



PRIMARY RESEARCH

The efficacy of the United Nations in a new world order

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Abstract

This article aims to focus on two important aspects of the world as it is today, firstly recognizing and analyzing new challenges that the world is facing 2001 onwards, and second to gauge how equipped the international system is to deal with these challenges, with an important focus on the efficiency of the United Nations and the role it has to play. It shall also trace the effectiveness of the UN throughout these years in resolving major world crises'. After 2001, the world underwent a complete change regarding the geopolitical landscape due to global terrorism, increased bilateral conflicts, forced migration, economic instability, the rise of threatening non-state actors, and heightened use of the internet and social media. This article explains the functioning of the United Nations as a body. It shall critically analyze the efficacy of the UN as an organization and its preparedness to deal with these challenges posed to the world order today. The United Nations is more relevant now than ever. This study concludes that United Nations can improve its performance by dealing with the problems of the world efficiently and effectively.

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THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is an international body that was established in 1945, after the Second World War. The idea and outline for the United Nations was set in the Atlantic Charter of 1941, which was initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill with the goal of establishing peace and promoting international cooperation between nations (Editors, 2018). After the end of the Second World War, on 24th October 1945 the United Nations Charter was ratified by 51 members, thus sealing the future of the United Nations, as an international peacekeeping organisation (Editors, 2018).

At present, the UN consists of 193-member states, who also constitute the General Assembly. The UN has 6 main organs-The General Assembly, The Security Council, The International Court of Justice, The Secretariat, The Economic and Social Council and The Trusteeship Council (United Nations, 2017). The Secretary-General is the "chief administrative officer" of the organisation and at present the post is occupied by Antonio Guterres, who was sworn in on 1st January 2017 (United Nations, 2017). The UN also has more than 30 subsidiary organizations working under it, that deal with a

range of issues and challenges across the world.

For 73 years the United Nations has intervened in issues across the globe and established its relevance and need in the international society. There have also been instances when the UN failed to resolve a certain problem, or prevent it which had lasting impacts on the world. After the Cold War, the United States' invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and several other proxy wars that were continuously fought in the Middle East, could not be effectively resolved by the UN. For a long time, the UN was considered as an imperative tool to further the United States' foreign policy, and considered a product of US hegemony (Azhar, 2015; Puchala, 2005; Saahar, Sualman, Hashim, & Mohamed, 2017), however, with time this reputation has diminished and now it is being questioned how effective is the United Nations going to be with the dealing of challenges that face the 21st century world.

THE WORLD ORDER POST 9/11- THE RISE OF 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

Samuel Huntington talked about 'uni-multipolarity' and how it will shape the world order and off late, the global order is shaping up to be something along those lines with

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one or two major superpowers and several other great powers existing in International Relations (Kagan, 2013; Kim, 2016). The events of 9/11 are seen as marking the end of one age and the beginning of another (Prasad, 2017; Roberts, 2008). In this new world order post 9/11, nations such as China, Russia, India and several West-Asian countries are taking a central stand and playing a role in furthering International Relations. In 2001, the world was shocked with the attacks of 9/11 and its impact that had rippling effects across the globe, bringing about a complete change in the geo-political landscape. One such impact is the “Globalisation of Terror”, the scope and dimensions that it has acquired due to technological advancement and enhanced communication (Khan, 2017; Shukla, 2006). Terrorism has evolved into an organized international network in the past decade, with different types of terrorism evolving such as religious terrorism especially of Islamic groups, drug terrorism which has developed into a huge money-making network, and cyber terrorism due to technological growth, with widespread impact and consequences in the society (Shukla, 2006).

The other aspect of terrorism that poses as a challenge is the role of Non-State Actors in the domestic and internal policies and actions of a nation. The 9/11 attacks are an apt example of the role of these international players, and the ‘War on Terror’ is a dire consequence of a group or an individual challenging nation-state (Shukla, 2006). Transnational terrorism has evolved significantly in the last decade and it has created a divide between the state and the individual, it has also led to the rise of non-state actors who do not differentiate between the state as an authority and the individuals of the state. This implies that the conflict arises due to the actors creating a problem from within the state and thus challenging its security, leaving no distinction between internal and external security (Shukla, 2006).

As a direct result of the 9/11 attacks, the United States invaded Afghanistan and hence started another war which cost thousands of lives and effort, and the United Nations as a supranational body took no major decision to avert it. The United Nations charter, however, makes no mention of terrorism as an issue, as it cannot interfere in the domestic issues of any nation-state as a rule Article 2(7) (Shukla, 2006). For a long time, this is the stance that the UN maintained, but in recent years considering the international outreach and scope that terrorism has envisaged, the United Nations has had to put their all in to curb the threat it poses- to the economy of countries spending millions to curb it and loss of lives in the process.

Terrorism, in the past few years, is being used as a tool of

strategic warfare and instrument to invoke psychological fear in millions across the globe. As a weapon of warfare, it makes it dangerous as terrorists are often motivated by various ideas, religions, ethnicities and the political gains such as overthrowing governments (Philip, 2018).

Terrorism is linked to a string of other issues which include-bilateral conflicts, forced migration and economic instability. An apt example for all three is the Syrian Crisis which started in 2012, and the Yemen crisis of 2011, both a result of the Arab Spring, has left the Middle-East in ruins. It has increased tension between one half of the Middle east with the other; people have been forced to leave their homes and migrate to refugee camps or another country altogether and shattered the economy with fluctuating prices and no stable source of income. In the name of democracy and the pretext of freedom, the simultaneous wars in the middle-east have practically brought it down to ruins.

Globalizations and the continuous evolution of the world and its reach, has created space for a wide range of problems that may have not been envisioned before. From climate change, nuclear proliferation, ecosystem losses, poverty and hunger, conflict prevention and economic diversity, these are not meant to be dealt with by one nation state alone. The impact of globalization has been the growth and rise of small individual powerful states that are economically independent and have the power to be seen or heard on a global forum. Each of these nation-states has its own geopolitical interests and methods of yielding power, which is what makes them unique (Chang, 2016; Held, 2017).

All nations across the world are being led by powerful strong independent leaders who are defining the era of their country with fierce competition- Vladimir Putin in Russia, Donald Trump in the United States, Angela Merkel in Germany, Narendra Modi in India, Emmanuel Macron in France, Kim Jong-un in North Korea, Theresa May in the UK etc. Global politics has never been so competitive and fiercely on edge, with the internet grasping the community and spreading like wildfire and enhanced communication and networks around the world. During such a period, the supranational organisations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, World Bank play a significant role in furthering interests and relations and enhancing cooperation. With this new era that the world is slowly transitioning into, there is emphasis on global cooperation and cosmopolitan associations (Held, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This article is a research initiative and an attempt to understand the functioning of the United Nations and the implementation of its policies, and its role in the global order as a peacekeeping organization and arbiter of peace and cooperation between the nation-states. The article is based on and derived from secondary data sources such as official documents of the United Nations, and other governmental documents. Online articles from websites were referred to understand the current scenario and create a link between the past and present. Some such sources include The Washington Post, Brookings Press, BBC News, History.com, United Nations official site etc. Various Journal articles and research papers written by analysts also provided clarity and understanding of the topic and the present situation. These have also been referenced in this article. The works cited have been added at the end of the article as a part of the bibliography.

THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS- A REVIEW

The most important aspect of UN Peacekeeping is civilian protection and mitigating violence. Over the years, the United Nations has played a significant role in combating terrorism and dissolving conflicts through their peacekeeping missions, some of which have been successful and some have not. The UN, have on their website admitted that protecting civilians is “a challenging mandate and the yardstick by which we are often judged” (Hultman, Kathman, & Shannon, 2013). The main challenges that the UN has faced, among others, after the 9/11 attacks, is the growth of global terrorism, the role of non-state actors in a nation-state and increased bilateral conflicts between states. These issues have created a mountain of problems that the UN is struggling to deal with. The UN and the Security Council have had mixed outcomes in the areas of conflict that they have been engaged with and in this new era, there have been many questions on the role that global organizations shall play in this time of ‘Global Chaos’ (Roberts, 2008). Further ahead, are 3 case studies that of- Yemeni crisis, Kashmir issue between India-Pakistan and the Sierra-Leone crisis, reviewed according to how efficient and successful was the United Nations in resolving the problem holistically on all fronts.

Yemen Crisis (2015)

It all began in 2011, with the Arab Spring uprising which advocated for a democracy in most middle-eastern states. Even in Yemen, this led to the autocratic President Ali Abdullah Saleh having to hand over power to Abdrabbuh Man-

sour Hadi. The new President was faced with a range of issues grappling the country and in this moment of his weakness, the Houthi movement (Zaidi Shia Muslim minority) took advantage and captured the norther province of Saada and neighbouring areas in 2014. Many Yemenis including Sunnis supported the Houthis and this pushed them to capture the city of Sanaa in 2015 and then eventually the entire country, leaving the President Mr. Hadi to flee abroad. Several Sunni Arab states like Iran, Saudi Arabia formed a coalition supported by UK, US and France to prevent a movement backed by Shia power to take over and attempted to restore Mr. Hadi’s government (BBC News, 2018). The war is divided between the pro-government forces of Mr. Hadi headquartered at Aden and the anti-government forces led by the Houthis and backed by former president Abdullah Saleh, controlling the north and cities like Sanaa, Saada, Taiz and a majority of the Western Coast. For 3 years now, the country is the centre of a proxy war and this has led to thousands of people dying and millions being displaced with no apparent solution visible. The Yemeni crisis is referred to as the ‘world’s largest humanitarian crisis’, and has become a breeding ground for terrorists such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) who have taken full advantage of the situation to create even more chaos (Alan, 2018).

The United Nations has been involved in Yemen since 2011, when the Secretary-General appointed a Special Adviser to Yemen. The international community unanimously agreed that the Saleh regime needed to be replaced and, at the end of 2011 the UNSC Resolution 2014 was passed with an aim to start a “Yemeni-led political transition” but failed to take into account the economic and social issues which were very important for the people of Yemen. In November, Saleh signed the Gulf Cooperation Council Agreement which gave the UN direct access and involvement to Yemen’s internal affairs and politics (Lackner, 2018). This deal allowed Saleh to fuel internal conflicts which only made matters worse. In 2015, the UN passed the 2216 UNSC Resolution, 3 weeks after the start of ‘Decisive Storm’, which was prompted by a plea of President Hadi from the GCC to “provide support, including military intervention, to protect the people of Yemen from the continued aggression of the Houthis”. This was an immediate result of the Saudi-led military intervention backed by the United Kingdom and the United States- known as ‘Decisive Storm’ which led to President Hadi and his government being exiled to Riyadh. The UN failed to prevent this war, and all the other humanitarian violations with it, because of Saudi Arabia wielding influence in the UNSC through the US and UK even though it is not a member of the UNSC. However, both the US and

UK have economic ties with Saudi which helps in fulfilling its interests and also provides military support and backing to the Saudi-led coalition. Operation Golden Victory, was initiated for the seizing of Hodeidah port in northern Yemen, but the farthest the Saudi-led coalition could reach was the airport south of Hodeidah. As a direct result of Operation Golden Victory and the advancement of the Saudis, the Houthis fired ballistic range missiles into Riyadh, which led to escalation of events and an even more tense situation. The latest positive developments indicate that the crucial port of Hodeidah in northern Yemen, has become a neutral point for peace talks between the Houthis and the UN. The port of Hodeidah is important as it is the entry point for all resources and support for the Houthis, allegedly from Iran, and the UN envoy led by Martin Griffiths hopes to negotiate surrender of the port to international supervision and further peace talks between both the parties and end the three-year long war (Riedel, 2018).

The crisis in Yemen has become a battleground for states to clash with each other and a base and excuse for bilateral conflicts, sides have been picked with no one willing to back down and the people of Yemen suffering in the centre. Both the Saudi coalition and the Houthis are heavily armed and an escalation in affairs could be fatal for the people of Yemen. The United Nations is being urged to replace the UNSCR 2216 in order to set the tone for political negotiation and talks, and to prevent the reinstatement of exiled leader Mansour Hadi.

However, after 4 years of proxy wars and a civil war, the UN has failed to bring peace in the country. Till date negotiations and peace talks are underway, with little progress. Saudi Arabia, with its organized coalitions, wields important influence in the United Nations which makes it difficult for the organization to pass any resolution relating to Yemen. It has also been alleged that UN has been serving state interests and avoiding critical issues which has made many question how the UN will reach a peaceful solution in Yemen anytime soon.

Kashmir Issue between India-Pakistan (1947-Present Day)

The history of India and Pakistan goes way back several hundred centuries. Since time immemorial and the beginning of history as we know it today, India and Pakistan were one nation and one civilisation. During the entire 200-year rule of the East India Company and subsequently the British crown, over the region, both the countries were one in the struggle for independence. However, at the cost of freedom and independence, the partition of the two countries was

initiated. On 14th August 1947, Pakistan, primarily a Muslim majority side, celebrated their Independence Day and the next day India celebrated hers. Ever since then, both the countries have had their series of struggles and clashes and the primary issue of contention is that of Kashmir which is divided into 'Pakistan occupied Kashmir' and 'India occupied Kashmir'. The problem arose in 1947 when all other princely states acceded to the Indian Union, however Kashmir and its ruler Raja Hari Singh refused to sign the Instrument of Accession and accede to the Indian Union, which led to Pakistan claiming that Kashmir is rightfully and historically theirs and India retaining control of one part of Kashmir through the 1947 war which was concluded with UN intervention and a ceasefire.

Since 1947, there have been 4 wars between the two countries, with the Kashmir region being the main cause of conflict in 3 out of the 4 cases- first Indo-Pakistani war of 1947-48, second Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, third Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, Kargil war of 1999 (Chandhoke). The region has been a subject of discussion and contention for several years now and no apparent solution in sight. In all this, the United Nations has played a significant role in the region over the years. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, approached the United Nations in 1947 after several months of fighting and violence in Jammu and Kashmir ever since the partition of India and Pakistan.

The ceasefire took place on January 1948, and it divided Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Over the course of the next few years, several UN resolutions were passed and both the troops retreated to their specific borders and newly drawn ceasefire line, while many proposed the idea of a plebiscite to let the people of Kashmir decide which union to accede to. None of the resolutions of the UN were satisfactory to the countries and hence the idea of a solution grew dim, while Pakistan was more open to the idea of a plebiscite, India preferred diplomatic talks (Chakravarty, 2016).

In 1965, during the Indo-Pakistani war, the UN pleaded with both the governments to cooperate with the UN Military Observers and declare ceasefire. In Tashkent, an agreement was signed and both parties agreed to retreat to the original ceasefire line of 1949, through Resolution 211 of the United Nations. In 1971, however, East Pakistan has surrendered and therefore there was a unilateral ceasefire declared in the west and at the end of this war, the Simla Agreement was signed between Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi and Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The Simla Agreement was considered to be the first actual step to the resolution of the Kashmir issue and it officially declared the

ceasefire line as a Line Of Control. The Simla Agreement is quite similar to the Karachi Agreement of 1949, however the Simla Agreement mandates “that the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them”. The confusion arose in the understanding of the agreement and its clause by both parties- India understood that there would be bilateral talks and resolution of conflict without any third-party involvement, whereas Pakistan indicated that it does not mention the non-involvement of the UN during this process. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan was considered null and void by India as the Simla Agreement had replaced the Karachi Agreement, however Pakistan did not agree to this and has been registering ceasefire violations since then, whereas India has been peaceful about it (Chakravarty, 2016).

Kashmir today, is still distraught with people displaced and an unstable government with no apparent solution in sight. Attacks and firing, violence and cross border terrorism are frequent in the region and the situation is at a stalemate. The UN cannot be blamed directly for the irresolution of this issue, because there are several other factors at play. The political situation in both countries prevents the setting up for a base of peace talks and despite several UN resolutions no actual solution has been reached, as historically the claim on Kashmir is justified in both cases (Volk, 2018). The ongoing debate on Kashmir between India and Pakistan has generated lot of discussion and dissent and disagreement and despite the condition of the people of Kashmir, there is no apparent solution to this date.

The Sierra Leone Crisis (1991-2002)

The Sierra Leone crisis started in March 1991, as an attempt by rebels belonging to the neighbouring country of Liberia, to overthrow the present Joseph Momoh government in Sierra-Leone. The two main players were the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by the former army corporal of Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh. The civil war in the country lasted for 11 years, with several loss of lives, and other atrocities to men, women and children alike (Momodu, 2018). The RUF during the course of the war, captured rich diamond territory in the eastern and southern part of Sierra Leone, and then the President Joseph Momoh was overthrown by Captain Valentine Strasser, who established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and after which the civil war only worsened.

In 1996, about 4 years after coming into power, Strasser was

removed from his position of power by a coup and after elections Ahmed Tejan Kabbah took office. In 1997, Maj. Johnny Koroma formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and sent President Kabbah into exile. Internationally, during this period the United Nations imposed sanctions on Sierra Leone and the country was suspended from the Commonwealth. In 1999, a peace agreement called the Lome Agreement was signed as a truce between the RUF, AFRC and the government. Though the agreement wasn't implemented well and the violence continued for 3 more years, finally in 2002, with the help of the British and the United Nations peacekeeping mission the civil war was finally declared to be over (Editors, 2018).

However, the aftermath of the war was long-lasting considering the impact the civil war had on the people, lives and condition of living of Sierra Leoneans. The atrocities committed including recruiting children in the RUF as child soldiers, the behaviour of the rebels against the civilians, the violence that the people were subjected to and the displacement and migration combined with the loss of thousands of lives. Though the United Nations and its peacekeeping mission was successful in bringing the war to an end, the impact of the civil war can still be seen in the region. As a major event in the UN history, the role of the UN in Sierra Leone is considered to be successful, as it played a significant role in bringing the conflict to an end. The major players in this mission included the ECOMOG- Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African Nations, and the UNOMSIL- United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, which was later terminated by the Security Council and replaced by the UNAMSIL- United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, in 1999. The success of the UNAMSIL, which was a large and extensive mission with 6000 military personnel who were tasked with ensuring the peaceful implementation of the Lome Agreement. By 2001, the UNAMSIL consisted of 17,500 military personnel tasked with increased authority in civil affairs and the civil police. The UNAMSIL is considered to be a model for UN peacekeeping as they successfully as over and above everything else they were able to help the government stop illegal trade in diamonds and also regulate the industry. They also played a role in disarming the fighters including the child soldiers, they assisted in the return of half a million refugees and displaced persons, they helped organize democratic and parliamentary elections, set up a Special Court for Sierra Leone to try persons for war crimes, they also trained Sierra Leoneans in human rights and launched projects to generate employment and assisted the government in re-establishing control and authority in the region.

Along the way, the UNAMSIL faced several challenges as members of the mission were kidnapped by the RUF and the ceasefire almost came to a standstill however, backlash from the international community, sanctions and constant efforts from nations across the world helped in furthering negotiations. The peace after 11 years of civil war was a disturbed peace as people were still reeling from the impact of the violence and they were unable to reap the social and economic benefits that were provided as a result of the UN Peacekeeping Mission. Sierra Leone and the successful resolution of the crisis is one of the examples of the relevance and need of the United Nations and its assistance in peacekeeping. The Secretary-General during this period, Kofi Annan, was closely involved with the mission and personally ensured its implementation.

The Sierra Leone crisis is an apt example of the need for a supra-national peacekeeping body in the world ([United Nations, 2009](#)).

The Relevance of the United Nations

The United Nations as an international body has several roles to play in the society and world. It is unfair to focus on only one aspect or part or organ of the entire body and gauge its relevance today. In the sphere of International Relations, UN Peacekeeping and the Security Council plays a significant role in maintaining relations and furthering cooperation. Off late the efficiency of the UNSC and its role in maintaining peace has been questioned due to conflicts like the Syrian crisis and Yemeni crisis. There have been many questions raised regarding the membership of the Security Council and the veto system, the power that a few nations hold deciding the fate of thousands. Whether the UNSC should be reformed is a different debate altogether, however the presence of the UN is deemed to be extremely necessary in the world today. There are always two sides to a coin and each negative has a positive. Each organ of the UN is playing an active role in the world, and it is important to acknowledge that the UN does not involve only one aspect that of peacekeeping and security. The review of three peacekeeping missions over the past 20 years has indicated that despite its ups and downs and failures and successes, the presence of the United Nations is relevant in the world today. In the case of Sierra Leone, the United Nations was successful in bringing an end to the conflict in the region and establishing the ground for peace, Yemen, is an apt example of UN Peacekeeping gone wrong and the failure to end the conflict and also prevent a humanitarian crisis-considered the largest in the world, and Kashmir is a neutral take on the UN having tried and failed however due to

other external factors and situations in the domestic affairs of the parties concerned.

During the time of Kofi Annan as Secretary-General, a report known as the Brahimi Report was drawn which was an insight into the Peacekeeping of the United Nations and how it can be improved over the years and what measure should be taken in that regard. The report states that the nature of armed conflict has changed dramatically over the past decade or so and has evolved from interest to intrastate conflict- which reflects the negative side of globalization and how the civilians are now bearing the brunt of the organized violence, at the hands of a few in power who are in the game ([Nisar, 2004](#)). It introduced several reforms in tandem with a specific rule of law and these helped in understanding where UN Peacekeeping was falling short and how it could be further improved. For example, UN Peacekeeping forces are majorly provided by developing nations and it has been questioned why the developed states do not have any contribution in this especially the permanent members of the P5. ([Durand, 2012](#)).

Over the years, UN missions and peacekeeping have focused less on immediate relief and are now channelling resources into peacebuilding, reconstruction, development and sustainable peace ([Durand, 2012](#)). UN Peacekeeping has come a long way from the Brahimi Report and since the geopolitical shift after the 9/11, steps have been taken to counterterrorism and prevent proxy wars and bilateral conflicts, however there is still a long way to go.

The relevance of the United Nations cannot be analysed through only one lens, the work of the other organs and organisations such as UNICEF, WFP- World Food Programme, WHO among others, has been significant in their respective fields and has gradually brought change. The United Nations as an international organisation is quite relevant, however the role of the UN as an actor in the political sphere can be questioned based on efficiency. The important aspect to be remembered is that the UN and its actions in most cases reflects the will of the member states and the interests they harbour, combined with the influence they wield in the Council, which may affect the mission or be biased towards the interests of a particular state.

CONCLUSION

In the past few years, there have been some major significant developments that have defined world politics and the global order, especially International Relations. The election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States of America with this bold views and outrageous opinions and actions, the Britain withdrawal from the European Union

known as Brexit and its implications across the world, the Trade War between China and the US, the growing power and open nuclear threats of North Korea and Kim Jong-Un, the crisis in the Middle East and the need for immediate resolution of the Syrian and Yemen crisis, the rights of women and the spread of the MeToo movement in every corner of the world, climate change and global warning, and most importantly the curbing of terrorism. There are several other issues that the world faces today and these are just some highlighted ones, however the onus lies on each member state of the United Nations and the leadership at the UN with Antonio Guterres at the forefront, to at the best of their capability collectively and sensitively deal with the crisis in

the most efficient way possible. Despite its shortcomings the United Nations is relevant now more than ever, and can improve its efficiency dealing with the problems of the world. Joseph Schwartzberg in his book- 'Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World' talks about how the power is unfairly distributed in the United Nations, and now more than ever, there should be emphasis on nations, non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens to make sure their voices are heard at the top level. He stresses on the motto- the importance of force of law over the law of force and how that is the way forward in the 21st Century (Schwartzberg, 2013).

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