

DESIGN OF LOWPOWER RISC PROCESSOR BY APPLYING CLOCK GATING TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Power has become a primary consideration during hardware design. Dynamic power can contribute up to 50% of the total power dissipation. Clock-gating is the most common RTL optimization for reducing dynamic power.

By applying Effective clock-gating technique on RISC processor adds additional logic to the existing synchronous circuit to prune the clock tree, thus disabling the portions of the circuitry that are not in use. Here in this project designed and developed efficient RISC CPU Interrupt controller unit ,Port controller and Program Flow Controller of an RISC Processor and clock gating technique applied to designed units.

Combinational and Sequential clock-gating selectively suspend clocking while the block continues to produce output. In typical designs, combinational clock-gating can reduce dynamic power by about 15-to-20%.On the other hand sequential clock-gating can save significant power, typically reducing switching activity by 10-to-25% on a given block. Thus, different RTL techniques are used to reduce the power dissipation of a processor.

The whole project captured in VHDL and implemented on targeted FPGA chip and observed the power using Xilinx Xpower tools.

Keywords Embedded systems, VHDL, Clock-gating, Low power.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Existing System

In general, a microprocessor unit consists of a number of modules. but, at an instant of time, only few modules will be working. since the clock tree is applied to all the modules, it results in unnecessary dynamic power consumption. dynamic power can contribute up to 50% of the total power dissipation. a general microprocessor architecture consists of control unit, data path unit and clock tree. among them, data path unit being the major source of power consumption. in order to reduce unnecessary dynamic power consumption, an additional circuit must be inserted into microprocessor design that effectively gates the clock to unused modules.

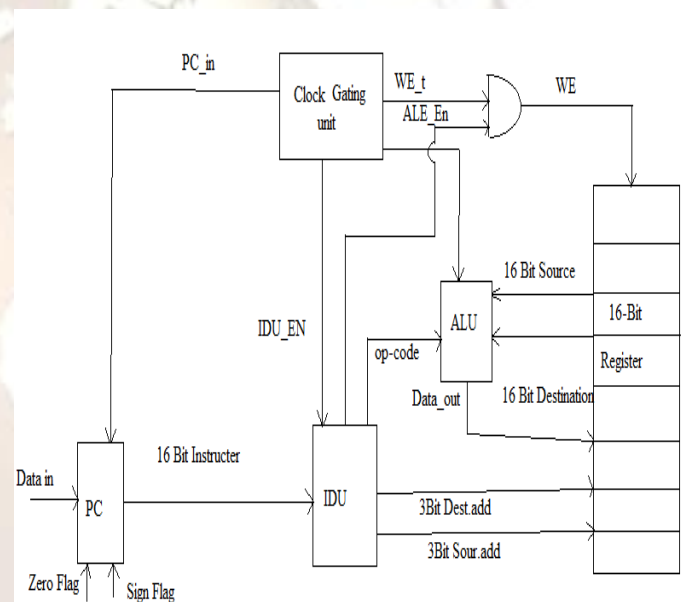
1.2 Proposed System

Clock-gating is the most common register transfer level (RTL) optimization for reducing dynamic power. In clock gating method, clock is applied to only the modules that are working at that instant. Clock-gating support adds additional

logic to the existing synchronous circuit to prune the clock tree, thus disabling the portions of the circuitry that are not in use.

Here, an additional circuit called clock gating circuit is introduced before the data path unit which provides clock inputs to only working modules based on the clock selection logic. Thus, the unnecessary dynamic power consumption is reduced using clock gating technique

2 BLOCK DIAGRAM



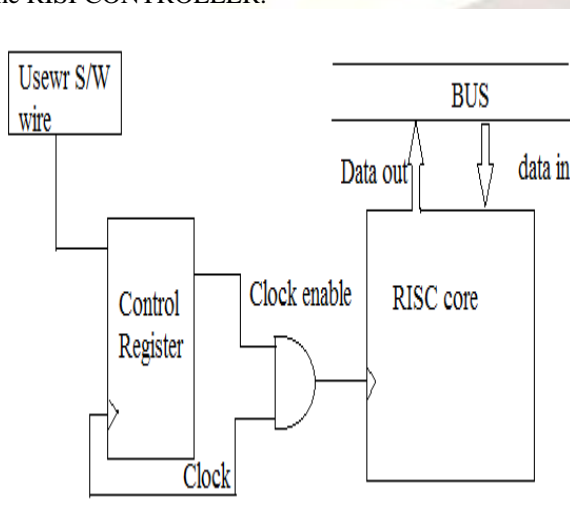
“FIGURE” 1. BLOCK DIAGRAM OF A RISI PROCESSOR

The reduced instruction set interrupt controller (RISI Controller) architecture mainly consists of ALU (Arithmetic and logical Unit), Port Controller, Interrupt controller and Register Array and its block diagram is shown in the Fig.(1). It contains RISCPU, Interrupt controller, Port controller and Program flow controller. These blocks are connected by internal buses.

2.1 Internal Architecture of RISC Controller:

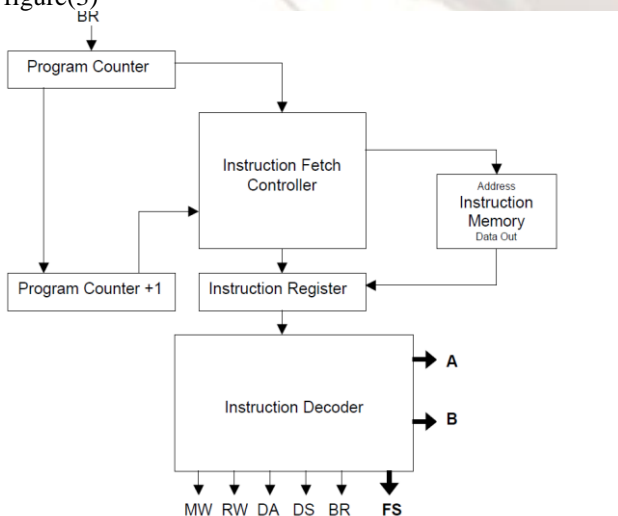
The instruction length of RISC Controller is 16-bit wide.RISC Controller has three flags namely carry, zero and interrupt flags. Both zero and carry flags are affected only during the execution of arithmetic and logical instructions and these are also useful for determine the flow of execution when branch and jump instructions take place. CPU checks the interrupt flag after completion of every instruction to know whether interrupt is available or not.ALU is capable

of performing the Arithmetic (Like Addition and subtraction) and Logical operations (like And, Or, Xor and Cmpl). There are no special purpose registers in the CPU like accumulator and there is no priority among them. RISI Controller has multi read port and single write port. Generally read operations are performing during the positive edge of the clock and write operation is performing during negative edge of the clock. Stack is used to store up to four addresses during interrupt and Branch related instructions. Port controllers take care of the read and write operation. An 8-bit address value provided on the PORT bus together with a READ or WRITE strobe signal indicates the accessed port. The port address is either supplied in the program as an absolute value or specified indirectly as the contents of any of the eight registers. There are some specific instructions useful for the controlling of interrupt controller present in the RISI CONTROLLER.



Fig“. 2 Internal architecture of RISC processor
2.2Interrupt Controller:

Modern CPU’s [15, 16] provide one or more interrupt request pins that allows external devices to request the service provide by CPU. Interrupt controller are used to increase the number of interrupt inputs available to CPU. The block diagram, of interrupt controller is shown in figure(3)



Figure”3.Block diagram of Interrupt Controller

Interrupt controller composed with three blocks. They are Interrupt Register block, Edge interrupt detection unit and Interrupt request generation unit. Interrupts are identified by interrupt detection unit during the negative clock edge of the clock. Whenever interrupts are detected, check for the corresponding interrupt input masked or not. Unmasked interrupt input set the corresponding bit in the interrupt status register. IRQ generation unit generates the interrupt request by using the IVR contents. Interrupt request reaches the CPU send an acknowledgement signal. *Int_inputs* are used to monitor the interrupts coming from various peripherals or external devices. Each interrupt register has a unique address and identified by using *Addr* input. To write the contents of *Data* input into the interrupt registers require a high *valid_wr* input. *Intr_flag input* indicates the status of interrupt flag present in the CPU.

Interrupt Detection Unit detects the interrupts coming from peripheral or external devices and activates the logic to generate enable interrupt to controller. It monitors the interrupt inputs composed of interrupt signal coming from external devices or peripherals and rises enabled interrupts according to arrival signals, Interrupt Request (IRQ) Generation unit contains the Generation logic of the Interrupts towards the processor. Interrupt requests generation is also configurable as either a pulse output for an edge sensitive request or as a level output that is cleared when the interrupt is acknowledged. Interrupt Registers handles the interrupt priorities, deciding which, interrupts are enabled or disabled and managing of interrupt acknowledgements. It contains the following Registers

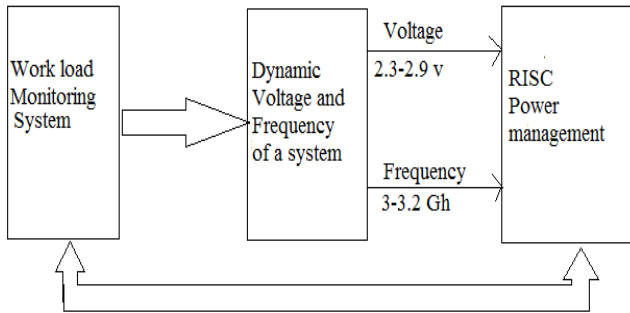
Interrupt Status Register (ISR) indicates which interrupts are active and the format is shown in the figure()4. All bits in the ISR are set to zero default. Any bits are set to indicates that the corresponding interrupt is active otherwise no active interrupts are available.

3.RISC CLOCK GATING ARCHITECTURE

The power efficiency is the important constraint in designing portable computers, because lower power results in lower operating costs, lower fan noise, and lower cooling requirements. Therefore, designers of modern portable systems focus on increased system performance while reducing operating power consumption. Increasing the operating frequency, using more powerful, higher density chips achieves increased system performance, but increasing the performance level increases power consumption .

Power consumption can be controlled during system operation depending upon the processing workload. This approach is called dynamic voltage frequency scaling [4,13]. According to the CPU workload, there are synchronous between the variation of the operating frequency and supply voltage [14]. For the cases that the workload is less than the minimum supply voltage requirements to drive the CPU, the enable signal of the clock gating technique will activate, during the activation of the enable signal the CPU consumes zero power. Hence the minimum energy reduction will

obtain The clock gating technique identifies low processing requirement periods and reduces operating voltage with clock frequency (voltage-frequency scaling), resulting in reduced average operating power consumption. According to the CPU workloads, f and V can be reduced to its minimum levels or zero levels based on the software control. Figure(4) shows the block diagram of the CPU dynamic energy reduction using clock gating technique.



Figure”4. Block Diagram of Dynamic Power Reduction using Clock Gating technique.

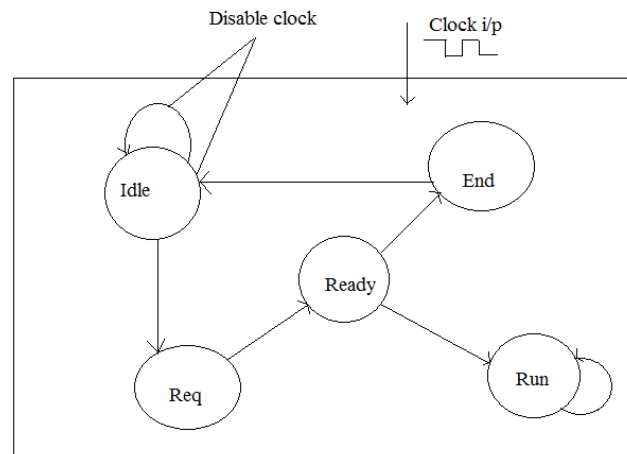
The workload monitor, predict the RISC activities based on a software implementation, while the voltage frequency scaling unit implemented in hardware, with the clock gating design of figure 3 inside or before the RISC. The overall block diagram controls the RISC energy reduction by

- Controlling the supply voltage V .
- Controlling the operating Clock frequency f .
- Turning the RISC power off during idle periods.

The voltage-scaling unit accepts a command from the workload monitor, and generates the required supply voltage and clock frequency, or turns the RISC power off .

3.1 Clock Gating Technique for Low Power RISC processor

we analyze the RISC model first. Any IP core (except combinational circuit) can be modeled as an Finite State Machine (FSM) which includes several states: Idle, Ready, Run and so on, as shown in the box of Fig.5. Each circle is a state and each arrow shows a transition from a state to another. The state and the transition will be mapped to the sequential circuit and the combinational circuit respectively by synthesis. When an IP core finishes the work, it enters the idle state (IS) and stay there until it accepts another request from the system bus. We call each of those states except IS working state (WS). Hence, all states in an IP core are classified to two classes: IS and WS.



“Figure”5. Principle of Low Power RISC Using FSM

When an IP core stays in the IS for some cycles, it doesnot need the clock. Therefore, ACG disables the IP clock if the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The current state of the IP core is IS.
2. There is no request for this IP on the system bus during the current cycle.

The conditions above also can be expressed as following: If the IP current state is IS and its next state is IS too, the clock is disabled automatically; otherwise, the clock is enabled. We call the circuit realizing the above logic Scout Circuit (SC) which is just a combinational one. The Clock Gating principle for low power IP design is shown in Fig.5.

4. VLSI Implementation

In the previous chapter, the design considerations of different functional units are discussed. The VLSI implementation is described in this chapter.

4.1 VLSI Design Flow

- System Level Design
- Functional Design
- Functional Verification
- Logic Design
- Logic Verification
- Circuit Design
- Performance Evaluation
- Physical Design
- Layout Verification

System level design

It is used to create a high-level (Behavioral) representation of the system. Tools used for system level design are Verilog, VHDL and System C.

Functional design and verification

A functional design assures that each modular part of a device has only one respon sibility and performs that responsibility with the minimum of side effects on other parts. Functional verification in electronic design automation, is the task of verifying that the logic design conforms to specification.

Logic design

- Translates system level description into transistors
 - Many logic styles
 - Schematic representation

- Logic verification
 - Simplistic models - to verify functionality
 - Fast - can run many cases

Circuit design

- Calculates transistor sizes
- Performance evaluation
 - Complex models - to evaluate timing and power
 - Slow - run only selected cases

Physical design

- Translate schematic into layout
 - Need to know the design rules
 - Layout representation may not be similar to schematic
- Logic verification
 - Compare netlists
 - Simulators

simulation that is performed is a Functional Simulation. This is also referred to as a Behavioural simulation in Xilinx Foundation.

Synthesis

During synthesis, the CAD tool will interpret your VHDL design information and infer standard building blocks to implement the. Subtle differences in your VHDL description can result in different hardware being inferred at this stage. Different hardware inferences will result in variances in system performance.

Implementation

The Xilinx implementation process takes your design through the TRANSLATE, MAP, and PLACE AND ROUTE sub-processes. The TRANSLATE process convert the netlist generated from the synthesis process, into a form specific to the target device The PLACE & ROUTE process picks up where the MAP process leaves off by allocating specific resources (placing) and interconnecting (routing) the placed design.

Device Configuration

After the design has been verified, a binary hardware configuration file is generated (bit stream). This file is then downloaded into the FPGA via the JTAG interface

VLSI DESIGN FLOW

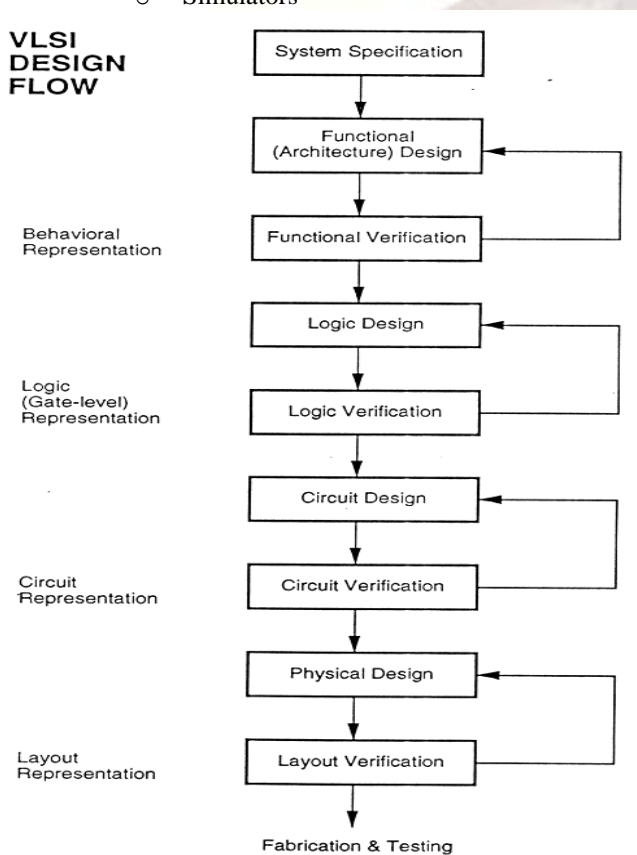


Fig. 6 VLSI Design flow

4.2 VHDL Design Flow

Design Entry

The first step in the design process is to input your design into a machine-readable format. To do this you will use a Computer Aided Design (CAD) tool. A typical CAD tool supports many design entry methods, such as a schematic capture, HDL entry (VHDL/Verilog) or a component netlist. In this course, all the designs are captured using VHDL.

Functional Simulation

Once a design has been captured, the next step is to simulate it. This is done to ensure that the design will meet the requirements of its specification. The first type of

HDL Design Capture

HDL Design Synthesis

Design Implementation

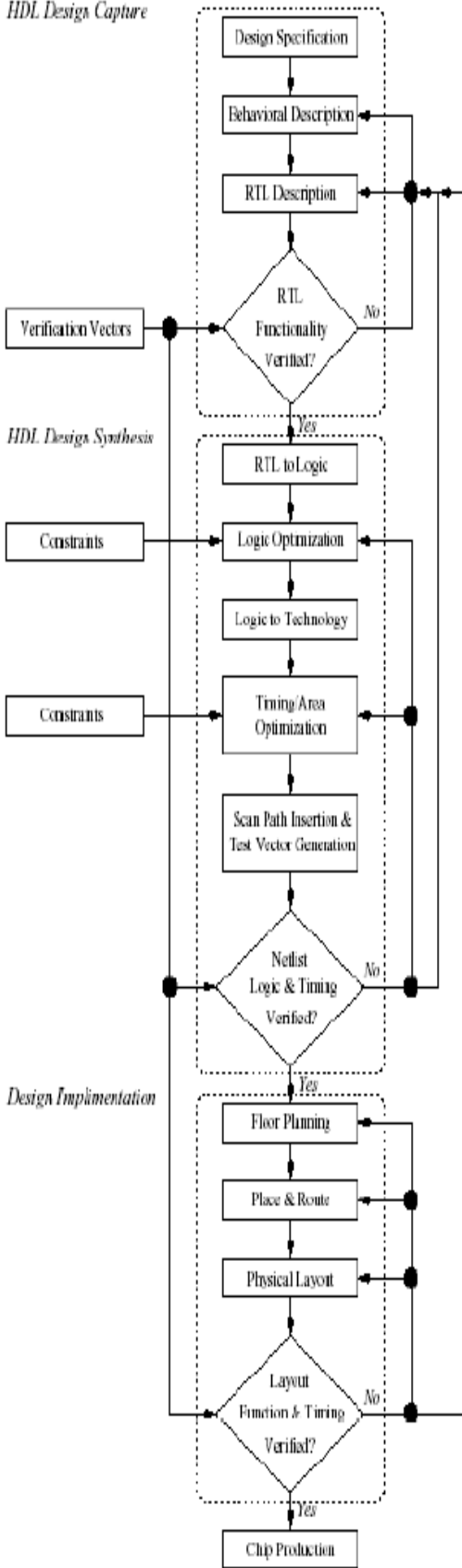
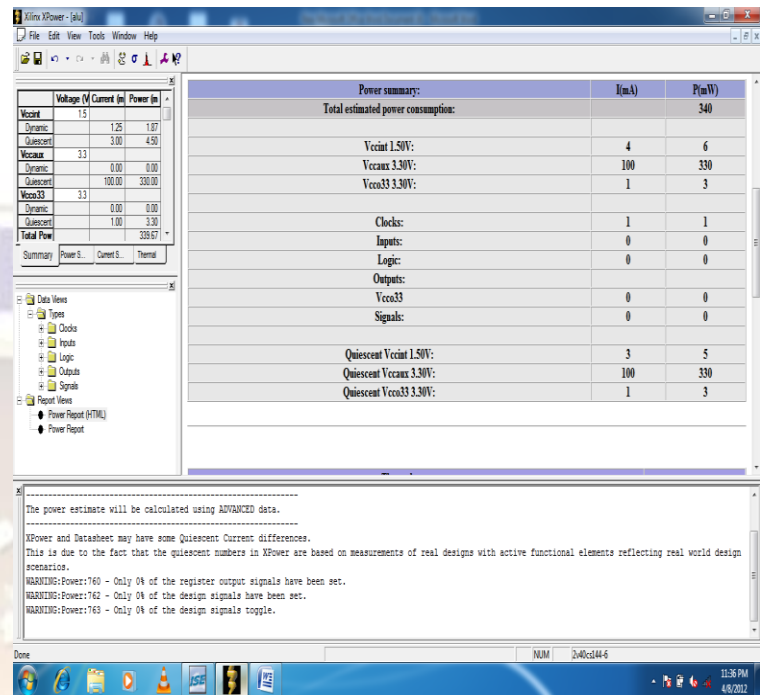


Fig.7” VHDL Design flow

5 Power Reports

5.1 Power Report When Clock Gating is Not applied



“Fig.8”. Power report when Clock Gating is not applied

5.2 Power Report When Clock Gating is applied

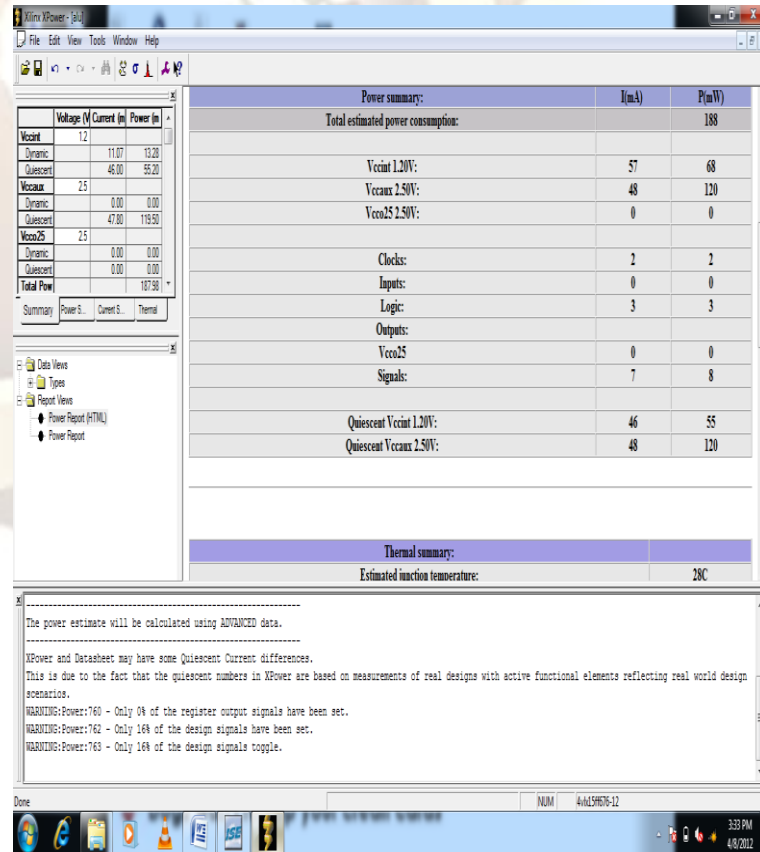


Fig. 12” Power report when Clock Gating is applied

6. conclusion

The Interrupt control unit, Flow control unit of RISC Processor has been implemented successfully using XILINX in VHDL coding. Observed that about 6% of the power is saved by applying clock gating technique to the existing design. This design can be used for low power applications to enhance the battery life of the devices. Power can be reduced further by applying the clock gating technique at a higher level of granularity.

Thus the design and implementation of a Processor using Clock Gating technique to reduce power dissipation has been accomplished.

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