

УДК 327.82(73):341.123

**THE EXERCISE OF SOFT POWER BY THE U. S. THROUGH
THE USE OF MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY DURING
G. W. BUSH AND B. OBAMA PRESIDENCY**

**ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ М'ЯКОЇ СИЛИ СПОЛУЧНИМИ ШТАТАМИ
ШЛЯХОМ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ БАГАТОСТОРОННЬОЇ ДИПЛОМАТІЇ
У ПЕРІОД ПРЕЗИДЕНТСТВА ДЖ. БУША-МОЛОДШОГО
ТА Б. ОБАМИ**

**ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ СОЕДИНЕННЫМИ ШТАТАМИ
ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ МНОГОСТОРОННЕЙ
ДИПЛОМАТИИ В ПЕРИОД ПРЕЗИДЕНТСТВА
ДЖ. БУША-МЛАДШЕГО И Б. ОБАМЫ**

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Abstract. *In the modern world, multilateral diplomacy is a significant factor of soft power, as it demonstrates commitment to global goals and international cooperation, the desire to address the interests of not only allies, but also of hostile states, and the presence of a clear vision of the world development that altogether increases the attractiveness of the state.*

The article analyzes the approaches to the multilateral diplomacy of the administrations of two U. S. presidents, namely of G. W. Bush and B. Obama. The study came to the conclusion that the United States mostly neglected the potential of soft power that could have been obtained in case of more active use of multilateral mechanisms. The preference was given to unilateralist ac-

tions on the world stage under the administration of G. W. Bush, and this trend was mainly preserved by B. Obama, despite his declared commitment to international obligations, although he generally managed to increase the importance of multilateral diplomacy for the United States and to improve the image of the state in the international arena.

Key words: *soft power, multilateral diplomacy, unilateralism, United States, United Nations.*

Анотація. Багатостороння дипломатія в сучасному світі є значним фактором м'якої сили, оскільки демонструє прихильність до глобальних цілей та міжнародного співробітництва, бажання враховувати інтереси не тільки союзників, але й недружньо налаштованих держав, та наявність чіткого бачення світового розвитку, що підвищує привабливість держави.

У статті було проаналізовано підходи до багатосторонньої дипломатії адміністрацій двох президентів Сполучених Штатів – Дж. Буша-молодшого та Б. Обами. У результаті дослідження було з'ясовано, що Сполучені Штати переважно нехтували потенціалом м'якої сили, яка могла б бути отримана у разі більш активного використання багатосторонніх механізмів, надаючи перевагу одностороннім діям на міжнародній арені за адміністрації Дж. Буша-молодшого, і ця тенденція великою мірою продовжувала зберігатися і за президента Б. Обами, не дивлячись на декларування його прихильності до міжнародних зобов'язань, хоча, в цілому, йому вдалося підвищити значення багатосторонньої дипломатії для США та покращити імідж цієї держави у світі.

Ключові слова: *м'яка сила, багатостороння дипломатія, унілатералізм, Сполучені Штати, Організація Об'єднаних Націй.*

Аннотация. Многосторонняя дипломатия в современном мире является значительным фактором мягкой силы, так как демонстрирует приверженность глобальным целям и международному сотрудничеству, желание учитывать интересы не только союзников, но и недружесливо настроенных государств, а также наличие четкого видения мирового развития, что повышает привлекательность государства.

В статье было проанализировано подходы к многосторонней дипломатии администраций двух президентов Соединенных Штатов – Дж. Буша-младшего и Б. Обамы. В результате исследования было установлено, что Соединенные Штаты в основном пренебрегали потенциалом мягкой силы, которая могла бы быть получена в случае более активного использования многосторонних механизмов, предпочитая односторонние действия на международной арене при администрации Дж. Буша-младшего, и эта тенденция в большой степени продолжала сохраняться и при президенте Б. Обаме, несмотря на декларирование его приверженности международным обязательствам, хотя, в целом, ему удалось повысить значение многосторонней дипломатии для США и улучшить имидж этого государства на международной арене.

Ключевые слова: *мягкая сила, многосторонняя дипломатия, унілатералізм, Соединенные Штаты, Организация Объединенных Наций.*

The current problem. Multilateral diplomacy in all of its aspects and, in the first place, the participation in international organizations has not been directly considered as a source of soft power in the initial version of this concept, coined in 1990ies – early 2000s. However both of these subjects, namely the diplomacy and the concept of soft power, tend to develop and evolve, thus both of them are being actively referred to in the context of soft power. Soft power, among other things, is the ability to ensure the full functioning of various spheres of soft power,

including such as private businesses, civil society (citizens' diplomacy or popular diplomacy), cooperation and consultations at multilateral organizations. While the former two areas do not relate directly to diplomacy, as they are dependent on a government's actions only indirectly, and their activities in other countries can only be facilitated or hindered by their government, thus increasing or decreasing the soft power of the state, the field of multilateral diplomacy, in particular, the predominating form of action in this field – participation in international organizations is directly implemented by ministries of foreign affairs, and its efficiency largely depends on the effectiveness of soft power of a particular state. The U. S. multilateral diplomacy, in general, and, in particular, the participation in the United Nations from the perspective of soft power is underdeveloped.

The aim of the article is to establish the connection between soft power and the practice of multilateral diplomacy on the U. S. example. To this end, the research deals with approaches of G. W. Bush and B. Obama administrations to international organizations, compares them and analyzes whether such approaches contributed to the application of soft power.

Analysis of the latest publications. The idea that multilateral diplomacy can be used not in the framework of instrumentalist approach with aim of achieving specific agreements and protecting national interests, but rather to achieve legitimacy and attractiveness in the eyes of the world society, was mainly developed by the representatives of so called innovative school of diplomatic thought – B. Hocking, J. Melissen, K. Rana, J. Robertson, D. Spence and others.

In the context of the U.S., the importance of multilateral mechanisms for the soft power of the state was stated for the first time in the analytical report “Smarter, more secure America” in 2007 [Nye, Cohen, Armitage, 2007]. The report noted that the essence of soft power lies, amongst other things, in the ability to consider and coordinate the different national and multilateral interests of the United States in terms of international cooperation. In the opinion of the report's authors, as regards the economic viewpoint the financing of various international organizations and institutions may be more efficient than to take military actions in remote countries, especially if such actions are taken unilaterally (hinting on G. W. Bush wars in Iraq and Afghanistan). Investments in multilateral cooperation, as indicated in the report, allow attracting a number of other countries to global projects, thus allowing the balanced redistribution of resources to solve global problems. At the same time, such steps could allow the U. S. to position themselves in the international arena as a political actor, possessing numerous promising and optimistic projects and ideas for implementation.

J. S. Nye claimed that, in the modern world, only the multilateral diplomacy can be effective, the approach that implies the coordination of interests of different parties and the cooperation with all participants of the international relations. According to the above-mentioned researcher, the logic of soft power requires the combination of the declared priorities with fundamental features of their implementation in real life. It may happen that the political and ideological allies of the U. S. would doubt their allies' official aims and ideals, or would consider them unacceptable. Thus, if the United States seeks to use soft power, they have to take into account the positions of other states, namely of those that are considered as the U. S. strategic allies – South Korea, Japan, countries of Europe and of the others [Nye, 2011: 231–234].

S. Walt noted that the UN and other international organizations helped the U. S. to project its power in a way that was less dangerous and therefore more acceptable to other states. Thus, the greater potential the U. S. had in different aspects – the more power it could project. The mentioned idea implied the projection of hard and structural power, although the suggested recipe for the application of power can also be regarded from the perspective of soft power and is close to its perception [Walt, 2002: 143].

The important research results. Generally, the American political scholarly researches on a state's participation in international organizations are still being dominated by traditional approaches – the realism (the neorealism) paradigm and the institutional and constructivist approaches, which are respectively represented by the concept of: “balance of power”; “state's reputation in the international organization” and “bargaining power”; and legitimization through international organizations, primarily the UN, accordingly. The leadership of the diplomatic apparatus of the United States shares this view, thus it tends to consider international organizations as platforms for interaction with other state actors, but not as institutions that have an independent legal capacity. Therefore, in many cases, international organizations act as intermediaries between their members.

Apart from that, the diplomatic theory and practice in the U. S. recognize two types of action on the international stage – unilateral actions (unilateralism) and multilateral actions (multilateralism). The prevailing paradigm, from among the three mentioned ones, determines different prioritization of these types and a different set of principles and the general assessment of correctness or fallacy for each chosen foreign policy action. For example, the realistic paradigm in its assessment begins with the available resources of a state, primarily represented by hard power, and if a state has sufficient resources to a unilateral action, it is considered as having the right and opportunity to carry out such an action independently, while multilateral action with allies are carried out when a state's resources are insufficient. When this approach is used, international organizations are considered only as a secondary platform for the achievement of national interests through negotiations with other states within the organization, besides this approach allows a state to limit its obligations to multilateral institutions [Paul, 2004: 1–28].

The dominating in the United States neorealism paradigm, implying unilateral actions of a state, has caused a lot of criticism. The critics, also depending on their approach, site three main arguments: a part of neorealism supporters admit that unilateral actions of a state, given the balance of power, can cause the formation of hostile alliances and alliances aimed at counter-balancing a certain hegemony; adherents of the institutional approach pay attention to the fact that unilateral actions cause reputational losses and preclude the protection of national interests through institutional cooperation; as for the constructivism supporters, they claim that multilateral institutions serve the legitimization function, while unilateral actions are less legitimate and undermine the international order. From the last point of view, the harm from unilateral actions could be completely offset by compensatory mechanisms. The diplomatic process is an example of such a mechanism. A hegemon may attempt to convince other actors of the need for a unilateral action, or it can legitimize it through multilateral organizations [Payne, 2001: 37–61].

Immediately after G. W. Bush came to power, the U. S. administration demonstrated its disposition to unilateral actions. It is symbolic that in January 2000 J. Helms, the former head of the Congress Foreign Affairs Committee, said in an address to the Security Council that “no institution, even the Security Council does not possess sufficient competence to judge the foreign policy decisions and the national interests of the United States” [Johnstone, 2004: 818–838]. In December 2001, the United States sent the notice of withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. This step allowed them to start a new program for the development of such systems, including their installation in the Central and Eastern Europe. This decision has become a landmark in the revival of the U. S. unilateralist approach [Malone, Yuen Foong Khong, 2006]. In general, the period of G. W. Bush presidency was characterized by a cautious attitude towards assuming new international obligations [Hussain, 2011].

According to many critics of G. W. Bush, his first administration was characterized by focusing only on the negative sides of international organizations, ignoring a variety of benefits.

The statement by J. Helms they put down to the fact that U. S. lawmakers tend to underestimate the value of the existing world order [Moens, 2004: 143]. F. Zakaria notes that in 2001–2002 the administration relied on the unilateral actions at the same time using the rhetoric “as if it was intended to insult the whole world” [Zakaria, 2003]. The attempts by G. W. Bush senior officials to hold consultations with key allies were unprecedentedly weak compared to the experience of the previous administrations [Kessler, 2004].

The United States had been trying to convince the international community that the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq were public goods. But their other actions – the imposition of tariffs on steel imports in 2002, and the attempts to block the purchase by the developing countries of off-patent drugs against AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis in early 2003, used to offset this message. The above proves that a significant loss of reputation by the United States was caused predominantly not by the unilateralism, but rather by the lack of compensatory mechanisms.

The return of the Democratic Party to power in 2008 through the election of Barack Obama as the President was perceived in the world as the return of the U. S. foreign policy to the different approach with active use of multilateral formats and the coordination of foreign policy actions, and more careful consideration of the interests and positions of other countries, especially of their European allies. It should be emphasized that the new President was almost forced to turn to constructive cooperation with the European partners, given the unfavorable international circumstances, particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis and due to the negative image of the United States at the international level in connection with its military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is worth noting that B. Obama’s policy was featured by obvious pragmatism in its approaches to solving of numerous problems and by the absence of excessive ideological burden in views.

However, B. Obama’s favorable attitude to multilateral coordination of policies also had its limits. Despite B. Obama’s desire to promote more active international cooperation, he could not go beyond the accepted American foreign policy doctrine. This implies major external structural constraints, as the preservation of American leadership in the world was declared one of the never-changing principles. Thus, the President attempted to keep increasing the U. S. military budget in order to increase the armed forces, equip them with new modern weapons and keep a wide network of US military bases around the world notwithstanding the difficult financial situation. These measures were aimed at preserving the U. S. military superiority over any other country or group of countries. The concept of multilateral cooperation included the further extension of NATO in Europe, as well as the establishment of official relations between NATO and other allied countries, such as Australia and New Zealand. By the way, in these countries, there were some new U. S. military bases established [Lutsenko and Piskorska, 2011: 47].

These principles also ruled out the possibility of subordination of the U. S. foreign policy actions to the decisions of the multilateral organizations in case of their discrepancy with the American national interests. The American administration, despite the declared principles of international cooperation, followed the policy of protecting its national interests through the use of the full potential of soft and hard power. In this context, the striking example is the United States policy towards UNESCO. Although G. W. Bush managed to restore the full membership by the U. S. at this organization, the Obama’s administration failed to keep it. The U. S. stopped paying its dues to UNESCO in 2011 in protest against the admission of Palestine to membership. As the U. S. contribution to this organization accounted for 22% of the budget, the organization was on the verge of a crisis and was forced to take the decision to suspend certain programs. This decision was taken based laws taken by the Congress in 1994. They stipulate that the United States would cease to pay their dues at any UN special agency that admits Palestine as a full

member. After the accumulation of arrears in payments, in November 2013, the United States lost the voting rights at UNESCO.

The challenges that the U. S. national security is facing threaten the other members of the international community as well. These challenges are global by their nature and require an adequate joint response. The main role in responding to them belongs to the United Nation Organization [Wirth, 2011: 54–58]. Therefore, this universal organization holds the most important position in multilateral relations of the United States, as this country is one of the founders and permanent members of the Security Council. It can be assumed that the UN was created out of the belief that the cooperation of the great powers with smaller countries would create an international community of peace and prosperity. Thus, a key role in this design was given to the great powers taking into account the tradition of the U. S. state formation stemming from the establishment of relations between different American states and not envisaging submission of a stronger entity to the rules established by weak ones. This principle was enshrined in the ‘veto power’ of the permanent members of the Security Council. However, the UN organization per se has somewhat transformed during the Cold war, given the process of decolonization and the rapid increase in the number of the UN members, partly gaining the right to dictate the rules to the great powers, and thus the US role in the UN has also gained new features.

The history of the U. S. – UN relations during the first presidency of G. W. Bush was quite controversial. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Washington received unconditional support from the Security Council on combating international terrorism. On September 12, 2001, the Security Council adopted a resolution which affirmed ‘the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense’ of the UN Charter, authorizing the use of ‘all necessary means’ by the United States in response [14], and on September 23, 2001, it adopted another resolution requiring every member of the UN to fight the financing of terrorists, share intelligence, and coordinate their efforts in fighting terrorism. At this stage, the task for the American president was to convert the received level of support into real actions.

The most crucial issue was to establish the connection of Saddam Hussein’s regime with the terrorist attacks. The Administration of G. W. Bush was consistently trying to initiate an investigation into the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In September 2002, G. W. Bush addressed the General Assembly and urged the UN to send inspectors to the rogue state. On November 7, 2002, the Baghdad received a request to resume the inspections. In February 2003, Colin Powell, the U. S. Secretary of State, dissatisfied with the pace of the investigation mission, stated at Security Council that Iraq was concealing the weapons of mass destruction [15].

The U. S. representative initiated the drafting of a resolution allowing for a military invasion of Iraq. The initiative had a mixed perception, and France even warned that it might impose a veto on the resolution. The impossibility of finding consensus in the organization on the authorization of a broad military action against Iraq ended up in led in the unilateral invasion of Iraq by the United States. Commenting on the decision, G. W. Bush noted that the delay in resolving such key issues would bring about the risk that the UN repeated the fate of the League of Nations [16].

The subsequent exposure of the fraudulent use of documents to prosecute Saddam Hussein turned into a severe reputational blow for the U. S. When in September 2002 the British government accused Iraq of trying to purchase nuclear materials from the Republic of Niger providing some documental proof of this, the U. S. administration used this information as a pretext to pass the Senate resolution that gave the President the right to start a war in Iraq [17]. In fact, the documents proved to be forged, and this was revealed by the IAEA Director General M. El-Baradei on March 7, 2003.

The unilateral U. S. decision to launch a war against Iraq led to the international isolation of the country in 2013, including at the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. The G. W. Bush Administration was trying hard to achieve at least any support for its actions from the Security Council. The only considerable result was the adoption of Resolution 1483, where the Security Council supported the Iraqi interim government formed by the U. S., and subsequently, the official UN representatives arrived in Iraq to observe the elections and to support the drafting of the country's new Constitution [18].

Although the core of the U. S. policy in the UN in the second presidency of G. W. Bush was also the legitimization of the military operation in Iraq, considerable attention was paid to other aspects of security. With a military coup in Haiti in February 2004, the transitional government requested the assistance from the UN to restore order. The first soldiers to land on the island under the auspices of the organization were the American marines. Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, personally thanked Kofi Annan for his active support of the American military.

In 2005 a new aggravation of situation occurred in Lebanon. The Washington managed to push through the Security Council a resolution that required an immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from the occupied part of Lebanon. It also provided for the establishment of a special commission to investigate the assassination of Rafik Hariri, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon. After the withdrawal of Syrian troops in August 2006 the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah broke out in Lebanon. With the support of the U. S., a peacekeeping mission was formed to settle the situation in South Lebanon.

In summer 2006, North Korea held a successful test of a ballistic long-range missile and a nuclear test. After finding a compromise decision with the other permanent members of the Security Council, in October 2006, the latter unanimously voted for the introduction of the sanctions regime on North Korea.

The situation in Iran also claimed the attention of the United States. While the U. S. kept on receiving reports and data that Iran was breaching the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and developing its nuclear program, the U. S. chose the UN as the best stage for countering such program. The Security Council imposed the first package of sanctions against Iran in December 2006, the second – in March 2007, and the third – in March 2008.

The mentioned directions and the corresponding initiatives proposed by the American side during this period are not exhaustive and are presented to highlight the priority areas for the U. S. policy in the UN. During the presidency of G. W. Bush, the Security Council became an important center of decision-making for the implementation of the Washington's foreign policy goals. The United States remained the key participant of discussions on peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Congo and Darfur. The successes of the American diplomacy at this point also include the UN resolution on the fight of AIDS, the effects of global warming and the creation of a number of anti-terrorist institutions.

The Washington's policy at a number of UN specialized agencies in this period cannot be called constructive as well. The United States quitted the Human Rights Council, arguing that this step was caused by the presence of authoritarian regimes chairing the Commission. Later they discontinued the funding for programs of family planning at the UN Population Fund since the administration of G. W. Bush had a principled position against abortion. However, there was a number of examples of successful cooperation of the U. S. with the specialized agencies, including the WHO, FAO, UNICEF on relief of the consequences of the tsunami in Asia in December 2004.

The Administration of B. Obama inherited from the previous President the task of reforming the U. S. policy at the UN. After a period of neglect and criticism of the organization in

public and scientific discourses on the eve of the 2008 presidential election, the attitude towards organization began changing. Experts regarded the new administration as possessing an opportunity to restore the American leadership in the world, and to strengthen the UN's role in this process.

The effective and reformed United Nations Organization focused on solving the world's problems, is one of the priority national interests of the United States. Under B. Obama's presidency, this statement was doctrinally enshrined in the National Security Strategy of 2010 [19]. The document noted that international cooperation based on the rule of law and human rights, when countries fulfilled their commitments, led to the prosperity of each country and of the world at large. The document indicated that the United States recognized the fact that no country alone could solve the global problems and in the First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review of 2010 defined the UN as a unique multilateral organization with regard to its legitimacy and influence on a wide range of problems [20]. Based on the above doctrinal beliefs, the Obama's administration stressed the critical importance of the existing architecture of multilateral cooperation, which is based on the UN system.

The administration of B. Obama also inherited the crucial agenda in respect of climate change. Key negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009 in fact failed. On this occasion, the U. S. President noted that differences between countries in respect of their obligations under the draft document were too substantial to be accepted.

One of the key differences of Obama's administration policy was the revision of the approach to a number of UN initiatives that had been previously ignored by the United States. While the previous administration believed that the membership of the United States at the UN body was impossible due to the presence of undemocratic countries there, and the former U. S. Ambassador to the UN R. Holbrooke called the Human Rights Council corrupt and ineffective [Bolton and Holbrooke, 2008: 15], President B. Obama in 2009 began the preparatory work towards obtaining membership at the UN Human Rights Council [Lynch, 2009].

The entry to the Council was a timely decision since it substantially improved the perception of the United States in the world, in the wake of the 2011 revision of the country's contribution as a member of the organization. Thus, the Washington managed to reserve a place at Council together with Belgium and Norway. This step mostly received positive feedback from the major human rights organizations [Lynch, 2009].

In the course of the two presidential terms, B. Obama has made a significant effort to regain the U. S. leadership at the UN, trying to compensate for the negative effects of the previous unilateral actions. However, his administration has not managed to overcome completely the inherent internal skepticism of the American political elite concerning the organization and multilateralism in general, thus the ambitious agenda of reform to improve the efficiency of the organization actually failed.

As regards the controversy unilateralism-multilateralism as a mechanism for achieving the national interests of the United States during the presidency of Barack Obama it is impossible to determine the dominant element. However, it should be noted that the commitment to multilateral instruments in the mentioned period was much stronger. Despite a serious revision of the policy towards the UN under B. Obama's administration, the U. S. reserved the right to take unilateral action in the case, where the position of the organization contradicts the U. S. national interests [Bolton and Holbrooke, 2008: 17]. By actualizing the basic democratic rights that underpin the American nation, and building up their policy over the ability to act in circumvention of the UN, the United States actually demonstrated the priority of their national interests to the world [Schlesinger, 2008: 114].

Summing up, it should be noted that the administration of B. Obama identified as its priority the convergence with the UN and ensuring that the organization had a greater role in the international affairs. This position was stated as a doctrinal principle in official speeches and statements of authorized representatives and partly implemented in the practical actions of the United States in the organization. The Washington during this period had a complex approach to the issue of the UN reform, and the proposals covered a wide range of fields. The major areas of the suggested reform encompassed the administrative reform, the reform of the financing system, and the changes in the Human Rights Council with the U. S. return to the body.

Paradoxically, the United States has put significant efforts to create the UN system, but at all times of its existence, they proved unable to adapt to the restrictions and obligations imposed on the country due to the membership at the organization. The commitment to fulfill its obligations for this country usually has to coincide with the national interests. As the aforementioned proves, the active participation of the U. S. in the United Nation that involves taking on additional commitments is regarded in this country as a threat to state sovereignty.

Conclusions. Taking into account the general approach of the U. S. to multilateral diplomacy, which is most overtly demonstrated by the practical actions at the United Nations (unsuccessful attempts to adopt resolutions that would allow to take military action in Iraq in 2003, the controversial issue of financing the United Nations, the history of the U. S. membership at UNESCO and other cases mentioned in this context), it becomes obvious that the United States has mostly ignored the potential of soft power, which could have been obtained in the case of more active use of multilateral mechanisms. This ambiguous attitude to the UN on the part of the United States reflects the unstable nature of the institutional interaction, however, such relations are in fact stronger than they appear. Ultimately, the UN is the model of the aims and principles envisioned by the Washington for the whole world. The organization remains the platform where the U. S. accumulate and actualize their soft power.

At the times of G. W. Bush's administration, the preference was rendered to the unilateral actions on the international arena. Under the presidency of B. Obama, the United States declared, in particular in the National Security Strategy, a more preferable disposition to the use of multilateral diplomacy. Additionally, during the second mentioned period, the United States refrained from unilateral actions, for instance in Libya and Syria, although the general perception of the United States as an actor, prone to unilateralism, did not allow the U. S. to exercise soft power efficiently by the means of the UN and other international organizations.

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