



The Political Economy of Subsidies: Measuring the Socio-Economic Impact of Removing Fuel Subsidies and Accelerating Electric Vehicles on National Stability

Rudianto^{1*}, Indria Sukma Sektiyaningsih², Rochayati Febriarhamadini³,
Hardianawati⁴

Institut Bisnis dan Multimedia Asmi, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Rudianto; rudianto@ibmasmi.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary structural shift from a fossil-based energy regime, which suffers from path-dependency, to a green socio-technical order creates a crucial political-economic dilemma for developing countries. This study aims to dissect the socio-economic impacts of fuel subsidy rationalization policies running simultaneously with the acceleration of electric vehicle adoption in Indonesia, as well as to analyze how the intersection of these two policies affects national stability and social justice. Using a critical political economy approach, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review method combined with Contemporary Content Analysis of reputable scientific literature and public policy documents from 2000–2026. The findings identify a sharp distributive injustice in the architecture of the energy transition. The lower-class society (grassroots) is forced to bear the direct burden of supply-side inflation and the surge in logistics costs due to the removal of fuel subsidies, while the benefits of green techno-ecology fiscal incentives are unevenly enjoyed by the urban bourgeoisie because of the high upfront cost of electric vehicle (EV) units and the exclusivity of charging infrastructure. This socio-economic friction creates structural tension and sociological deprivation that could trigger horizontal polarization and social resistance, reducing national security stability. Therefore, the government needs to redirect green incentives towards mass public transport electrification and build adaptive social safety valves through inclusive procedural justice

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of structural transformation from a fossil fuel-based energy regime to a green techno-ecology have shifted from being just an ecological discourse to a crucial political-economic imperative for the resilience of developing countries. A Fossil Fuel-Based Energy Regime is a global or national system where all infrastructure, economy, regulations, social habits, and even political policies are heavily dependent on and centered around fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas). Dismantling this 'regime' is really tough because the path is already locked in (path-dependency). All the industries, gas stations, power plants, and even our lifestyle have been built to rely on fossil fuels for more than a century. "Green techno-ecology" is an integrative concept that combines two main dimensions in modern development: Technology (Techno) and Environmental Sustainability (Ecology). Literally, the term refers to a paradigm or arrangement where technological innovation no longer harms nature, but is designed to work in harmony with ecological systems for environmental sustainability. This concept is used to describe a shift in civilization. We are moving from destructive technology (internal combustion engines/fossil fuels) towards eco-friendly technology ecosystems (batteries, renewable energy, and low-emission transportation). The Green Socio-Technical Regime is the opposite of the fossil energy regime, meaning a new order where regulations, infrastructure, and societal culture are already based on eco-friendly technology.

Amid global commodity price fluctuations and the demands of post-latest climate agreement decarbonization targets, managing the national budget is forced to be adaptive through fiscal consolidation policies. One of the most controversial yet urgent instruments is the rationalization, reduction, or even elimination of fuel subsidies (Rentschler et al., 2023). In theory, removing fossil fuel subsidies is projected to be able to restructure the country's fiscal space for more productive development allocation. However, in the empirical reality of developing countries like Indonesia, energy is not just a market commodity, but also a social intervention tool that ties political stability and domestic purchasing power. The complexity of this policy escalates when the government simultaneously builds the energy transition framework by accelerating the adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs) as a long-term strategic substitute. Shifting the budget load from fossil fuel consumption incentives to green productive stimuli creates a massive political-economic paradox. On one hand, removing fuel subsidies triggers a domino effect, leading to supply-side inflation, higher logistics costs, and an instant drop in real income for the lower- to middle-class. On the other hand, the current EV technology ecosystem is still quite exclusive; price interventions, limited charging infrastructure, and high initial capital mean this green mode of transport is only accessible to the upper-class segment (Sovacool et al., 2021). This socio-economic friction creates a perception of structural inequality and distributive injustice. When grassroots communities are forced to bear the direct burden of rising fuel prices while green fiscal incentives are allocated to relatively well-off EV industries and consumers, the political legitimacy of the state is tested. This sense of injustice has a high potential to turn market distortions into social unrest, mass protests, and horizontal political

polarization that directly undermine national resilience and stability (Heffron & McCauley, 2017). Therefore, gauging the reciprocal relationship between energy fiscal policies, green technology penetration, and social conflict management becomes crucial. *Here, 'grassroots' is used as a sociological metaphor referring to the lowest layers in social, economic, and political structures.

Even though the literature on the energy transition is growing rapidly, a look at contemporary studies shows there are significant analytical limitations. So far, the academic literature is split into two big, fragmented camps. The first camp is dominated by purely econometric approaches that measure the macroeconomic impact of energy price reforms on GDP and poverty indexes without taking into account the society's defensive socio-political variables. The second camp focuses on technology readiness, consumer behavior, and the management of the EV industry supply chain in a technocratic way. Very few studies integrate both of these policy landscapes into a single comprehensive political economy analysis model, especially those that examine how the intersection (nexus) of these policies affects national security stability. There is a gap in the literature regarding how a country's conflict mitigation mechanisms and political communication strategies minimize the risk of structural instability when these two disruptive policies are implemented simultaneously. This research offers novelty. The novelty of this study lies in integrating three dimensions of analysis: fuel subsidy reform, the acceleration of electric vehicles, and national stability, within a single political economy framework based on structural conflict theory. This study not only analyzes the socio-economic impacts of energy transition policies but also explains how the unequal distribution of policy benefits and burdens can affect government legitimacy, trigger potential social conflicts, and ultimately impact national stability. The resulting conceptual model provides a new perspective for understanding the relationship between energy transition and national stability, which has been relatively limited in previous studies, especially in the context of developing countries like Indonesia. Explicitly, this research aims to analyze the socio-economic impact of the fuel subsidy removal policy; evaluate structural barriers and distributive fairness in accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles; and develop an integrative political-economic mitigation model to maintain national stability amid energy transition disruptions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grand Theory: Contemporary Political Economic Theory (The Political Economy of Energy Transition)

The analysis in this research is guided by the Grand Theory of Contemporary Political Economy, particularly the combination of Public Choice Theory and Neo-Gramscian State Theory in energy governance (Goldthau et al., 2018). This theory emphasizes that energy policy, including the introduction or removal of subsidies, is a battleground of power where the state does not always act as a neutral actor pursuing market efficiency. The state is under constant pressure from three main elements: the demands of capital accumulation (industry groups), maintaining political legitimacy (constituents/voters), and

international commitments (global decarbonization). The policy of removing fuel subsidies reflects global fiscal pressure, while maintaining subsidies is often a regime defense strategy to avoid political unrest. This theory serves as the main analytical lens to dissect the motives behind synchronizing fossil and green fiscal policies.

Middle-Range Theory: Energy Justice Theory

To bridge the dynamics of political economy with social realities at the micro level, Middle-Range Theory is used in the form of Energy Justice Theory, developed by Sovacool et al. (2021) and Heffron and McCauley (2017). This theory evaluates energy transition policies through three operational lenses:

- 1) Distributive Justice: Criticizes the allocation of economic burdens and benefits. A policy is considered distributively unfair if vulnerable groups bear the highest economic consequences of the removal of fuel subsidies, while the beneficiaries of EV acceleration incentives are predominantly urban bourgeoisie.
- 2) Procedural Justice: Assesses the extent of involvement of the community, transportation unions, and MSMEs in the formulation of the national energy transition roadmap before the policy is enacted.
- 3) Recognition Justice: Requires the state to identify and protect the rights of social groups most vulnerable to economic deprivation due to energy sector inflation.

National Stability Theory and Structural Conflict

To analyze the dependent variable of national resilience, this research integrates Dahrendorf's Structural Conflict Theory. This theory states that radical and sudden structural changes in meeting basic economic needs, without the provision of an inclusive social safety net, will trigger structural tension between state authorities and society. If this tension accumulates and political mobilization occurs, it can escalate into open conflict, mass strikes, and domestic security instability that threatens national resilience.

State of the Art (SOTA)

Tabel 1. State of the Art (SOTA)

| Researcher | Research Focus | Method | Key Findings | Similarities and Differences with This Research |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Muttitt et al. (2021), <i>Energy Research & Social Science</i> | Energy justice and energy transition financing in Indonesia | Qualitative | The energy transition needs to consider social fairness so it doesn't widen the economic gap in society. | Similarity: talks about energy justice. Difference: that research focuses on rural electrification and clean energy financing, while this study integrates fuel subsidy reform, electric vehicles, and national stability. |

| Researcher | Research Focus | Method | Key Findings | Similarities and Differences with This Research |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ichsan, Lockwood, & Ramadhani (2022) , <i>The Extractive Industries and Society</i> | Fuel subsidy reform and the energy subsidy regime in Indonesia | Policy study | The biggest obstacle to subsidy reform isn't just the fiscal aspect, but also the political and institutional dependence on the energy subsidy system. | Similarity: studying fuel subsidy reform. Difference: previous research didn't link subsidy reform to electric vehicle policies or the implications for socio-political stability. |
| Sokołowski et al. (2022) , <i>Energy Policy</i> | Evaluating the failure of Indonesia's energy subsidy policy using the JUST Framework | Mixed methods | Energy subsidy reforms should be paired with fair governance so they don't hold back the national energy transition. | Similarity: discusses energy subsidy policies and energy justice. Difference: this study expands the analysis to the political economy dimension, distribution of electric vehicle benefits, and social conflict risks. |
| Maulana & Kurniawan (2024) , <i>Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik</i> | Electric vehicle subsidy policies in Indonesia | Qualitative | Electric vehicle incentive policies are influenced by the interaction between the government, industry players, and investment interests in the energy transition agenda. | Similarity: discussing electric vehicle policies. Difference: the study doesn't link EV incentives with the policy of phasing out fuel subsidies and its impact on national resilience. |
| Sutrisno et al. (2025) , <i>Energy Research & Social Science</i> | Indonesia's low-carbon energy transition strategy | System Dynamics | The success of the energy transition requires a mix of fiscal policies, renewable energy development, and gradually speeding up the | Similarity: discusses energy transition and electric vehicles. Difference: that research focuses on energy system modeling, while this one emphasizes socio-economic |

| Researcher | Research Focus | Method | Key Findings | Similarities and Differences with This Research |
|------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| | | | adoption of electric vehicles. | impacts, policy legitimacy, and national stability. |

Based on the SOTA map above, this research fills the integrative gap by positioning the policy of removing fuel subsidies (as a burden) and the acceleration of EVs (as a long-term solution) on the same political-economic scale, in order to see the projected impact comprehensively on national resilience and stability.

METHODOLOGY

Research Type and Approach

This research was designed as a qualitative study using a Systematic Literature Review combined with Contemporary Content Analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The approach adopted was critical political economy (Goldthau et al., 2018). This approach was deliberately chosen because the primary focus of the research is not simply to measure macroeconomic indicators in isolation, but rather to unravel the nexus of interests, power relations, and procedural justice dynamics behind energy structural adjustment. Through this qualitative literature design, researchers can extract in-depth meaning, conceptualize patterns of sociopolitical resistance among grassroots communities, and formulate policy models that cannot be reached through linear statistical modeling (Miles et al., 2020).

Data Sources and Types

This research uses secondary qualitative data obtained through library research. Secondary data was selected because it provides comprehensive information on energy subsidy policies, the transition to electric vehicles, and their implications for socio-economic conditions and national stability. In qualitative research, secondary data is a relevant source of information for understanding a phenomenon through the analysis of various scientific documents, official reports, and existing publications (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Miles et al., 2020). To maintain data quality and credibility, this study utilized sources that met the criteria of relevance, validity, and currency. All data was classified into three groups as follows:

Reputable Scientific Articles; Primary data was obtained from articles published in reputable international journals indexed by Scopus, national journals accredited by SINTA, and other journals. Articles were selected based on their relevance to the research topics, namely fuel subsidy reform, energy transition, electric vehicles, political economy, and national stability.

Academic Reference Books; This study also utilized academic books as a conceptual and theoretical foundation. The selected books are publications from reputable academic publishers, both international and national, that have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and discuss political economy

theory, qualitative research methods, structural conflict, energy transition, and public policy.

Policy Documents and Official Reports; To complement the empirical analysis, this study utilizes various policy documents, statistical reports, and official publications issued by government agencies and international organizations. These documents include laws and regulations, fiscal reports, energy statistics, and reports on the development of electric vehicles issued by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, and other relevant organizations. The use of these official documents aims to strengthen the validity of the analysis through factual and accountable data.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique was implemented through the Systematic Documentation Protocol, adapting the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) principles adapted for qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The literature data collection process was conducted through three mechanistic stages:

- a. Keyword Mining Phase: Utilizing academic digital search engines (such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar).
- b. Screening Phase: Strictly applying inclusion criteria. Eligible documents must have been published between 2000 and 2026, written in English or Indonesian, have a DOI/ISBN number, and substantively examine the correlation between energy fiscal policy and conflict management or state stability. Popular opinion articles, non-peer-reviewed proceedings, and research published before 2000 were automatically excluded.
- c. Content Verification Phase: Thoroughly read the abstracts, findings, and conclusions of the literature that passed the screening process to ensure the extracted data were relevant to the variables of political economy, energy justice, and national stability.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected textual and conceptual data were analyzed using the Interactive Thematic Analysis Model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). This analysis process proceeded cyclically through three main stages:

- 1) Data Condensation: The researcher selected, focused, simplified, and transformed raw data from journals and books. Statements, arguments, and statistical data from the literature were coded based on specific themes: (a) political economic determinants of fuel subsidy removal; (b) distributive inequality in the acceleration of EVs; and (c) shifting patterns of national stability post-transition.
- 2) Data Display: Organizing the condensed data into a taxonomy matrix, a political economy causality flowchart, and a State of the Art (SOTA) table to visualize the novelty of this research within existing scientific conventions.
- 3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Formulating conceptual propositions and an adaptive energy transition policy model. To ensure data validity (trustworthiness) and validate qualitative conclusions, Theory

Triangulation was conducted (Heffron & McCauley, 2017). Researchers simultaneously compared and synchronized empirical regulatory data with two theoretical perspectives: Public Choice Theory to analyze state rationality motives and Energy Justice Theory to analyze the sociopolitical responses of grassroots communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Anatomy of the Political Economy of Fuel Subsidy Removal: Fiscal Pressure vs. Regime Legitimacy

Based on the results of data condensation from various fiscal documents and primary literature, the policy of eliminating or rationalizing fuel subsidies in Indonesia is dominated by the motive of allocating budget efficiency in the face of macro commodity price shocks. The main obstacle to this reform is not financial mathematical calculations, but rather the regime's fear of losing political legitimacy among constituents (voters). When fossil fuel subsidies are cut, the cost burden is instantly shifted from the state's fiscal balance to real household expenditures.



Fig 1. Fuel Subsidy Impact Simulation

The figure above is a simulation of the impact of the fuel subsidy removal/reduction policy, illustrating the policy transmission model from fiscal reductions to the lowest level of household welfare (grassroots) and its mitigation instruments:

Initial Policy Stage (Shock Origin)

- Fuel Subsidy Removal: This fiscal policy acts as the primary trigger for the economic shock (Shock Magnitude) of a maximum of 50%. This subsidy reduction is generally implemented by the government to reduce the state budget deficit due to fluctuations in global crude oil prices.

Sectoral Inflation Transmission (Transmission Channels)

- Increase in Logistics & Transport Tariffs: The fuel price adjustment policy directly impacts transportation costs by 48%. The transportation sector is a key input component in the goods distribution supply chain.
- Food Sector & Essential Goods Inflation: Due to increased logistics costs, there is a second-round inflation transmission effect to the essential commodities sector of 45%.

Impact on Community Welfare (Socio-Economic Outfall)

- Grassroots Economic Deprivation: The accumulation of inflation in basic goods and the cost of living has reduced people's real purchasing power, reaching a vulnerability level of 30%. If left unchecked, this condition has the potential to increase poverty and social inequality.

Aggregate Simulation Indicator Results

- Overall Impact Intensity (34%): This is the weighted average intensity of the overall macro shocks experienced by the economic system.
- Preserved Stability (20%): This is the remaining stability or level of national economic resilience successfully maintained through the social safety net.
- Protection (20%): In the center of the visualization is a green arc representing the Safety Net/Mitigation. Through the Mitigation Level lever of 20%, mitigation policies such as Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) or transportation assistance have successfully mitigated the decline in purchasing power of grassroots communities from the full impact of the economic shock.

From a Public Choice Theory perspective, defense of energy subsidies is often used as an electoral political commodity. When a state is forced by structural circumstances to remove these subsidies, it experiences a decline in the accumulation of political capital (Goldthau et al., 2018). Every fuel price increase is always followed by an escalation of horizontal resistance, public transportation strikes, and organized mass demonstrations in various urban centers.

Distributive Inequality in EV Acceleration: The Green Techno-Ecology Paradox

Literature findings on the acceleration of the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem in Indonesia identify a sharp inclusivity bias. Green fiscal incentive regulations (such as tax breaks and direct purchase subsidies) have not been able to address the mobility needs of lower-income communities. EV unit prices, which are above average real purchasing power, coupled with the concentration of charging infrastructure (Public Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (SPKLU)) in metropolitan areas, create a technological ecosystem exclusive to the urban bourgeoisie. When this data is compared with Energy Justice Theory, specifically the Distributive Justice dimension, a travesty of transition is revealed:

- Transition Burden: Borne massively by grassroots communities in the form of inflation in basic goods due to the removal of fuel subsidies (Rentschler et al., 2023).
- Transition Benefits: Enjoyed asymmetrically by the established economic class through subsidies and exclusive facilities for EV technology (Sovacool et al., 2021).

This imbalance fuels feelings of sociological injustice. The envisioned transformation toward green techno-ecology risks creating new forms of marginalization, with the poor trapped by increasingly expensive fossil fuels without the financial capacity to migrate to clean transportation modes (Heffron & McCauley, 2017).

Projected Impact of the Energy Transition on National Stability: Mapping Conflict Risks

Qualitative data synthesis confirms that the nexus between the removal of fuel subsidies and the failure of inclusive EV distribution is strongly correlated with the potential for domestic security instability. Based on Dahrendorf's Structural Conflict Theory, national stability will be threatened if economic tensions at the grassroots level are not mitigated by an adaptive social safety net. To visualize how the political economy dynamics of the energy transition affect national stability, this study formulates the following qualitative conceptual model:

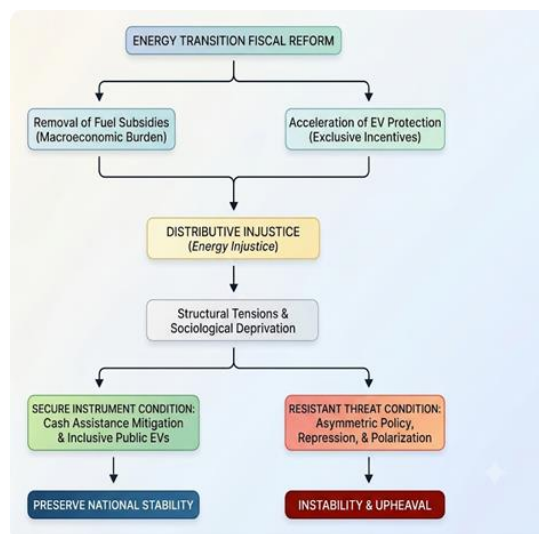


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Energy Transition & State Stability

Based on the Energy Transition Fiscal Reform flowchart in the image above, energy transition policies have a systemic impact on national stability through social justice and economic mitigation. The following is a detailed explanation of how the energy transition flow affects national stability based on the diagram's structure: Analysis of the Energy Transition Component Flow and National Stability, as follows:

Policy Initiation (Shock & Stimulus)

The energy transition begins with a dual fiscal reform measure:

- Fuel Subsidy Removal (Macroeconomic Burden): The government removes fossil fuel subsidies to reduce the burden on the state budget and redirects fiscal budget allocations to productive sectors.
- EV Protection Acceleration (Exclusive Incentives): Simultaneously, the government provides stimulus in the form of special incentives to accelerate the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem.

The Vulnerability Channel

These parallel policies create crucial challenges at the societal level:

- Energy Injustice: When fuel subsidies are removed (which directly impacts the cost of living for the lower-middle class), while EV incentives appear to be enjoyed only by elite/wealthy groups who can afford new technology, a perception or reality of distributive injustice arises in the use of state funds.

- Structural Tensions & Sociological Deprivation: This gap in access to energy benefits creates sociological pressure. Communities feel they are experiencing a structural reduction in economic rights due to the uneven implementation of the green transition agenda.

Final Scenario Impact on National Stability

This chart branches into two contrasting end states, highly dependent on the presence or absence of mitigation policy interventions by the state:

- LEFT TRACK – Safe Instrument Condition (Maintained National Stability): If the government balances fiscal reform with social protection instruments in the form of Cash Assistance Mitigation (BLT) to support grassroots purchasing power, and develops Inclusive Public EVs (affordable, accessible electric-based mass transportation), then social unrest can be mitigated. The end result is Maintained National Stability.
- RIGHT TRACK – Resistant Threat Condition (Instability & Unrest): Conversely, if the transition is forced through Asymmetric Policies (only favoring industry without a social safety net), the state will likely have to resort to repression to quell protests, ultimately triggering sharp socio-political polarization in society. The end result is Instability & Unrest that threatens national resilience.

The model above shows that national stability is at a crucial crossroads. If the government implements purely consumptive compensation policies (such as short-term direct cash assistance) without restructuring the affordable, electric-based public transportation system for the lower classes, structural tensions will continue to accumulate. The risk of horizontal political polarization and public distrust of the green transition agenda will increase, which in turn could trigger security disruptions that threaten national security stability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative-analytical research concludes that the synchronization of fuel subsidy removal policies and the acceleration of EVs (Electric Vehicles) in Indonesia has created a political-economic paradox that challenges national stability. Fossil fuel fiscal reforms, unaccompanied by an inclusive green energy transition, have triggered severe distributive injustice. Grassroots groups are forced to bear the burden of chain inflation resulting from rising conventional fuel prices, while fiscal stimulus for the EV ecosystem is asymmetrically enjoyed by the established middle and upper classes. This inequality accumulates into sociopolitical structural tensions that, if not adaptively mitigated, could erupt into a wave of social resistance and horizontal political polarization that undermines national resilience.

FURTHER STUDY

Based on the research findings, the government must develop an energy transition policy that focuses not only on reducing carbon emissions but also on social justice and national stability. Energy subsidy changes will be more successful if implemented gradually, with protections for the most impacted groups, and based on an open and participatory policy-making process.

Here are some Policy Recommendations that can be implemented:

- 1) Redesigning Green Incentives for Public Transportation: Shifting the focus of incentives for purchasing private electric vehicles to electrifying public mass transportation modes (such as city buses and electric trains) that are directly accessible and inclusive to grassroots groups.
- 2) Adaptive Social Safety Net: Developing a productive social safety net assistance scheme (e.g., direct energy cost subsidies for MSMEs and informal transport sector workers) instead of short-term consumptive cash assistance.
- 3) Procedural Justice through Multisectoral Dialogue: Prioritizing open public discussion by involving labor unions, transport associations, and civil society organizations before determining future domestic energy tariff adjustments.

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