Democracy and Peace in the Age of Globalization: Old Problems, New Challenges for Africa

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Abstract: This article considers the impact of globalization on peace and democracy, especially in Africa. Peace is essential for orderly life and democracy is the paramount political value of our epoch. Are democracy and globalization compatible? They can be under certain conditions. Can globalization guarantee peace? Yes, if it can help in addressing the problems of poverty. The Constitutive Act of African Union enjoins African leaders to promote and protect human and peoples' rights and to consolidate democratic institutions and culture. It also requires the promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent. The conclusion: Globalization must be controlled and global institutions democratized.

Résumé: Cet essai considère l'impact de la globalisation sur la paix et la démocratie, en particulier en Afrique. Le principe de paix est essentiel pour une vie ordonnée et la démocratie est une valeur politique d'une importance capitale à notre époque.

La démocratie et la globalisation sont-elles compatibles ? Elles peuvent l'être sous certaines conditions. La globalisation peut-elle garantir la paix ? Oui, si elle peut aider à diminuer les problèmes de pauvreté. L'Acte de Constitution de l'Union Africaine intime aux dirigeants Africains de promouvoir et de protéger les droits de l'homme et des peuples, et de consolider les institutions démocratiques et culturelles. Il implique également la promotion de la paix, la sécurité et de la stabilité sur le continent. En conclusion, la globalisation doit être contrôlée, et les institutions globales doivent être démocratisées.

Introduction

African countries have recently experienced a constitutional renaissance, unencumbered as they now are by the historical burden of colonial rule and by the pressures emanating from Cold War politics. This experience affecting Africa coincided with developments in Eastern Europe in the post-Soviet era, essentially involving democratic transition from Soviet style one-party autocracy. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 coincided with—some might even think that it caused—popular movements demanding democratic transition in much of Africa. And constitutional engineering became the principal method of achieving democracy.

As someone who teaches comparative constitutional law, and who has also been involved in constitution drafting and consulting, I am keenly aware of the place of constitutionalism in democratic transition; indeed, constitutionalism is the foundation of democracy. I will return to the subject of democracy later; and now a word on the companion concept of peace, the other subject of my address.

Peace has been a precious commodity throughout human history; so much so, that in many languages peace is a common form of greeting. In recent times, peace has been joined by democracy and other core values, to be incorporated in the constitutional system. It is therefore of interest to ask: what has been the impact of globalization on these two core values, especially in Africa, a continent plagued with conflict and dictatorial regimes?

Globalization's Source and Impact

For some years now, scholars and practitioners have been arguing about the meaning and impact of globalization. To some it is the salvation of humanity, holding the key to universal prosperity and peace. Others fault it as the source of the major problems of our time—as a disruptive force, exacerbating peoples' problems, causing environmental devastation, destroying native cultures, and widening the gap between rich and poor at the national level as well as globally.

It should be remembered that globalization is the product of a long historical process, spurred by the human urge to acquire more knowledge of

what lies beyond the known boundary, as well as by the will to expand and acquire more resources. Aided by science and technology—particularly in our times, with the extraordinary developments in the technology of communication—globalization extended to every part of the planet, potentially turning the world into a global village. Essentially concerned with the expansion of global commerce and culture, and driven by the powerful economies of the world, globalization has come to stay and seems to be irreversible.

In defense of globalization, it has been said that it opened up closed borders, enabling freer movement of capital, of people, and of goods and services, increasing the wealth of nations and enabling individuals and groups to get rich overnight. To cite a simple example from the world of sport, soccer has been globalized as a result of such freedom of movement, with some curious results. Senegalese soccer players, for example, who beat the French team some years ago, play in the French professional league. Having sharpened their skills there, they fly back to their native land to play as a national team; and then they go back to their teams in Europe to live a dream life. On the other hand, open borders also mean brain drain, a movement from South to North (i.e., Europe and America) that has enriched one side at the expense of the other. In terms of the free movement of capital across national boundaries and facilitating world trade, there has been a sea change, creating new languages to describe the process. *Outsourcing* is such new language which describes the flight of capital—of domestic manufacturing—abroad in search of cheap cost of production. Outsourcing has also increasingly included skilled and semiskilled jobs being done abroad that were previously done here in the United States, such as accounting and related services. The beneficiaries of outsourcing are countries like China and India with an abundance of cheap labor. This new trend has brought about a reordering in international trade, with China fast approaching the United States as a strong economy and using its economic strength to validate and advocate its political model. More on this later.

Democracy's Salience as Core Value

Clearly, globalization affects every aspect of the contemporary reality at all levels. Some may wonder, therefore, why I chose democracy and peace as the principal themes in my reflections on the impact of globalization with a focus on Africa. My answer is, first of all, that peace is an essential precondition for orderly life and development; and, second, that in the long march of the adventure of ideas, democracy is generally accepted as the paramount political value of our epoch. Democracy is in my view a necessary condition for peaceful interaction in national and international affairs, as well as for the fulfillment of the aims of other core values like human rights and social justice. As such it is the object of universal, popular aspiration. Its mobilizing power is undeniable, and humanity has not found a bet-

ter substitute as a governing principle. Even autocrats pay lip service to it. The question arises: are democracy and globalization compatible, and can globalization guarantee peace? I venture to answer this question by positing a conditional hypothesis—that globalization can guarantee peace if it can help in addressing the problems of poverty. A brief review of the first African experience of globalization in the form of European colonization will help elucidate the point. I will call the colonial experience "primitive globalization" for reasons that will become clear later.

Following the earlier contact during the mercantile era, and the devastating experience of the slave trade, Europe's advent to Africa occurred in a big way toward the end of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, European countries had divided up and occupied all of Africa, except Ethiopia and Liberia. The process of European colonization may be divided roughly into three phases. The first was the violent phase, in which armed with superior weapons, Europeans defeated and disarmed Africans and imposed their rule on them. The second was the phase of pacification, in which the military withdrew to the background and were replaced by civilian administrators, judges, and police, with Christian missionaries lending a helping hand in a "civilizing mission." The British poet and imperial ideologue Rudyard Kipling coined the phrase "the White Man's Burden" to describe what the French also called *mission civilisatrice.* The third and final phase may be called the period of commercialization. This represented the real motive of the colonial adventure, namely the exploitation of Africa's material and human resources for the benefit of European commerce and industry in the era of advanced capitalism.

Needless to say, there was no talk of democracy then; to the contrary, from the beginning to the end of the colonial enterprise, an autocratic government provided the needed security umbrella to the business of the exploitation of Africa's resources. Indeed, paradoxical as it may seem, Africans were made to pay taxes to help provide the security, including building prisons. Earlier, the Europeans had sought to dispense with traditional African legal institutions, as "savage law"; then they quickly realized that they could not do it; and in fact found it convenient to use traditional institutions to advance the colonial security and revenue imperatives.

One of the consequences of colonial rule—the primitive globalization—is the imposition of European-based state institutions on Africa. The colonial state was itself defined by artificially fixed boundaries cutting across ethnic lines and thus dividing peoples everywhere, which is one of the negative legacies of colonial rule with built-in problems of stability and obstacles to sustainable development. Within these artificially created nation-states, enclosing different ethnic groups, utilizing institutions modeled on European systems, African states have been trying to govern peoples whose institutions and modes of governance at the local level are totally different from those of the national state. Small wonder, then, that writers like the late Basil Davidson have observed that the crisis of African politics is the crisis of

its foreign imported institutions. It is worth reflecting on Basil Davidson's observation before dismissing it as outlandish, as some have done.

Technology and Democracy's "Enduring Promise"

The events of September 11, 2001, revealed an ugly side of globalization, or to be more exact, the misuse of some of its instrumentalities: namely, the misuse of the technology of transportation and communication. The terrorists who planned and carried out the attack on America using modern technology with incredible precision were almost universally condemned. At the same time, humanity has not yet confronted globalization's darker side, which involves subtler forms of violence affecting people's lives the world over. The September 11 attack brought home with blinding clarity the fact that addressing issues of poverty is important not only for security reasons, but also for moral ones. Osama Bin Laden, the spoilt "rich kid" who inspired the attacks, did not recruit his suicide bombers from the rank of other rich kids to do his destructive work. Most of them came from families who live in abject poverty. Poverty and unemployment of males between the ages of 18 and 30 are fertile breeding grounds for extremism. A crucial question facing humanity as a whole is: are the people who control the institutions of the global economy unable or unwilling to provide solutions for poverty? In short, is globalization to blame for much of what ails the world, or are the antiglobalization protestors at the annual meetings of the G-8 or G-20 misguided fringe radicals?

In this respect it is necessary to point out that there is a basic issue of contention concerning democracy and globalization in which the opponents of globalization claim that there is a glaring absence of democracy in international affairs, particularly in the governance of the multilateral organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. The U.N. Charter provides the democratic framework in the name of which former colonial peoples claimed and gained their independence. Yet its fulfillment remains a dream for much of humanity; even in the developed countries, deviation from the democratic path occurs all the time. Nevertheless, a deviation from the path does not diminish the value of the path, nor the goal at the end of it. I am talking about the democratic ideal and the value that comes with strivings for that ideal, with its two principal elements, that is to say, democracy as doctrine, and democracy as institutions. In doctrinal terms, the equality principle lies at the center, with mutual tolerance perhaps coming second. Democracy as institutions includes election of representatives in local and national bodies.

The question of what is democracy is relevant in our discussion of its place in the global order because it has occasioned controversy. The classical definition of democracy concerned its source and purpose, with the will of the people as source and the common good as purpose. In contemporary discourse on democracy, the prevailing view considers the proce-

dural aspect, rather than the substantive aspect, as the central feature. The procedural aspect concerns the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people. The late Samuel Huntington was an ardent advocate of this approach. But we may fairly ask: Does such a conception of democracy embrace other critical requirements for meaningful democratic government? Do elections, per se, constitute the only or even the main element of democracy? The answer surely must be no. As Jean Berthke Elshtain of the University of Chicago University has stated, "democracy is not and has never been primarily a means whereby popular will is tabulated and carried out, but, rather, a political world within which citizens negotiate, compromise, engage and hold themselves and those they choose to represent them accountable for action taken . . . " (Elshtain 1996). Elshtain then poses a haunting question: "have we lost this deliberative dimension of democracy?" And she concludes by asserting that democracy's enduring promise is "*that citizens can come to know a good in common that they cannot know alone*" (emphasis mine).

And herein lies one of the challenges of democracy in the age of globalization. Citizens can use technology to act individually as well as collectively to raise issues of common concern regarding the impact of global economic and cultural forces on their lives. The Internet has proven to be a potent force to achieve those ends. It can facilitate the mobilization of citizens so that they can know a good in common that they cannot know alone, to paraphrase Elshtain. In other words, technology can be used for democratic ends. It can also be used for undemocratic—indeed for horrific—ends by some powerful and uncaring market forces. I will come back to this point later.

Since the replacement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by the African Union, there has been some significant development in regard to democracy in Africa. Reflecting the emerging development of international law regarding the right to democratic governance, the Constitutive Act, which created the AU, enjoins the African leaders "to promote and protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and . . . ensure good governance and the rule of law" (Preamble). Thus the transition to democracy embodied in the individual constitutions of African states has been reinforced at the continental level following the creation of the African Union. The normative framework has been expanded, requiring African leaders to promote, sustain, and defend democratic rights of their peoples with an implied right of mutual obligations, as individual nations as well as collectively as a continental body, to sanction errant leaders. This implies the obligation to intervene in one another's internal affairs in the event of violation of fundamental rights, an obligation that was absent in the OAU Charter. However, needless to say, the onus lies on the people themselves to take active steps for the protection of their democratic rights, because so far African leaders have behaved as members of an exclusive club closing ranks to protect one another.

During the Cold War, African international politics was marked by a dependency relationship in which the developed nations like the United States and European countries like France and the United Kingdom used their economic and financial power to influence governments in Africa. Even where the United States gave support to democratization, its pro-democracy rhetoric were unevenly applied depending on the perceived importance of the African country. For example, the Clinton administration was quick to enforce comprehensive economic sanctions against the mini-state of Gambia when that country's military took power in a coup d'état in 1994, but it refused to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against the military dictatorship of Nigeria because it would have affected U.S. access to Nigerian oil. Economic interest as the principal foreign policy determinant trumps all other considerations every time. Nor is this peculiar to the United States. In Benin, for example, Soglo's election victory after that country's transition to democracy in 1991 led to the formation of an administration less dependent on France and more interested in promoting close foreign ties with the United States. For that reason, the French provided significant support to Soglo's authoritarian predecessor, Kereku, who emerged victorious in the 1996 elections. Commentators on the Benin story claim that in the subsequent move toward a more democratic politics in Benin, the strengthening of several competing institutional actors, most notably a vibrant national assembly, has contributed to growing pluralism in Beninois foreign policy (see Gordon & Gordon 2007:183–84).

The Primacy of Peace

The African Union's Constitutive Act to which I made reference earlier also contains provisions requiring the promotion of peace, security, and stability in the African continent. War and peace have been ever-present conditions of human existence. It is customary to consider peace as the normal and war as the abnormal human condition because most societies experience war as the aberrant event, disturbing normalcy in human relations. People need peace to concentrate on their work. It is, therefore, not inappropriate to treat the subject of war and peace in connection with a discussion of globalization and democracy. There is an inexorable logic: peace is a precondition for trade, and trade is the lifeblood of globalization. A discussion of war and peace in relation to democratic development is also relevant simply because conflict situations draw resources away from all forms of development, including democratic development.

War and ways of resolving it have engaged humanity since the dawn of history. Even as they lived in peace, men constantly thought of war, as illustrated by the Latin saying, *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace prepare for war). In fact, *pax*, the Latin word for peace, is related to *pact*, agreement, as in *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements or treaties must be observed). The idea behind this maxim underlies the normative framework of inter-

national relations, a framework that supposedly binds nations to a common approach toward peace. Peace, as the desired condition of normalcy, is a universal value and, as such, it is or should be of universal concern. To quote a famous dictum of the French sociologist Pierre Burdieu, "il faut travailler a universalizer les conditions d'acces a l'universel" (we must work to universalize the conditions of access to the universal). The condition for peace anywhere is the assurance of peace everywhere, a point expressed by the old maxim of international law that peace is indivisible. Simply put, this means that peace in one corner of the world may be affected by war in other parts. In short, universal peace is a condition for the smooth operation of the global order. The defunct League of Nations, the brainchild of Woodrow Wilson, created a framework for collective security—a sort of precursor to globalized security. It did not work because there was no universal commitment and no superpower to enforce it. The United Nations, the product of World War II, seems to have fared better; but whether it can ever become a universal enforcer of peace is still an open question.

Historically, different empires have approached the issues of peace and international relations differently. Ancient Rome's *Pax Romana* was peace imposed by the legions of the imperium. During much of the mercantile era, *Pax Britannica* imposed British policy, making sure that raw materials were drawn from all over the world and made available to British manufacturers, whose products dominated the world market. And British shipping, under the protection of the British navy, dominated world trade. By contrast, in today's *Pax Americana*, which is one way of describing the post–World War II era, the uninterrupted flow of commerce—the basis of the global economic order—does not need the protection of a mighty army or navy. Instead, what we may call the sovereign flow of commerce is ensured through bilateral and multilateral trade pacts or unwritten conventions and the agency of the institutions of the global economic, financial, and legal order—the World Trade Organization, the IMF and the World Bank.

Whether this global order—this *Pax Americana*—has led to better peace among nations and within nations is debatable. What is beyond question is that powerful nations like the United States, even as they pay lip service to free trade, do engage in restrictive trade practices, as witness the U.S. government's imposition of protective tariffs on steel imports to protect its inefficient and faltering steel industry; and more recently on Chinese-made tires.

As for peace within nations, civil wars have grown more numerous and longer lasting, thus drawing the attention and resources of the world community. As wars last longer, more and more countries get embroiled in them. An example of this is the continuing war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the involvement of neighboring countries like Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Angola. A little known dirty secret in the Congo story is the plunder of diamond and other valuable minerals by the armies of these nations. Meanwhile the Congolese live in fear and poverty

and the Congolese army is too weak for the State to extend its national fiat beyond Kinshasa and its environs to protect vulnerable populations in eastern Congo, where systematic rapes have been common. There is a crying need for the role of the governments of neighboring countries as well as that of foreign companies in these acts of plunder to be the subject of investigation, just as the genocide in Rwanda was.

Another point worth noting is that the trend toward proliferation of conflicts becomes self-sustaining because war breeds the conditions that produce more conflict. A cycle of violence thus becomes endemic. Sierra Leone was a good example of this trend. Space will not allow me to examine the causes of these conflicts in any detail, but let me mention some frightful facts in this connection. First, in the last decade alone, more than 12 million Africans have lost their lives in conflicts of one sort or another. Second, about 90 percent of the victims of war are civilians. Third, arms are easier to obtain than food in some of these countries. Fourth, arms deals between governments and private arms merchants are widespread in Africa, despite the declaration made against the practice by the international community. In fact, Africa is the largest market for arms. A continent reeling from poverty, poor health, and weak educational structures can ill afford to be subjected to such a predicament. Yet with the exception of Lesotho and Botswana, all African countries spend more on defense and defense-related projects than on health.

Africa has been described as the final frontier of global capitalism's incessant search for more dominion. Today's global market is the inheritor of the wrenching experience of colonial rule. The continent is now facing another challenge: how to benefit from the global economy that history has condemned it to be a part of. The challenge includes dealing with new emerging economies and the potential of large investment in infrastructure and trade. It is the task of theory and scholarly endeavor to analyze the nature and extent of the consequences of the global connection, sorting out the negative from the positive, and to map out strategies for attenuating the negative effects and reinforcing the positive. Whether the Chinese and Indians will behave differently from the Americans and Europeans remains to be seen. The available evidence seems to support the presumption that national interest prevails over other considerations, which means that they will not. A more pertinent question is how African leaders can work out a strategy of development in relation with these emerging economies, in terms of trade and investment that can benefit Africa.

This point is very much connected to the challenges of democracy in the age of globalization. A democratic system with an aroused and organized public would force governments to work out a strategy and act in a manner that is in consonance with the interests of the public. It is reasonable to assume on the basis of past experience that corruption can be checked, if not completely eliminated, with the advent of vigorous democracy. The postcolonial reality of Africa, which in broad outline was defined by the

colonial experience, is characterized by a state–society divide in which the government inherited the state institutions more or less unchanged from the colonial government. And, with notable exceptions, African governments favored a strong executive dominating the other branches of government, building security organs—the army and police—and taking a lion's share of financial resources. The earlier decades of postindependence were marked, for the most part, by the politics of domination and exclusion, with one-party rule generally based on a major ethnic group or a coalition of ethnic groups. Far from favoring the promotion of democracy and stability, this led to dissention and instability, even revolt.

However, at the local (village) level, life continued as before. Village meetings and the traditional laws and institutions that settle disputes and regulate public life are practically the same as when the European colonizers found them during the colonial scramble for Africa. At its best, this was direct democracy, with villagers taking control of their lives, by and large. When not completely captured by the one-party elites, such village democracy represented self-rule, albeit often lacking resources. In constitutional terms, this requires more devolution of power from the center to the periphery.

Globalization, Trade, and Sustainable Development

I made reference to the darker side of globalization. This is evident in world trade; trade, as the agent of economic integration, involves unequal exchange, or unfair terms of trade between the powerful North and the weaker South. It also involves exploitation of cheap labor and repressive national legislation targeted at labor unions, which denies working people the power to bargain for fair wages and better working conditions. Politically, economic integration through trade and investment will also lead eventually to the decline of national sovereignty. Corporations with global reach exert more influence, weakening the power of governments to act autonomously. And the guardians of the dominant economic order have, for over two decades, enforced neoliberal economic policies requiring governments to privatize government-owned enterprises and discouraging investment on infrastructure.

The ideology driving global economic and trade policy is based on premises concerning how markets work that lately have been under severe criticism. According to the economist and Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, globalization itself has been governed in ways that are undemocratic and have been disadvantageous to developing countries, especially the poor within these countries. Stiglitz contends that the adverse effects of IMF-ordained liberalization of financial and capital markets have been seen in several countries, such as Argentina and the Asian countries, as the 1997 financial crisis demonstrated. According to him, such policies have destabilized developing countries, leaving them prey to hot money pouring in and

fueling speculative real estate booms. Just as suddenly, as investor sentiment changes, the money is pulled out, leaving in its wake economic devastation. There is an implied assumption that democracy by itself does not provide sufficient discipline, in the thinking of the IMF. Stiglitz claims that if one is to have an outsider as disciplinarian, one should choose a good disciplinarian who knows what is good for growth and who shares one's values. The IMF, according to him, does not know what is good for growth and does not believe in democratic values.

The role of scholars as well as that of policymakers is to probe whether and to what extent global economic integration can lead to general welfare as it did in the case of some Asian countries. In this respect, the concept of sustainable development provides a useful framework. Embracing two seemingly contradictory goals—economic development and environmental conservation—sustainable development proceeds from the assumption that economic growth, in terms of the quantity production of goods and services, is not synonymous with development, which is economic growth plus something else. This something else includes the quality of life associated with a healthy environment as well as fulfillment of the cultural aspirations, or preservation of the best of the existing culture of a given community. The emergence of the environmental movement provided an organizing principle that prompted a refinement of the meaning of development. This movement challenged the global problems posed by mindless growth, driven by profit motive, in utter disregard of the damage to the environment and often to people's health and general welfare caused by such growth. In this respect the decision of the Nobel Committee to award the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 to the Kenyan environmental and human rights activist Wangari Maathai represents a milestone in the global struggle for sustainable development.

Sustainable development, as an organizing idea, goes further than what the earlier challenges of the environmental movement had envisaged. It addresses the deepening global environmental crisis as well as the increasing social and economic imbalance that divides the world. It analyzes the underlying political and economic structures causing environmental degradation—multinational corporations organizing the logging of old-growth forests, for example, or automobile companies lobbying for more roads and lower pollution standards.

In 1992, at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, governments agreed on sustainable development as the leading concept to guide development policy. Two related facts must be noted in this connection. First is the exponential growth of the world's population and that most people live in poverty. Second, the share of the planet's resources being used by the affluent minority is also growing. The effect of these facts is driving forces of environmental degradation. The sustainable development approach suggests a solution to this double crisis by offering a principle summed up in the famous sentence of the "Brundtland Report" (2001):

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Unfortunately, despite notable achievement of Rio, its objective of sustainable development still remains just a rallying cry, if not an empty slogan. The powerful global economic forces have not yet been successfully challenged to mend their ways and behave in accordance with the requirements of Rio and other international treaties. The United States, for one, has yet to sign the Kyoto treaty.

Conclusion

I would like to end by a brief recapitulation of the challenges facing us in this age of globalization and what needs to be done.

First, the forces driving globalization must be tamed if humanity and the precious gift we call Earth are to continue in peace and to provide a decent life for all peoples. Things cannot continue the way they are—as business as usual.

Second, we must preserve protect and promote the United Nations and keep building on its core values like peace and democracy, and to those ends strengthen its institutions. It is not perfect, but it is the only institution that stands between order and chaos, between the rule of law and jungle justice.

Third, we need a democratic challenge, a demand for countervailing democratic checks to ensure that global institutions like the IMF and the World Bank serve the general interest.

Fourth, the unfair trade and the agenda of market fundamentalism set by the special interests in the North must be challenged. In this respect, the governments of the emerging economies—particularly China, India, and Brazil—should lead the way to help reorient global relations and economic development in a direction that will be more just and sustainable.

Finally, turning more specifically to Africa, we need to review critically the record of the postcolonial state. Nation-building, the guiding ideology of the postcolonial state, can be achieved only with the creation of a political framework and social environment that ensures the participation of all citizens. Democracy, political inclusion, and equitable distribution of resources are the key ingredients of a successful national policy. In other words, the problem of nation-building is linked to the problems of democracy and sustainable development, and those who control the globalizing agenda need to take heed of this. And in view of the major role that China's economic power is expected to play, the question becomes: Will China impose it worldview in political terms on the strength of its economic success? More pertinently, will African governments be tempted to abandon democratic accountability? If so, will their people let them get away with it? These are questions worthy of the attention of scholars and practitioners in the years ahead.

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