New Media and National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract
The advancement of internet has grown social interaction across all sphere of life. The far-reaching ability and anonymity it provides have advanced the communication patterns of citizen to citizen, citizen to government and vice versa. This advancement as brought by the new media revolutionised the communication pattern of social interaction as well as government operations. National security is one of the most precarious aspects of governance in any country today. Several governments across the globe have resorted to use of social media platforms in their operations including interactions and communication with their citizens. This study examined the use of new media in enhancing national security in Nigeria. Premised on the technological determinism and structural functional theories, the researchers employed in-depth interviews conducted among communications and security experts in Nigeria to examine the use of new media in enhancing national security in Nigeria among the respondents. Findings of the study revealed that there is a link between ineffective use of new media and the spread of security threats in the country. Thus, the researchers recommended a well-coordinated communication strategic plan for the use of new media and also, the reinforcement of conflict sensitive reporting by Nigerian media.

Keywords: New media, National security, Social Interaction, Governance, Freedom of Information Act, National Communication Act

Background to the Study

The advancement of technology and information has drastically changed how issues are handled in Nigeria and the world in general. National Security is loosely referred to as the requirement to maintain the survival of the state using economic power, diplomacy, power projection and political power (Lipmann, 1943, cited in Salawu, 2013). National security is greatly entwined with the facilitation of governance, which is the effective management of national affairs of a country at all levels of its functioning and execution, aimed at maintaining the integrity of the nation and the security of its people (Abraham, 2012). To achieve good governance in any country, it becomes crucial for the authorities to exercise political, economic and judicial control, in a manner which ensures that the people are given their freedom to fulfil their duties, and resolve their disputes as it is allowed in the constitution (Vohra, 2008). Jordan & Taylor (1981), however, stated that national security has a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it implies protection, through a variety of means,

of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten fundamental values and the vitality of the state.

On the other hand, the mass media are expedient in nation building. No government can survive without effective use of the mass media as described as the fourth estate of the realm by Edmund Burke in the 18th century (McQuail, 2000). The media are saddled with the traditional role of transmission of information, correlation of social values and surveillance of the society. Media agencies and organisations have been vital tools in the propagation of national security and plays an important role in the global fight against terrorism (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016). However, over the years, with the advent of digital technologies, the mass media have refined the landscape and, especially with the tremendous improvements to what is now known as the new media.

The new media are defined as means of communication using digital technologies such as the internet or in general, it is referring to the forms of media that are computational and rely on internet and computers for distribution. According to Cote, (2020) new media is any media -from newspaper articles, ad blogs to music and podcasts- that are delivered digitally from a website or email to mobile phones and streaming apps. That is, any internet-related form of communication can be referred to as media. Hasan (2013) also opines that new media is a technically interconnected network of audio, video and electronic text communication that blurs the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication. The general public utilise the new media to understand and keep in touch with different kinds of socio-economic, political and social events, turning the world into a global village and the speed at which information is disseminated becomes better and enhanced (Nsude & Onwe, 2017). However, the prospects of the new media are also faced with peculiar challenges which have crippled its role, especially in propagating national security. The new media has allowed everyone to be content creators and distributors which have in turn, led to the rise of fake news. Some lawbreakers and cybercriminals utilise the new media to modify legitimate documents and distribute them as part of disinformation campaigns. Terrorist and other criminal groups use the new media to pass their information to the general public to their advantage due to its cost advantage (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016).

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram Terrorists leverage on social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to advance their goals and objectives as they engage the state in years of bloody violence that have seen more than 50,000 deaths, displacement of about 2.2. Million people and destroyed socio-economic infrastructure in the North East (Dough, 2016). It is pertinent to note that, the new media, particularly the social media are powerful because they can combat insecurity and at the same time pose security threats (Nsude & Onwe, 2017). It is on this background that this study examines the use of new media and its potentials to enhancing national security with particular interest to Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Media organisations have over the years, influenced strategic decisions in the world, especially on outcomes of conflicts. During times of crisis, nations have used the media, in some instances, as a strong weapon to determine outcomes of counter insurgency (Akale & Udegnunam, 2018). Then advancements in the new media came onboard with digital platforms and internet and regarded one of the used sources of information and communication by both citizens and government operations. However, the use of new media as a communication platform introduces serious security and privacy concerns, including fake news or new vectors for cyber-attack that the government and the security operations cannot ignore (Kimutai, 2014). Conversely, insurgents' groups also use the media among other tools to effectively tilt public opinion.

Meanwhile, to attain National security, a country requires strategies such as monitoring conversations and content shared on new media technologies, arranging effective methods to counter adversaries' propaganda and interferences, improving governmental agencies and institutions' performances, strengthening a state's geopolitical position and its international credibility (Kimutai, 2014). The Nigerian government has adopted measures, including establishing the Nigerian Internet Registration Association and other organisation which censor content deemed offensive to the Nigerian community (Beckley, 2018).

Similarly, the National Assembly passed the Prohibition of Frivolous Petitions and Other related matters bill 2015, popularly known as the social media bill. The bill is aimed at censoring aspects of conduct on new media technologies (Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh, 2019). Also, the Prohibition of Hate Speeches and for other Related Matters otherwise known as Hate Speech Bill 2019 and the Protection from Internet Falsehoods and Manipulations and Other related matters bill 2019 were measures adopted by the Nigerian government to regulate the online space. Despondently, all these efforts received condemnations from stakeholders and failed in controlling hate speech, incitement to violence and other criminal activities over the internet (Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh, 2019). With these measures put in place by the Nigerian government, this study examines the current state of the use of new media for security operations, especially available strategies developed in managing and enhancing national security. What strategies exist to reduce the disadvantages related to improper use of new media in the country and how well are those strategies implemented without altering or violating the freedom of information and communication as well as national security?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the existing strategies for use of new media in enhancing national security in Nigeria.
2. Discuss the possible challenges to the use of new media to enhance national security in Nigeria.

New Media and National Security

Mass media are crucial in the achievement of society-wide objectives, be it in the area of social, health, infrastructural, political, educational or security development. The mass media constitute one of the most important institutions of socialiSation and in fact, the major cultural industry responsible for the distribution of ideas in the Nigerian society (Pate, 2011). However, technology is changing human patterns and habits globally; enabling the free flow of information within and outside nations as the weight, cost and power required for information-sharing technologies reduce (Dairo, 2017). New media is often referred to as web 2.0. It consists of a wide variety of web related communication technologies such as blogs, wikis, online social networking sites, virtual worlds and other social forms (Friedman & Friedman, 2008). There are more than twenty social media sites where information can be freely shared with the public, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These technologies help the connection of people and enabling interaction and information distribution over the internet. The new media has also increased social and political interactions through social networking platforms (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2017). Meanwhile, terrorist groups and miscreants use these new media to spread their propaganda, recruitment of new members, fund raising, training mechanisms, organise and strategize attacks and ways of escape, as well as and other forms of cybercrimes (Nsudu & Onwe, 2017). Therefore, the link between information as a tool and objective of achieving national security has thrown concern on who should be helm of this tool and how its use can in order to achieve national security (Dalhatu, Erunke & Idakula, 2019).

New communication technologies set off new perspectives for communication in different ways from the mainstream media, due to the nature of the new media and how it revolutionises various aspects of our lives, everyone can now be content creators and distributors which has in turn, lead to the rise of fake news, online violence, ethnic disputes, hate filled comments among other online vices. In response to this, the Nigerian government adopted some strategies to controlling these peculiar vices which includes establishing the Nigerian internet registration association and other organisations which was saddled with the duty of censoring contents seen as offensive to the Nigerian community (Beckley, 2018).

Fake News and National Security

The advent of digital technologies escalated the dangers of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda otherwise known as fake news, which have been features of human communication. Nunez (2018) opines that technology has led to the abundance of information and facilitated access to it, leading to the random, non-linear consumption of information and the selection of sources, direct or indirect sources, ownership of people, personal information. In recent times, fake news has assumed a disturbing element and its damaging implications cut across every walk of life, ranging from politics, religion, business, social life and national security. Salawu (2013) opines that national security is a bye product of governance and for national security to be

attained, a robust governance platform which can at once, create economic security, energy security and environmental security which will put a nation at a vantage position to shelve off conventional foes such as other nation-states and non-state actors, cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organisations. In Nigeria, fake news is said to be a threat to peace and tranquillity. Mohammed (2018) argues that fake news has emerged as the propeller to the forces that engender insecurity. Collaborating this position is the words of the Nigerian Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, who submits that fake news threatens the peace, security and corporate existence of Nigeria, describing it as a time bomb waiting to explode. National security is therefore a sine qua non for development and the total wellbeing of a nation and for this to be attained, all hands is required to be on deck to curb the spread of fake news (Madu, Aboyade & Ajayi, 2019).

Managing Social Media for National Security

There are arguments that one major challenge in managing social media in Nigeria, according to Beckley (2018), is the lack of regulatory law in the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA). The use of social media in China is regulated, with over 642 internet users being censored per minute in order to protect China's national security, thanks to the regulatory mechanism in place, however, there is a debate on how to implement a similar strategy in Nigeria without the intrusion into section 39 of the 1999 constitution which protects the freedom of speech. Subsection 11 (I) of the NCA 2003 only seeks to promote, support, and safeguard national interests, safety, and security in the use of limited national resources in Nigeria, without addressing how social media might be regulated.

Again, Nigeria's constitution guarantees the right to "the privacy of citizens," which essentially means privacy in the broad sense, not just privacy in one's home, correspondence, phone conversations, or telegraphic communications. As a result, certain information gathered from Nigerians to form various databases, particularly in the telecommunications industry, is protected under the constitution's right to privacy. With over 200 active social networking sites, the growth of social networks over the last decade has been astounding and scholars. Beckley (2018) argued that forensic computer analysts and social network forensic experts, among others can be efficiently used to deal with some of the negative effects of social media on national security.

Nigerian Communications Act 2003

The Nigerian Communications Act (NCA) 2003 was signed into law by President Olusegun Obasanjo on the 8th of July 2003 after being passed by both Houses of the National Assembly. The Act strengthens the capacity of the Nigerian Communications Commission to properly carry out its activities as the independent regulator of the telecommunications industry in Nigeria. The Act created the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) headed by an executive vice chairman and saddled with the duty of overseeing the regulation of the telecommunication sector in the country. The NCA

2003 applies to the provision and use of all communications services and networks, in whole or in part within Nigeria and was passed to meet the following objectives: to promote the implementation of the national communications, to establish regulatory framework for the Nigerian communications industry, to encourage local and foreign investments in the communication industry, ensure fair competition in all sectors of the Nigerian communications industry and so on.

Frivolous Petitions and other related Matters Bill 2015

The National Assembly passed the prohibition of frivolous petitions and other related matters bill 2015 popularly known as the social media bill which was aimed at regulating aspects of conduct on social media. In 2019, the prohibition of hate speeches and for other related matters otherwise known as hate speech bill and the protection from internet falsehoods and manipulations and other related matters bill 2019 was presented into senate. The bill sought to disallow hate speech, discriminatory language and harassment based on ethnicity, curb the spread of falsehood and fake news in Nigeria.

Review of Empirical Studies

Nwabueze & Ebeze (2013) studied mass media relevance in combating insecurity in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the agenda setting theory and adopted the qualitative approach in evaluating the correlation between the mass media and insecurity in Nigeria with emphasis on practical measures. The study recommended that journalist should be regularly trained on terrorism and conflict reporting in order to keep abreast of modern techniques that will be used in ensuring effective use of the mass media in combating insecurity in Nigeria. To curb insecurity, the police force is considered an essential institution, but is faced with several challenges. Adegoke (2014) examined the Nigerian police and the challenges of security in Nigeria. The study employed the survey method and sampled 200 respondents from two local government areas in Rivers state. The study was anchored on the structural functional theory. Findings of the study revealed that poverty, unemployment, leadership and religion are root causes of insecurity in Nigeria. The researchers recommended that the efforts of the Nigerian police force alone cannot curb the rate of insecurity in the nation. Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018) analysed the impact of social media on national security, a view from the Northern and South-Eastern region of Nigeria. They found that Nigeria's security climate is poor and social media is not a threat to Nigeria's national security. The study employed quantitative research methodology and distributed questionnaires online and recommended that there should be further studies on determining the perception of government security agents on the impacts of social media on national security. Asemah & Edegoh (2013) conducted research on social media and insecurity in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to find out whether social media contributed to insecurity in Nigeria, the extent to which social media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria and the social media network that has contributed

more to insecurity in Nigeria. The study was anchored on media equation theory and technological determinism theory. Their findings showed that social media have actually contributed to security challenges in Nigeria and the extent of contribution was high. The finding further showed that out of the social media network, the Facebook was the one that caused insecurity more.

Conversely, Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh (2019) investigated the nexus between social media and national security in Nigeria. The scholars found out that the Nigerian Communications Acts (2003) is not very effective as regards regulating the social media in aspects content sharing. They also revealed that there is poor enforcement of the freedom of Information Act and Nigerian Communications Commission due to low technological base. The study recommended that the Nigerian government should ensure that needs of regulatory agencies are well provided to avoid bad elements in the society from taking advantage of the social media. The mass media is considered as a very vital tool used for the fight against insecurity and social vices in any country. In 2019, Dalhatu, Erunke & Idakula explored media, terrorism and security in Nigeria's fourth republic. The study was anchored on the social identity theory and it employed secondary data which was content analysed. The study found out that insecurity and terrorism are inimical to democratic sustainability and development of Nigeria. Systemic corruption, malicious media reports, ethno-religious, political and economic based violence were listed as the predisposing factors and challenges of national security in the fourth republic.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The paper is premised on two theories; they are the technological determinism theory and structural functional theory. The technological determinism theory posits that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel and how society operates as it moves from one technological age to another. The theory as propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1964, explains the impact of ICTs on how information is consumed, retrieved and disseminated in contemporary society. The theory seeks to explain social and historical phenomena in terms of the principal determining factor (technology). The theory states that communication technologies in general are the prime causes of changes in society which determines the course of history (Asemah, 2011; Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). The theory is relevant to this study as the advent of digital technologies have changed the way the society interact. The new media have awakened citizen journalism and increased participation of the public in national affairs, people are able to keep in touch with different kinds of socio-economic, political and social events. The initiation of the new technologies has turned the world into a global village. However, if these new media are not properly managed, it could make or mar the society.

Structural functional theory also views society from the macro-level orientation. It looks at the society as a complex system whose parts work together in the promotion of stability. This theory is largely associated with the works of Talcot

Parsons (1902-1979). The main thrust of the theory is that society, is best understood as a complex system with various interdependent parts that work together. Various parts of the society are seen to be closely related and taken together as a complete system. Media organisation both traditional and new media work to support the existence of government by providing information, education and correlation of issues bordering security and other important issues to the people. This theory is relevant to this study, as the media (new media) is seen as a structured institution in the society that contributes its functions to the society. According to functional-structural theory, the contents the new media disseminates is information that aims to satisfy the need of society by observing natural and human universe that help people to survive in their physical and social reality (Nossek, 2015). Also, the falls and limitations of the new media directly and indirectly affects the general security of the society as proper functioning of each part of the society ensures the well-being and survival of the whole society (Bothamley, 2004).

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach and the In-depth (Intensive) interview method was employed. In-depth interview presents the respondents freedom in answering questions and an opportunity to provide in-depth responses (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo & Okpanachi, 2012). The research population consisted of communications officers and security personnel of the Nigerian Army selected based on their level of experience and expertise in dealing with communications and national security issues in Nigeria. Therefore, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to arrive at the study sample. According to Bryman (2008, P. 141) "purposive sampling is strategic and entails an attempt to establish good correspondence between research questions and sampling; meaning that, the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions." The researchers then asked respondents to suggest other communications and security experts who may also qualify for the research study (snowballing). Thirteen (13) respondents were arrived at and were interviewed in this study. These include nine (9) communication and four (4) security experts. The select security personnel are experienced on national security, especially as they work in the communications units of the Nigerian Army and security agencies. The communication experts on the other hand were selected based on their knowledge of tenants of communications and security issues in Nigeria.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The researchers adopted thematic method of data analysis to analyse the data gathered from the in-depth interviews. Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: perception on effects of new media on national security, the new media strategies used for national security, the challenges

faced using the new media for national security and the ways to strengthen the use of new media for national security in Nigeria. These are presented and discussed below:

Use of New Media for National Security in Nigeria

The section started with understanding of use of new media for security purposes. When asked, all the respondents believed that new media are used for security purposes and could have positive impact on the security structure of a country. Majority of the respondents believed that the new media can be used to alleviate security menace citing examples with how the Nigerian government is exploring and exploiting the opportunities of new media in establishing strategies such as security policies and bills. One of the respondents explained that "the Nigerian government is taking advantage of the opportunities of new media to ensure security especially around digital safety, privacy and curbing fake news." Another respondent who is a security expert reported that "the new media is used by security agents in Nigeria to get information and inform people about the true happenings in the troubled areas. This is in form of tips, alarms and intelligence in security prone areas. Also, to ascertain this, one of the respondents said that "the Nigerian army was able to record success in its war against insurgency in Nigeria, especially because of the tips and information shared using new media."

In tandem with this finding, the structural functional theory adopted in this study assumes that the new media is a structured institution that contributes its functions to the society in disseminating information aimed at helping people to survive in their physical and social reality (Nossek, 2015). The information shared through new media helps educate the populace thereby turning their hearts against the insurgency that is causing insecurity. Confirming that, one of the respondents reported that "at any time, people are willing to supply the security agencies with security information via social media and other available online platforms to help people informed and the security agents in their fight against insecurity. However, the respondents have contradictory views on whether what is on ground regarding new media can be regarded as effective strategies for national security. For instance, the security experts that were interviewed believe that there are strategies for use of new media for national security include establishment of new media policies and bills such as social media bill, Freedom of Information Act and public communication Act on countering fake news and have been quite effective as they are able to create some level of sanity in issues of fake news and hate speech which has caused so much tensions and conflicts in the country.

Also, other respondents acknowledged efforts such as use of dashboards, websites and other platforms designed by security agents, international and local organisations to monitor fake news or propaganda on some insecurity issues like Boko Haram insurgency as quite helpful in use of new media for national security. One of them reported that "apps are dashboards are employed by local and international organisations to inform the public about the extent of the security situation towards finding lasting solution." Breaking this point further, other respondents said, "so far,

the security personnel, especially police and military have been able to track some criminals and terrorists through social media tracking devices and are able to monitor security prone areas through dashboard created by organisations such as Centre for Information Technology advancement hate speech dashboard and Transparency international security dashboard." Technological determinism theory that seeks to explain the impacts of ICTs in contemporary societies, as adopted in this study helps to elucidate these findings that communication technologies in general are the prime causes of changes in society which determines the course of history. While the other respondents who disproved that what is on ground cannot be regarded as effective strategies for use of new media for national security believe that issues of monitoring and implementation are critical in ensuring success of such efforts. One of the respondents said "what is on ground on use of new media for national security like acts and bills cannot be regarded as effective strategies. This is because they are hardly followed and difficult to implement or even monitor." Conversely, Ogbette, Enwemeka & Okoh (2019) assert that existing strategies like the Nigerian Communications Acts (2003), Freedom of Information Act and Nigerian Communications Commission are not effective as regards regulating the social media in aspects content sharing and there is poor enforcement of these strategies due to low technological base. This means that the Nigerian government if at all willing, can leverage on social media and all other components of new media for its security operations however must improve its technology base to ensure success especially in creating awareness among the people as well as tracking of security activities.

Challenges of Use of New Media for National Security in Nigeria

This section examined the respondents' views on whether social media poses immediate threats to national security in Nigeria. All the respondents agreed that improper use of social media platforms poses threat to national security and that these are seen in many areas. One of the respondents mentioned that "the rise of fake news, unsubstantiated claims, misinformation, disinformation seditious messages and conspiracy theories are furthering insecurity in the country." Another one said "apart from fake news, there is the issue of spreading of "propaganda" by politicians and other elites to incite violence, bigotry and hate speeches using the new media, especially the social media platforms. He explained that even terrorists also used social media and other new media platforms for the same purpose that the security agents use it to pass information about their attacks, create fear among the people and sometimes get tips about their operations." In the same vein, one of respondent lamented that "use of new media as a strategy for achieving national security is somewhat coming in Nigeria; however, there is need to tread with caution because there are a lot of misinformation on both new media and traditional media.

On the issue of misinformation, disinformation and seditious messages raised as a challenge to use of new media and its potential to enhance national security, one of the respondents agreed that the new media has caused several unrests and conflicts

in the country. The respondents lamented that "the issue of misinformation and disinformation or seditious messages have posed limitation to use of new media generally talk less of using it to enhance national security." Another respondent also puts that "the rise of hate speech, black mail, misinformation and disinformation as a result of cheap platforms to speak or write such as what the social media gives to citizens is worrisome. It does not just deter people from using the platforms, but reduced the level of trust that people have for these new media and this has limited the way people accepts information for security proposes that are displayed or channeled on the platforms." Furthermore, a respondent raised concern on use of social media for trivial purposes rather than serious issues saying "majority of people use new media such as social media for trivial news and socialisation than for serious purpose such as getting informed on security matters. Where serious issues such as security are discussed, then they are traded carefully as they also have the potential of inciting public sympathy, disagreement among others. Therefore, this is a serious limitation to ensuring use of new media platforms to pass information that will enhance national security."

Furthermore, one of the respondents who is a major general lamented "the reason we are facing the challenges in use of new media for security purposes is lack of coordination and strategic planning. If these things are put in a better shape, people will welcome the idea. In general, almost all the respondents agreed on the fact that lack of regulation and unethical influencers available in the country are serious challenge to use of new media for the purposes of enhancing national security in Nigeria. On the contrary, Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018) aver that social media is not a threat to Nigeria's national security however, the country's security climate is poor.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of new media in Nigerian security challenges were investigated in this paper as it is one of the burning socio-political issues in Nigeria and around the world. In this paper, the ineffective use of new media is placed within the context of increased national security challenges in the country and to that end this paper argues that using social media to spread false information and negative information causes and amplifies unnecessary tension among citizens and governments inability to provide strategies that will enhance using the platforms poses threats to national security. One of the paper's most important empirical findings is that there is a link between ineffective use of new media and the spread of security threats in the country. The link was emphasised as one of the most important ways in which Nigeria's security challenges have worsened. On one hand, users of social media make ineffective use of the platform to spread negativity thereby affecting the security situation of Nigeria while on the other hand, there are few not properly implemented government efforts towards proper use of new media to enhance national security. This, the paper found out that it is mainly as a result of the rise of fake news, unsubstantiated claims, misinformation,

disinformation, seditious messages and conspiracy theories, propaganda, lack of policies, regulation and unethical influencers. The following measures are, therefore, recommended:

1. The Nigeria government should involve National Orientation Agency in enlightening the general populace on the potentials of new media as well as how to deploy such to enhancing national security. This is because a lot of people do not have trust on the new media especially because of the rise in the misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and fake news among others.
2. The Nigerian media to align or attune to conflict-sensitive reporting to set agenda for other new media platforms and information peddlers such as new media. This is essential as over the years the county's media terrain have been accused of being more conflict journalism than peace journalism. Hence can do a lot when it is ensured that both traditional and new media emphasises peace.
3. The Nigerian government through its security agencies should design and implement a well-coordinated media strategy for use of new media and this should spell out policies and bills to regulate activities of users and misuse for national security purposes.

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