

**Leadership in Context of Followership:
the Cooperative Role in Addressing
the Global Problem of Climate Change**

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Abstract

The strict division between leaders and followers poses a false dichotomy and it is important to understand leadership in the context of followership where the parties involved engage in deliberation, negotiation and participation. In this paper, followership and leadership will be understood in terms of relationship between various actors. By concentrating on the global challenge of climate change the importance of followership will be highlighted through demonstrating the importance of analysing the interests of various actors followers, leaders and middle powers to facilitate cooperation. This assessment will draw upon the 21st century international relations theory which has experienced a transition in power dynamics. It will be argued that understanding the motivations and strategies of the 'following' parties and their interaction with the 'leading' counterparts is crucial in order to achieve a meaningful international cooperation to address climate change.

Key words: Climate Change, Followership, Leadership, Cooperation.

I. Introduction

Despite the prevalent use of the word, leadership is a term that is difficult to define. In its practical uses, the term often refers to stereotypical characteristics of a leader. Leader is someone who can pull the followers towards the desired direction through authority, charisma or persuasion. However, leadership and followership can be better appreciated as a process and relationship among various actors rather than a set of qualities assigned to a role. (Kohles 2012) Traditional literature on leadership has focused disproportionately on how those in leader positions may affect or influence the followers. Nonetheless, this preconception has increasingly come under fire as followers are appreciated for shaping leaders and contributing to a shared objective. Even in the international stage a new power dynamics has emerged which make the old notions of coercive, one-directional leadership outdated. Climate change politics is one of the areas where it can be demonstrated that leadership and followership are two sides of the same coin.

The shift in distribution of power and influence in the international stage is making it less likely

for few actors who act as leaders to exert sufficient amount of control so as to bring about a favored outcome. In fact, many actors traditionally classified as followers are beginning to gather clout through increasing leverage they have over international consensus and strengthening the legitimacy of collective agreements. Hence, I will argue that leadership and followership are interlocked concepts where all stakeholders should be active participants within their own leadership and followership contexts. Moreover, the global challenge of climate change will be explored and key leadership successes, limitations and future prospects for followership will be discussed.

II. Overview of a Global Challenge: the Climate Change Negotiations

Like many other global challenges the issue of climate change negotiations is multi-faceted and complex. It is a topic that creates many cleavages along various political and economic lines. As much as it is an environmental issue, climate change is a development issue for many states that prioritise growth using fossil fuels which is also closely tied to competition for sources of energy. In contrast, climate change poses a threat to economic prosperity and sometimes even existence of other nations. It is also an equity issue attempting to bridge the disparity in the carbon emissions per capita, historical emissions and capability to pay between industrialised and developing countries.

Although there is a consensus in the scientific circles about the imminent threat of global warming the policy response has been tentative. (Dryzek, Norgaard and Scholosberg 2013) This is partly due to policy myopia as the devastating impacts of climate change is likely affect the future generations whereas many world leaders are more concerned with immediate problems such as the global recession and domestic political situations. Yet, procrastination is highly undesirable as impacts of global warming are irreversible and potentially catastrophic which call for an urgent response based on intergenerational justice. Another obstacle is that a large scale transnational cooperation is needed which is challenging as compromise must be reached between many competing interests.

It was only in the 1960s when scientific consensus on global warming started to emerge but political movements were not properly mobilised till the 1980s beginning with the Villach Conference. (Paterson 1996, 25-36) Through a series of conferences, leaders of world's industrialised countries have publicly endorsed the need to address the problem of excessive carbon emissions.

The historical development of climate change negotiations can be summarised as below;

1. Start of negotiations and scientific understanding of the issue (from the 1950s): Many scientific organisations acting as intellectual leaders raised awareness of the problems of global warming and this was demonstrated in the Toronto Conference in 1988. An important product of this conference was the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) mainly consisting of scientific experts to produce regular reports on scientific data on global warming and assessments on environmental policies.

2. Agenda setting (1988-1990): This was the stage when various states started to get involved in the issue along with increasing public interest. Some 'green' OECD countries participated in agenda setting but the EU and US were the most influential with the EU leading the scene.
3. Rio Conference (1992): The main question on the table was whether or not to adopt a legally binding emissions target. Negotiations by the US and the UK meant there was no specific timetable or legally binding target but aimed at the stabilisation of greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 levels by the year 2000.
4. Kyoto Protocol (1997): The lead up to the negotiations saw the EU reaching some internal consensus on more commitment to cut emissions yet negotiations with developing countries and the US meant the product of the negotiation was a flexible mechanism that excluded joint participation from developing countries as well as the US. (Andresen 2013)
5. Post Kyoto Framework: Through Copenhagen (2009), Cancun (2010) and Durban (2011) the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius and funding for developing countries to adapt to climate change were raised but as they specified no date few firm promises were made. (Subramanian 2013)

This showed that despite the high level of interest in addressing the climate change, binding multilateral cooperation was rare which meant that many of the proposals were not successfully implemented into domestic policies.

III. The Stakeholders and Coalitions of the Climate Change Negotiations

One of the most prominent divisions between nation states regarding climate change is the one between industrialised and developing countries. The huge amount of cumulative carbon emissions from industrial revolution has been a main source of wealth of the current developed countries and these countries should be accountable for past emissions. Hence, the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' was upheld in the early stages of climate change negotiations in the Rio Earth Summit. Even until Kyoto, most developing countries were against the idea of binding carbon reduction commitment on the part of developing countries partly because they lacked the political will or the capacity to keep such promises whilst promoting economic growth. Thus, the main leader for multilateral cooperation were a handful of industrialised countries in particularly the EU and occasionally the US.

The UN Framework for Convention on Climate Change classified countries into these categories:

Annex-1: OECD countries and Economies in Transition which aimed to return to 1990 emission levels by 2000,

Annex-2: Only OECD countries that were to provide financial assistance to developing countries

Non-Annex-1: Mostly developing countries and member of the Group of 77 (G-77).

Nonetheless, it would be an oversimplification to divide the participants in international negotiations along economic lines when there are many other cleavages. Even the G-77 is a diverse collection of developing countries which can be divided into coalitions:

- Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): 43 low lying island states that advocate strong action as they are vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change.
- Least Developed Countries (LDC): Countries with high levels of poverty and lack of resources that are vulnerable to desertification.
- OPEC: Main petroleum exporting countries that tend to coordinate informally to oppose strong mitigation action.
- The EU: Political and economic union of 28 European states which attempts to maintain a unified stance despite different national circumstances. Views itself as an environmental leader supporting strong commitments and multilateral cooperation.
- Umbrella Group: A loose group of politically diverse states emphasising flexibility and cost effectiveness including a number of Annex-1 countries such as Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Iceland with relatively lower carbon emissions per capita and the counterparts with higher emissions such as the US, Australia, Canada and Russia. (Depledge 2005)

With these various actors onboard, climate change is a global challenge that can be better understood through followership in particular when analysing the motivations and strategies of actors in different coalitions.

IV. Evaluation of Leadership Approaches on Climate Change Negotiations and the Case for Followership

Leadership in international negotiations regarding climate change has been disappointing. Despite ambitious moves by the so-called leaders the results of negotiations were only piecemeal falling short of expectations considering the severity of the problem. The traditional understanding of leadership of placing significant value in economic and political power is insufficient in explaining the current climate.

Even for the professed leaders, there is inner conflict between national economic interest and commitment to a cleaner environment with the UK's Environmental Secretary, Nicolas Ridley, expressing worry about the climate fund impinging on individual nation's sovereignty. (Paterson 1996) In spite of the initial enthusiasm for a climate conference, the US government diverged from the rest

of the developed countries in 1990 in the White House Conference through raising scientific uncertainties of climate change. At the same time, the UN Economic Commission for Europe's conference on Sustainable Development in Norway saw many developed countries undertaking unilateral commitments to reduce carbon emissions though the US and UK were lukewarm in their response. (Paterson 1996).

On the other hand, participation of developing countries is a prerequisite to a successful climate change mitigation as their share of green house gas emissions is large and growing. In fact, four non-Annex 1 countries, namely, China, Brazil, India and Indonesia are major emitters and together account for more than 30% of world emissions. (Held, Roger and Nag 2013) Accordingly, more developing countries are taking an active role in addressing the issue. Some have taken unilateral commitments to implement mitigation strategies. For example, China has recently pledged to reduce its economy's carbon intensity by almost 50% from that in 2005 by 2020 and Brazil, South Africa and Mexico set their own target for reducing emissions before 2020. This trend was seen in the Copenhagen Accord in 2009 when various developing countries signed declarations of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) despite refusing to sign up to binding timetables and targets. (Held, Roger and Nag 2013)

The rise of followers has become more pronounced with power shifts in international relations. Power and leadership in International Relations are malleable concepts but the powerful tend to possess the ability to make another party do something that they would not otherwise do. (Fels 2012) There are also various ways of measuring power whether it be the size of the economy, military or its stock of resources. What is important is that power and influence are relational concepts that can be meaningful when compared with other agents. Currently, it is clear that there is no single state or a close coalition of states that can act as a dominant powerful leader in climate change negotiations. Power and influence have been disseminating to emerging economies and an absence of a single dominant leader means that the so-called 'middle powers' may hold the key.

These middle powers can be understood as secondary regional powers that "perform special functions due to their material capabilities and political willingness to engage in the political arena" (Fels 2012). Some countries identified as middle powers include South Korea, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam. In fact, Nolte presented a behavioural model arguing that leadership understood in the diplomatic arena may apply to these middle powers. (Fels 2012) This is because the middle powers may be able to affect the cost and benefit analysis of the great powers through engagement.

Moreover, other non Annex-1 countries with less prominence still cannot be left out of the equation due to the nature of climate change. Whatever deal is reached, it needs to be representative of parties involved especially the low-lying island nations and developing countries that had to bear the costs of global warming without reaping the benefits of industrialisation. Consideration for these

less powerful countries is crucial in asserting the legitimacy of an agreement. Hence, leadership cannot be complete without exploring the role of these various actors.

There has been a gradual change in the understanding of leadership in the literature. Analysis of different leadership styles including 'inclusive leadership' has taken place. (Wubbeke 2012) Not only do previous leading powers need the support of followers but rising leaders also need the backing of followers to rise to prominence against the existing power structure. Thus, acknowledgement of followers' interests is an important step to successful leadership. Recent literature has been going beyond followercentric approaches to leadership to followership which differs from the former as it is concerned not only with how followers view leaders but also how followers view themselves in relation to the leaders. (Kohles 2012) The unique facets of climate change mentioned above show that followership may be required for a more thorough understanding of the issue.

V. Exploring Different Leaders and Leadership Approaches

Acknowledging the importance of followership does not make followers the only focus, however. As leaders are key actors within the relationship framework, they cannot be downplayed. Furthermore, the organisation of international negotiations, especially climate change summits, is such that nations with resources and power have advantage in determining the outcome. In these conventions more than 150 participants come to raise a wide range of issues which are most important to them. This means that very little time may be reserved for marginal countries. Although some developing countries may have the unexpected resource through being a victim of a global warming induced harm, many developing countries have expressed difficulty in getting their points across and setting the agenda due to their lack of experience and small delegation size. (Depledge 2005) In contrast, Annex-1 countries may have more resources which is crucial in developing the agenda and relations with other delegates.

To date, leaders of climate change including the United States, United Kingdom and Germany have had important input in the emergence of international climate norms and translation of these norms into domestic and international policy in particularly in the application of the precautionary principle using market mechanisms. (Cass 2006) Some of their commitments were reactionary based on domestic political pressure but they practised various types of leadership. The US, for instance, presented power-based or structural leadership which depends on the ability to affect other's incentives to have them accept its own terms in the Kyoto Protocol.

In the Kyoto Protocol, Japan and the US used extensive coordination to bridge the gap between the European and American targets. (Cass 2006) Bridging the gap was not easy yet a compromise was reached where the US decided to increase its emissions commitment but the negotiating parties conceded to the demands by the US through expansion of types of gases that were to be reduced. It

can be pointed out that the influence of the US was outstanding and the source of most ideas in the Kyoto Protocol were similar to the US proposal such as the inclusion of flexible mechanisms. (Andresen 2013)

However, what was striking in the negotiations was that there was an atmosphere of competition rather than cooperation. The US was adamant that joint implementation where targets should be enforced on all members including developing countries should be part of the deal. This was aggressively opposed by developing countries in particularly China and India. However, backdoor manoeuvring saw a split up of G-77 and some proposals by developing countries were adopted. For instance, Brazil's 'Clean Development Mechanism' was adopted and the US secured hybrid joint participation of other developing countries such as Argentina in the aftermath of the protocol. Yet, the half-hearted commitment of the US and various loopholes made the Kyoto Protocol short of expectations. (Paterson 1996)

Therefore, climate change negotiations to combat global warming largely led by Western countries with opposition from leaders of G-77 resulted in a disappointing global pact. Despite the collateral efforts, the growth of green house gas (GHG) emissions from burning coal, oil and gas have accelerated. (Loh 2008, 32) This demand a better assessment of different types of leadership styles such as intellectual or directionary leadership where intellectual capital is produced to shape the perspectives of the bargaining parties as well as setting a good example. (Andresen 2013)

Although many developed countries were reluctant in taking active measures in combating climate change, others have taken a leading role including Norway. Like many other industrialised countries Norway's economic interests clashed with its aspiration to be a role model in international climate change negotiations. More than 70% of Norway's energy in 1990 came from hydroelectric power and its transport system relied on oil and it was a major exporter of oil and gas. Therefore, cutting CO₂ emissions would translate into a high marginal cost. Thus, although the Norwegian government put environmental concerns high on the agenda economic issues gained more attention from the 1990s.

Although its target emissions was scaled down in Rio Summit, Norway approached the international climate negotiations supporting the principles of broad participation and reasonable burden sharing. Its delegation was behind the transfer of resources to developing countries and has worked together with environmental organisations and developing countries to demonstrate the possibility of joint implementation of carbon reduction. For instance, it ran two pilot projects aimed at mitigation policies with the Global Environmental Facility, Mexico and Poland. This was to improve energy efficiency in Mexico and Poland respectively by introducing fluorescent lamps and changing coal-fired boiler to gas. (Andresen 2013)

The question arises to why Norway chose such measures to reduce carbon emissions. The

evaluation of environmental performance by the OECD stated that Norway would be able to achieve a greater reduction of CO₂ per unit of expenditure if the investment were made abroad rather than in Norway. (Andresen 2013) Hence, Norway's coordination with other developing countries was an effective strategy to contribute towards lowering carbon emission without endangering its key petroleum related industries. Norway's case shows the instance of leadership working hand in hand with participating follower countries. Developing countries through cooperation was obtaining useful technology to mitigate and adapt to climate change and Norway settled for the most efficient way to make a difference.

VI. Middle Powers: Potential Game Changers with a Leading Role

As mentioned above, middle powers are likely to have a larger role in determining the outcome by influencing the trend and direction of agenda setting. Many of these middle powers are economies in transition or previously developing countries such as the Asian Tigers like South Korea and Singapore. One could also classify new emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China into this category.

They are not only the world's major economies but also one of the highest GHG emitters and it is no surprise that their role in climate change negotiations is going to be significant. (Dryzek, Norgaard and Scholosberg 2013) During the 2008 climate talks in Ghana, some parties that were considered developing countries in the past have shown substantive initiatives. South Korea, for example, announced that it planned to set a binding target for emissions and volunteered to be the bridge between the developed and the developing world. In the case for more developed countries in Asia, their contribution to reduction of carbon emissions through development of green technology boosted the case for energy efficiency. Japan's Eco-Action Partnership in Asia to promote an 'Energy Efficient Community' has started a healthy competition for low-carbon development for countries such as Singapore, China, Taiwan and South Korea. (Loh 2008)

Once a sceptical climate laggard, China has timidly begun to engage in climate change issues. It issued its 'Renewable Energy Law' in 2006 to set a target to generate 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 and it is investing \$10 billion on alternative energy sources. This is in line with the trend of investing in alternative energy sources which was met with enthusiasm in India and Singapore through the adoption of a National Climate Change Strategy and energy efficiency plans. (Loh (1) 2008) Various factors ranging from international pressure, bargaining and interdependence of global economy may have induced such a result. Yet, it is evident that leading actors such as the EU's pressure is only a partial answer to bringing about active participation by the middle powers.

One of the most convincing analyses of emerging economies' followership seems to be the co-benefits approach. This is when climate change mitigation or adaptation measures go hand in hand

with national interests and efforts to highlight the points where the two are compatible can bring about multilateral cooperation. Figures showing benefits of reducing GHG emissions could act as a considerable incentive for many countries. For instance, China has been adopting environmentally friendly policies after realising that negative impacts of pollution and climate change can act as bottlenecks to economic growth. In particular, the country's high carbon intensity has been worrying the Communist Party as energy dependence may directly put economic stability and future prospects for growth at risk. Hence, the Chinese government is responding via increasing investment in renewable energy sources and efforts to stabilise carbon emissions by 2050. (Garnaut, Jotzo and Howes 2008)

Co-benefit strategies have been recommended in many Asian cities in order to make plans for sustainable development. Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) pointed out that many mega-cities located in coastal areas are vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather patterns which has facilitated quicker response to combat climate change. (Loh (1) 2008) Thus, appealing to the benefits of cooperation may be a long-run solution to encouraging the middle powers to become willing collaborators and acknowledge their significance in active followership and the leading actors would benefit by illuminating the benefits of cooperation to followers.

Previously, leaders of climate change negotiations have resorted diffusion of Western value system to persuade other countries. Such an effort by the EU was met with disgruntled responses from major players such as China and India. The weakness of EU's leadership first came from the internal divisions which presented an inconsistent face but also its limited capacities. Furthermore, imposing the western rationale for cooperation did not match the motivations of the emerging economies. An official in Brussels has been quoted saying "If you try to push China, it won't respond well. China is self-confident and is very careful not to be influenced by others". (Torney 2012) In the same vein, follower-centric approaches to leadership would promote awakening of Asian tigers to be persuaded by their own logic based on the co-benefits approach.

Another interesting quality of China is that its policies may have bearings in other parts of the world. In recent years, China has made substantial investment in sub-Saharan countries which has been a mixed blessing for the region. Some investment projects were met with local antagonism as many projects seemed to be focused on extraction of natural resources instead of transfer of sustainable development methods and technology. Although the Chinese government may have limited control over activities of private entrepreneurs its stance may affect the distribution of economic proceeds and whether some African countries can break free from resource curse. (Toulmin 2009) Therefore, co-benefits approach is not a panacea in facilitating cooperation as it may only be applicable to instances when the incentives of the state and the global aim coincide.

In addition, such an approach may not be suitable for countries such as Russia which may have net gains from climate change in the near future and is highly reliant on fossil fuel energy. In fact resource competition of these emerging powers demonstrate the huge influence middle powers can potentially wield in shaping the international attitude towards resources. Major middle powers' support for a shared fund for development of sustainable energy may help to offset the race for more resource extraction which can be coupled with violence. (Giddens 2009)

Nonetheless, the co-benefits approach can be useful when forming coalitions of like-minded people for a common purpose. In the Copenhagen Summit, the US sought to utilise the shared relationship among emerging economies when it negotiated almost exclusively with Brazil, China, India and South Africa excluding traditional partners such as Japan, Russia and the EU. (Falk 2012) This demonstrates that the US has resorted to soft power leadership in forming new coalitions to mobilise global consensus rather than to resort to ideological hegemony. Therefore, cost-benefit analysis is an important element in leadership and followership along with the role of middle powers.

VII. Followers: Learning to Play to their Strength

Involvement of developing countries, in particularly LCDs, in solving possible damages caused by climate change is crucial as they are more vulnerable to the changes and face higher costs to address the problem compared to developed countries. For instance, many African countries are worst affected areas through extreme weather although their per capita GHG emissions are one of the lowest. This had the unfortunate effect of undermining the prospects of the countries' development and potential growth. (Toulmin 2009) With some of the richest forests and water sources, protecting natural capital in these countries and directing a low-carbon development model are important in solving the North-South Divide and presenting a united front against climate change.

Problems facing these vulnerable countries may require leadership which needs to be sensitive to the demands and needs of the followers. Least Developed Countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have suffered from man-induced climate disasters in the form of monsoon flooding, droughts and glacial lake outbursts. These nations can be said to bear a disproportionate brunt of global warming but they have confronted the problem through establishing regional cooperation among co-riparian countries. Such an institutional adaptation response motivated action from the leaders in technology. For instance, the Netherlands supported Nepal's government to begin a project to drain the Tsho Rolpa glacial lake by three metres to reduce the risk of outburst floods which is part of Nepal's Tenth Plan to improve its ability to cope with natural disasters. (Murray and Mozaharul 2005) Therefore, followers' engagement and willingness to face the global challenge may lead to a two-way response with leaders offering to share the burden.

Yet, there is still limited participation from developing countries in global agreements and

vestiges of North-South Conflict remain. In particular, Indian government has expressed adamant opposition to compromising with other climate leaders such as the EU to commit to reducing GHG emissions. (Torney 2012) Despite attempts by the EU to persuade India through projection of their shared objective on sustainable development, economic prosperity was the top priority for Indian government. This shows that leaders need followers and an impasse would take place if the two parties fail to cooperate.

However, there are optimistic signs as revealed in 2007 Conference of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC) as well as in the Association of Southeast Asian Economies (ASEAN). There was a commitment to stabilise GHG in the long-run to prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. Moreover, island nations in the Pacific have mobilised together to strengthen their voice against the threat of rising sea levels. (Loh 2008) Although these were not in the form of a multilateral agreement with developed countries, regional cooperation may play a part in resolving the problem. Hence, followers standing up to the issue as activists not only helps to raise awareness of the issue but augments the impact of their commitment and targets as they can appeal to being representatives of an important aspect of climate change.

VIII. What is the Way Forward? : A New Framework for Addressing Climate Change

Some projections suggest that repetition of the business-as-usual with no mitigation actions would see 200% increase in carbon emissions by developing countries compared to levels in 1990. To avoid catastrophe and to guarantee the development opportunity of LCDs, industrialised countries must reduce their carbon emission by 270% by 2050. This would be the case unless revolutionary technological advances are to be made. (Subramanian 2013, 62) Whilst the US Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu, expressed that the key to effective response in US-China agreement is based on creativity of the market to provide the technological fixes, a compromise between industrialised and developing countries is urgent as there may be insufficient technological progress in the future. (Falk 2012)

There are various suggestions for how climate change negotiations should proceed from here. Some have criticised the neoliberalism espoused by Western countries (Muzio 2012) whereas some still emphasise the importance of developed countries' leadership. On the other hand, alternatives such as 'Greenprint for cooperation' were recommended for developing countries to engage in through constructing a new narrative and arithmetic. It is argued that greater role of should be played by the Dynamic Emerging Economies (DEEs) including China, India, Brazil and Indonesia based on a new leadership framework. (Subramanian 2013)

A transition in international leadership framework seems reasonable in order to adapt to the changing climate as well as the political situations. However, consideration for followers and leaders should be balanced and states should not be assigned fixed titles as either a leader or follower but

more care should be put in their respective roles in the complex web of international climate change negotiations. Low lying islands may play a leading part in mitigation strategies against rising sea levels whereas middle powers in Asia may champion the development of sustainable technology and alternative energy source. The leaders can also play their part in communicating the cause for action to developing countries based on the co-benefit analysis.

IX. Conclusion

In the sections above I have demonstrated that the issue of climate change is multi-faceted and require cooperation of many parties with various concerns and interests. In the past, Western countries have predominantly been the leader of climate change negotiations yet the result could be compared to a cup half-full. Countries previously thought as followers may fill this cup through becoming active participants.

Through the assessment of leaders, middle powers and followers within various leadership and followership framework it can be shown that followers can shape leaders' behaviours and bring about desired responses. Followers may also have the potential to become a leader of a critical issue within the climate change negotiation. I hope this paper has made a strong case for a two-way communication between leaders and followers. In the 21st century, the leaders need followers as much as followers need the leaders just as supply must be accompanied by demand for leadership. If leadership were understood in context of followership and the followers' roles are appreciated, the crises of global leadership in climate change may be alleviated.

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