance security, privacy, transparency, and accountability.

As we embark on this transformative journey, it is imperative to maintain vigilance and proactively address the risks associated with AI in cybersecurity. Continual monitoring, improvement of defense mechanisms, and the development of adaptive AI systems are essential. Additionally, policymakers and regulatory bodies should work closely with researchers and practitioners to establish robust legal frameworks that address the ethical implications of AI in cybersecurity.

By harnessing the potential of AI while upholding ethical considerations, we can build a resilient and secure digital ecosystem that safeguards individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. The future of AI and cybersecurity holds immense promise, but it requires unwavering commitment, collaboration, and dedication to ensure that technology serves as a force for good in the ongoing battle against cyber threats.

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