



ORIGINAL PAPER

The socio-economic effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Romania. A sociological perspective of the impact of the war on the attitudes and behaviors of Romanians

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Abstract:

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict that succeeded the Covid 19 pandemic marks the end of the winter of 2022 and continues to deepen Europe's socio-economic fragility. Whatever the causes of its outbreak, any armed conflict has immeasurable effects on combatants, allies and opponents alike. The leveraging of financial resources in support of one side and the triggering of pecuniary sanctions for the other implies an enormous consumption of resources with global economic effects. These are compounded by the social effects of war: loss of life, family segregation, refugee crisis, severe material deprivation, unemployment, crime, etc. As an EU and NATO member state, Romania has had to reinforce its responsibilities of support (as a geopolitical supporter of Ukraine) and responsibility towards war refugees. However, it is precisely Romania's geographical proximity to Ukraine that has led to an increase in the population's fear of the risks of conflict close to the country's borders, but also to a natural solidarity of citizens with its innocent victims: the civilian refugees in our country. Based on an analysis of the scientific literature, at the heart of which will be placed the theory of conflict (Marx, Weber, Lake, Woon, Sharma, etc.), the communication aims to present the results of a quantitative research carried out by means of an opinion survey based on a questionnaire administered to a nationally representative sample. The sociological study aims to identify Romanians' perceptions and fears regarding the social and economic effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war and to find out the mechanisms that determined the spontaneous cohesion that was at the basis of the mobilisation of citizens to support temporary refugee migrants or those seeking asylum in our country. of law specialization, aiming to highlight their views on the perspectives offered by migration.

Keywords: *war conflict, social and economic problems, human cohesion and solidarity, opinion survey.*

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About the war in Ukraine

The Russian-Ukrainian war has immeasurable effects not only on the belligerent states but also on global level, the negative social and economic effects being felt more and more deeply. We see "growing imbalances and instability of the global economic and political order" and a risk of "possible large-scale, if not global, conflicts" (Mariotti, 2022: 2). At this moment it seems that an agreement between the belligerent states cannot be concretized in order to end this war. The propaganda used by Russia and Ukraine is different (Anghel, 2022). Both Russia and Ukraine aim to change the states' positions in their favor, but also the thinking of the masses and the population. In short, both states are trying to scare, Ukraine to involve the states in the war and Russia to keep them out of the war. Ukraine's propaganda relies heavily on attracting the sympathy of the member states of the European Union and NATO, but also on involving the civilian population in the war, and Russia's more elaborate propaganda tries to erode the population's trust in the authorities, in NATO and the EU, and tries to convince the population that sustaining war is not the business of other nations.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on 8th of November 2022, there were 7.824.440 refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe (90% of them being women and children) and 4.460.847 refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe (UNHCR, 2022a). Most refugees have fled to neighboring countries, first of all Poland, but also significant numbers fled in Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and other countries in the region. Of the refugee population, some have continued onward to other European countries (UNHCR, 2022b).

According to Pascale Moreau, Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Ukraine Situation UNHCR: "The response to the refugee exodus from Ukraine has been characterized by unprecedented solidarity, collective action and clarity of purpose" (UNHCR, 2022c).

This war is very expensive. Humanitarian support actions for refugees but also for Ukrainians remaining in the country who urgently need help, requires massive funding both from Ukraine, from the refugee destination states and especially from international organizations (UN-IOM, UN-UNDP, UN-UNFPA, UN-UNHCR, UN-UNICEF, UN-WHO, UN-WOMEN). Thus, in November 2022, UNHCR reports 1.4 billion US\$ for their activities, UN reports 4.29 billion US\$ needed to ensure humanitarian assistance and protection to 11.5 million people across Ukraine, and 1.7 billion US\$ needed for regional refugee (UNHCR, 2022a).

Even more, in September 2022, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said that due to the inflation and energy supply shock stemming from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it is projected global economic growth to slow to 2.3 in 2023 and estimated that this war "will cost the global economy \$2.8 trillion in lost output by the end of 2023, and even more if a severe winter leads to energy rationing in Europe" (OECD, 2022).

The Standard Eurobarometer survey conducted in June-July 2022 (Directorate-General for Communication, 2022), "indicates strong support for the EU's response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine". The summer 2022 Eurobarometer, shows that citizens confirm "their strong support to EU's response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. When it comes EU actions, humanitarian support is the most approved

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(92%) followed by welcoming in the EU Ukrainians fleeing the war (90%). A percent of 78% of Europeans support economic sanctions imposed by the EU on the Russian government, companies and individuals. A 68 percent of the interviewees are in favour of financing of supply and delivery of military equipment to Ukraine” (European Commission, 2022).

Summer 2022 Standard Eurobarometer shows that the majority of EU citizens support investments in renewable energy and action to reduce the EU's dependency on Russian energy sources (European Commission, 2022).

An analysis made by the Chicago Council of Global Affairs think tank, shows that the Eastern Europeans are divided in relation to the war in Ukraine (The Epoch Times, Romania, 2022). Although the majority of European states, as well as other Western countries, have a firm position regarding the war in Ukraine, disapproving Russia's position, imposing economic sanctions on Russia and supporting Ukraine economically and with combat arms, the population of various European countries manifests different opinions regarding the aid granted to Ukraine and the punishment of Russia. These differences are most pronounced in the states of Eastern Europe, where national security considerations, economic interests and common historical elements influence a lot (The Chicago Council of Global Affairs, 2022).

Thus, the degree of support for sanctions on Russia across Europe varies a lot, ”with northern publics much more united in their support for sanctions than southern ones” (Ex: Poland – 93% and Bulgaria- 46%). Big differences appears also ”when these same countries are asked about the extent to which they would support financially supplying and delivering military equipment to Ukraine”. The difference in commitment is large, from Poland with 91% to Romania with 61%. In ”southeastern European countries, the percentage of people that agree with financial and military assistance is between 61 and 38 percent”. According to Globesec Poll, from March 2022, ”the northern countries of Eastern Europe are more willing to support Ukraine or punish Russia because they perceive Russia as more of a threat than their neighbors to the south do (Ex: Poland – 90% sense of threat, Bulgaria – 33% sense of threat) (The Chicago Council of Global Affairs, 2022).

Romania and the Russian-Ukrainian war

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war right on the border with Romania, has recently brought a series of economic and social problems for our country. As a result of the reduction or even interruption, in some areas, of the economic relations that Romania frequently and traditionally had with Russia and Ukraine, the economic effects can be felt today in our country. The sanctions imposed on Russia affect Romanian industry, businesses are closing, jobs are being lost. A significant increase in prices can be observed due to rising inflation, financial instability and the energy crisis. Romania is struggling to cope with the economic difficulties caused by the energy crisis. At the same time, there is an economic pressure but also a social pressure coming from the need for integration of Ukrainian refugees, which involves a series of aspects related to covering the needs of the refugees (accommodation, food, money, jobs, effective social integration, pressure on the institutions involved etc). At the same time, in the last period we find this war as being among the causes of emigration of Romanians (Ilie, 2020; Pricină, 2021; Grignoli, Serban, 2018), whether we find it identified as a direct cause, or whether we are talking about the economic effects caused by the war.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on November 2022, in Romania are 80,011 Ukrainian refugees, 83,428 Ukrainian refugees registered for temporary protection, 27,420 people have received cash assistance, 50,451 refugees provided with information and counselling in person or over the phone (UNHCR, 2022: 6; UNHCR Romania, 2022). The refugees in Romania are 50% women, 14% men, and 36% children. In Romania there are 12 Blue Dots set by UNHCR, UNICEF and their partners. The newest ones were inaugurated on 1st of September 2022 in Bucharest and on 31st of October, in Galati near the border with Moldova and Ukraine, to offer legal advice and counselling on integration (UNHCR partner CNRR), child-friendly spaces (UNICEF), and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and referrals (WHO) (UNHCR, 2022: 6).

The Romanian Office for Immigration has six Regional Centers for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers: in Bucharest, Galați, Giurgiu, Rădăuți, Șomcuta Mare and Timișoara. Also, the Emergency Transit Center operates, destined for temporary stay of the refugees in urgent need of evacuation from the asylum country. Besides the six Regional Centers for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers, at the same time, Romania has 39 mobile camps where up to 7,839 people could be accommodated (Porumbescu, 2019; Ilie, 2019 :155).

In Romania the majority of Ukrainian refugees live in private accommodations, including rented apartments and homes with host families. In Romania, "the government's so-called "50/20 program" partially offsets costs for locals hosting refugees—it provides RON50 (US\$10) per refugee per day for expenses and RON 20 (US\$4) per day for food". In August 2022, a number of "4,500 Ukrainians had registered in the national "Jobs for Ukraine" database and 6,431 Ukrainians had been offered jobs". (Refugees International, 2022).

The consequences of war on children are horrible and multifaceted (Lava, de Luca, Milan, Leroy, Ritz and de Winter, 2022; Niță and Ilie Goga, 2015). Unfortunately, the enrollment of Ukrainian children in schools in Romania is very poor. In September 2022, only "about 4,000 Ukrainian children were enrolled in school in Romania" (Refugees International, 2022).

The UN's inter-agency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) appealed for refugees in Romania for 239,858,526 \$. According to the UN Refugee Agency the total appeal was 71% funded as of September 23 (Refugees International, 2022).

In August 2022, the Romanian government announced Romania received a first installment of €39.1 million from the EU and said that the Interior Ministry had spent about €3.9 million on the response (Refugees International, 2022).

The report "Globsec Trends 2022. CEE amid the war in Ukraine", issued based on the analysis of a public opinion poll surveys carried out in March 2022 on a representative sample of the population (1000 persons from each country, using stratified multistage random sampling in the form of computer-assisted telephone interviewing) in nine countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, provides an overview of Central and Eastern Europeans' perceptions on key issues pertaining to foreign, defence and security policy (Globsec, 2022). According to this Report, Romanians considers in a proportion of 63% that Russia invaded Ukraine and is responsible for the conflict, 26% think that West provoked Russia and 6 % think that the reason for the war is "Ukraine that oppressed Russian speaking part of population" (Globsec, 2022: 52). Only 43 percent of Romanians agree with the following text: "By fighting against the Russian invasion, Ukraine is also

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fighting for democracy in Europe” (Globsec, 2022: 56). The majority of Romanians (58%) considers Ukraine to be an independent country, 25% considers Ukraine to be “a puppet of the West” and 9% considers Ukraine to be part of Russia. In a percent of 51, Romanians think that Ukraine should be a member of the EU, or NATO, or both and 40% think that Ukraine should be a neutral country.

Prior to the war in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin was one of the favorite leaders (Constantinescu 2016) in some Central and Eastern European countries, including Romania (Globsec, 2021, 2018, 2017). In 2022 only 16% of the Romanians view Vladimir Putin positively, compared to 2021, when 40% of Romanians had a positive opinion on the Russian leader.

58% of Romanians perceive Russia as a threat to our country. Furthermore, 34% believe that Russia will not stop in Ukraine, it will invade other European countries as well (Globsec, 2022: 62-63).

A percent of 73 of the Romanians think that their country should reduce their energy dependence on Russia. Also, 61% of Romanians agree with the statement: “EU countries should impose the strongest possible sanctions on Russia to stop it from waging further conflict even if it means the price of fuel or other products increase in my country” (Globsec, 2022: 64-65). But, even though Romanian society supports the international organizations and their government enforcing economic sanctions, 64% opposes NATO troops engaging in combat against Russia in Ukraine and only 23% of the Romanian respondents agreed with the fact that NATO countries should send their own troops to Ukraine to help them fight against Russian invasion.

In this context where propaganda greatly influences society's opinion about the war, a percentage of 66% of Romanians agreed with the statement that “websites and actors spreading disinformation about the war in Ukraine should be banned from social media” (Globsec, 2022: 67).

Being asked about the status that Ukraine should have in the current geopolitical context, a proportion of 13% of Romanians said that “Ukraine should become a member of the EU”, 11% said that “Ukraine should become a member of the NATO”, 27% said that “Ukraine should become a member of the EU and NATO”, 40% said that Ukraine should be a neutral country and 5% said that Ukraine should be in the Russian sphere of influence (Globsec, 2022: 69).

A sociological analysis: Perceptions and fears of Craiova's inhabitants about the economic and social effects of the war in Ukraine

In this section we present the main results of a questionnaire-based sociological survey conducted between 30.06.2022- 05.07.2022 in the municipality of Craiova, Romania.

The number of respondents in the exploratory sample was 272 inhabitants of Craiova municipality. The research subjects were selected in a random, probabilistic way.

The main objective of the present research is to identify the degree of anxiety and the projection of fears of the population regarding the effects of two major events: the pandemic generated by the Covid-19 virus and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Another objective concerns the identification of respondents' behaviour regarding the management of financial/material resources in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

At the same time, one of the objectives is to identify the perception of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Craiova on how the pandemic and post-pandemic period characterized by the Russian-Ukrainian war produces effects on the social sector.

Q1: How informed are you about the conflict situation between Ukraine and Russia?

Variants	Percent
Not at all informed	3.3%
Little informed	47.4%
Quite well informed	42.3%
DK/ NO	7%

Considering what the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has caused in our country and the upheavals that have taken place, we wanted to find out how informed people are, while at the same time being able to see how they feel about this war and easily see it on their faces. Thus, our respondents had the following answers: 7% said they don't know/don't answer, 42.3% answered that they are quite informed, 47.4% confirmed that they have little information and the remaining 3.3% said they are not informed at all.

Q2: Do you agree with Romania's economic and military support to Ukraine?

Variant	Percent
From	55.2%
No	29%
DK/ NA	15.8%

According to the answers to this question, 55.1% of the respondents gave a positive answer to the question whether our country would support Ukraine economically and militarily, 29% said that they would not support Ukraine for fear of worsening the economic situation and national security, and the remaining 15.8% of the respondents chose not to give a concrete answer on this issue. Although Romania is at a fragile point in many respects, military and economic support for Ukraine was viewed positively by a large proportion of respondents.

Q3: Given the prolonged conflict between Russia and Ukraine, to what extent do you think this will affect you?

Variant	Percent
To a very large extent	34.9%
To a large extent	26.1%
To some extent	32%
In small broom	2.9%
To a very small extent	1.1%
DK/ NA	7%

For Romanians, but also for the rest of the world, the fear of war has become an increasingly pressing issue. With the war in Ukraine unlikely to end soon, Romanians are becoming increasingly worried about the consequences of war and how they will be affected by it. Thus, 34.9% of respondents think they will be affected to a very great

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extent, 26.1% to a great extent, 32% say they will be affected to some extent, while 2.9% and 1.1% say they will be affected to a small or very small extent respectively.

Q4. Are you afraid that living standards in Romania will suffer because of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

VARIANT	PERCENT
From	79.8%
No	13.6%
DK/ NA	6.6%

It is true that, given the standard of living in Europe, Romania has not been placed in a very good place, and the crisis of the Russian-Ukrainian war may have consequences that will affect Romania on this level. This is a fear that the majority of respondents have, 79.8% to be precise, while 13.6% of them say they are not afraid that the standard of living in Romania will suffer as a result of the war. The remaining 6.6% of respondents choose to remain indifferent to this question.

Q5. To what extent do you agree with the financial blockades of Russian companies on the territory of Romania or Romanian companies doing business in Russia?

VARIANT	PERCENT
To a very large extent	37.1%
To a large extent	25.7%
To some extent	21%
To a small extent	7.4%
To a very small extent	
DK/ NA	5.9%

With regard to this question, which aims to obtain an assessment of the financial bottlenecks of Russian companies on the territory of Romania, we can point out that they were imposed because of the imbalances that were manifested in several branches of the national economy (trade, manufacturing industry, transport industry, etc.). Therefore, the answers given by the participants in the study were as follows: 37.1% said they agreed with these bottlenecks to a very large extent, to be completed by the percentage of 25.7%, where the respondents said they agreed to a large extent with this approach, also 21% said they agreed to some extent, 7.4% said they agreed to a small extent, 2.9% to a very small extent, and the remaining 5.9% of respondents said they did not know/do not answer.

Q7: Given the two events with major economic impact (the Sars-CoV2 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war), do you have fears about a possible economic crisis in Romania?

VARIANT	PERCENT
From	82.7%
No	10.7%
DK/ NA	6.6%

So far, the pandemic and the way it has been managed, plus the destabilisation

of the energy market and the war, have slowly led to an eventual economic crisis. The biggest problem is inflation, i.e. the devaluation of money in relation to goods and services on the market. Thus, when asked if they are afraid of a possible economic crisis in Romania, the vast majority of respondents answered that they are afraid, while 10.7% of them are not afraid of this situation. The remaining 6.6% of respondents are undecided or do not have enough information about this context.

Q8. Do you fear for the safety of your job or family members?

Variant	Percent
From	41.2%
No	49.6%
DK/ NA	9.2%

Fears of job security among the Roma are quite high amid the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. At a time when the economy is collapsing and jobs are being restructured, 41.2% of respondents admit to fearing for the job security of themselves and their family members. At the other end of the spectrum, almost half of respondents (49.6%) say they are not afraid of such an event, and 9.2% do not know, or have not thought about it before.

Q9. As a result of current events, accelerated price increases, have you changed your current spending behaviour?

Variant	Percent
Yes, I'm much more careful with my spending, I've started to cut back and save	40.4%
I'm trying to cut down a lot on the expenses I'm used to	11.4%
Yeah, I'm limiting myself to the bare necessities	15.4%
I haven't changed my daily shopping behavior, but I thought I would	16.9%
No, I don't think that's the case now	9.9%
Definitely not	3.3%
DK/ NA	2.6%

Rapidly rising prices were one of the negative effects the war had on the country's economy, so the way people used their resources changed. People had to mobilise quickly and find solutions to use material resources efficiently. Again, the results to the question "As a result of current events, accelerated price increases, have you changed your behaviour with regard to current expenditure?" were not at all unpredictable, thus the least chosen option was "definitely not" representing 3.3% of respondents.

The second least selected option was "No, I don't think that's the case now", which was chosen by about 10% of survey participants. The next possible answer "I try to reduce a lot of the spending I am used to" was chosen by 11.4% of respondents, about 17% of participants claim not to have changed their consumption habits at all, and 15.4% limit their spending of material resources to the bare necessities. The overwhelming majority of respondents chose the option "Yes, I am much more careful with my spending, I have started to reduce spending and save", with a percentage of over 40%.

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Q10: If you are considering cutting back, what categories of expenditure have you considered giving up or cutting back on?

Variant	Percent
Travel / excursions	22.4%
Real estate purchases/car purchases	21.3%
Outdoor activities	14.7%
Food	10.3%
Training/ education	1.8%
Something else	11%
DK/ NA	2.6%

Of the 84.1% of respondents who answered that they have reduced or are going to reduce spending, the majority chose to reduce spending on "travel/excursions" representing 22.4% of the total. Another area that people cut back on to reduce costs was real estate/car purchases, this option was chosen by 21.3% of participants, and, 14.7% chose "leisure activities". The training/education and food options accounted for approximately 12.1%.

Q10. From a financial point of view, what do you think has affected you more, the pandemic context or the Russian-Ukrainian war?

Variant	Percent
Pandemic SarsCov2	23.2%
Russian-Ukrainian conflict	12.5%
Both events	54.4%
DK/ NA	9.9%

Romania's situation is becoming more and more delicate, as over the years it has been increasingly affected economically. The beginning of 2020 will mark the start of a year with many material and human losses in Romania. A disastrous year, with many victims either affected by the virus that had taken over us, or affected by the economic crisis that our country had entered (Motoi, 2014). Many people sent into unemployment or technical unemployment, aid offered by the state for small and medium-sized businesses, but nevertheless Romania was under siege of fear and death that continued to increase its number from day to day. Now, the beginning of 2022 has kicked off a mild economic crisis amid the Russian-Ukrainian war. Romanians' daily lives are affected by the inflation rate that seems to have exploded. Romania's ties with Russia having been severely severed, it did not allow time to explore more affordable export opportunities, which led to the price of some food, fuel, gas, electricity and other items becoming more expensive. So, the curiosity was to ask what affected consumers more financially, and the answers were as follows: 54.4% chose Both, 23.2% chose "Pandemic context", 12.5% chose "Russian-Ukrainian conflict", and the remaining 9.9% did not want to answer or did not know.

Q11. What do you think about the way our country has been involved in supporting people who have chosen to leave Ukraine and take refuge in Romania?

Variant	Percent
I fully support the involvement of the Romanian state	26.5%
I support the involvement of the Romanian state, but the situation of needy Romanians must be taken into account	60.3%
I believe that the Romanian state should not have been so involved in supporting refugees	8.5%
DK/ NA	4.8%

Romania, a country that is always sunk in European prices, but whose income is below its standards, is the heroine of several thousand refugees, getting involved from the first signal of help from its neighbour Ukraine, which is always under attack, not being allowed to dress the wounds of its soldiers who are in the front line or to mourn its fallen soldiers and victims under the ruins of buildings bombed by Russian missiles. Romania has opened its arms and accepted Ukrainian refugees to pass through the country to another destination and if they want to stay. The people of the country are in solidarity with Ukraine, and the desire and commitment to help them is great. The civic spirit is at home, but apparently only for those outside our country, because when it comes to helping our own people, the state looks the other way and compares us to countries in the European Union. Thus, people's opinion is divided, 60.3% of them "I support the involvement of the Romanian state, but the situation of needy Romanians should also be taken into account", 26.5% "I fully support the involvement of the Romanian state", 8.5% "I think that the Romanian state should not have been so involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees".

Q12. Do you feel insecure lately, given the Ukrainian refugee crisis?

Variant	Percent
From	25..%
No	64.3%
Don't know/ No answer	10.3%

The Russian-Ukrainian war came when everyone least expected it and turned the lives of millions upside down. First and foremost, the Ukrainian people are the most affected by this crisis because they have been forced to abandon their possessions, family members, memories and all their life savings, trying to save themselves. They have chosen to leave their homeland and seek refuge in other countries. Fortunately, all European countries have mobilized and provided the necessary aid to refugees, but there have been and still are voices that claim that this refugee crisis makes them insecure in many ways.

This insecurity also arises from the association of the refugees of today with those of the past, most of whom came from the Middle East and who did not have clean intentions. But it must be understood that Ukrainians did not leave because of the precarious financial situation in their country, but to save their lives and those of their

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children. Many people said that they met refugees who owned expensive cars and did not look needy, so from their perspective they did not "deserve" a place to sleep or eat. It is understandable that people from host countries panic, because this situation is not comfortable, as if overnight, someone invaded your territory and personal space.

But for the most part, as the survey shows, more than 60% of those surveyed said they felt safe despite the large number of refugees flooding into Europe.

We note that the majority of respondents consider themselves "well" or "fairly well" informed about the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and more than 50% of Craiovians agree with the economic and military support to Ukraine and the protection offered to Ukrainian refugees. The majority of the population felt a major economic and social impact, both during the pandemic period and in the current context under the shadow of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. Many respondents are feeling the economic impact and fear a severe economic crisis, so they have started to reduce spending, or are planning to do so.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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