# FOREIGN INTERVENTIONISM: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This study examines foreign interventions in Nigeria, with the objective of determining its causes and consequences in contemporary times. To achieve this objective, descriptive survey research design was used for the study, which area of study covered the Federal Territory Abuja, Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used, with homogeneous sampling aspect chosen as it focuses on one particular sub-groups, from which 150 Respondents were evenly selected from the diplomatic corps, security agencies, academic. The study finds that causes of foreign interventions in Nigeria include insecurity, interest of foreign powers, poor economic condition and other infrastructural challenges, human rights violations and poor delivery system. Some of the consequences of foreign intervention in Nigeria were determined to be insecurity and poverty, exploitation by foreign nations, breaking Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth, religious and economic rivalry. It was concluded that Nigeria's rich wealth in human and material resources, and her standing as the major powerhouse in West Africa, her Big Brother status in Africa constantly attracts interference from foreign powers. The result is that there are mostly overt (rather than covert) interventions that can be linked to insecurity, interest of foreign powers, poor economic condition, infrastructural challenges as well as lack of respect for human rights abuses. Recommendation include that the country's political and military leadership in Nigeria should understand the tenets of realism and act in the interest of the country. It was also recommended that interventionism can be mitigated by improved security network, and improved diplomatic engagement. Similarly, reasons for interventionism, which include insecurity, democratic development, infrastructural deficit and human right issues, should be addressed, so as to forestall interventionism.

## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, it has been argued that sovereignty should not stand in the way of intervention embarked upon to protect victims of gross human-rights violations. A number of cases illustrate this new normative claim and the controversy this position has generated. Examples include the Bosnian civil war, the Somalia Intervention (1992), the Rwandan genocide (1994), and the Kosovo War (1999). Rabe (2005: 240) added that the literature on intervention reflects these key themes, with different authors arguing over the meaning and continuing importance of sovereignty and the non-interference principle. Questions include i. whether the

international community has a right or obligation to respond to humanitarian abuses, ii. whether intervention can actually make a positive contribution to peace and stability at acceptable costs, and iii. how intervention can be made more effective for those military and civilian practitioners engaged in actual interventions. There has been focus on the latter item since the US led invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

Contemporary Africa has witnessed unprecedented violent conflicts compared with other parts of the world. Severe cases include Angola, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Mali. The Nigeria-Biafra Civil war is another case of devastating armed conflict that is often best forgotten. Consequences of these conflicts include whole-scale casualties, health and death of millions of Africans through people war-induced starvation. The nature of armed conflict in Africa is so pervasive that Kane (2008) had opined that the predictability of violent conflicts in Africa has been regarded as one of the most distinctive features of the continent.

Similarly, several mainstream Western scholars hold similar pejorative positions on Africa and violent conflicts. However, scholars like as Fang, Kothari, McLoughlin, and Yenice (2020) linked foreign intervention (however subtly) to Africa's present predicaments. Gilpin (2016) also believes that fragile governments, historical acrimonies, exclusionary politics, opposed legitimacy, natural resource rivalry, external political and economic interference, globalized conflicts and terrorist ideologies have cooperate to produce numerous incidents of violent conflict all over the continent of African since many Africa countries got their independence in the 1960s, which has brought about the death of Millions of people, with inexplicable properties destroyed as well. Gilpin (20160 further claim that violent conflict in the continent has also cost many African countries billions of dollars owing to malicious damage and inevitable economic achievements, in spite of many efforts to foster viable and sustainable peace, security and development in Africa.

In addition to Nigeria's non-alignment national policy, the country has a unique position and interest within the West African Sub-region. Hence, the huge investment Nigeria has made in ECOWAS. Ibebunjo and Udeoji (2019: 165) noted that Nigeria has experienced acts of aggressions from her immediate five neighbours, which are relatively smaller than Nigeria in terms of "militarily, population, human and natural resources, landmass etc.). One thing they all have in common is their neo-colonial and defence pact with France". According to them, this military defence path notwithstanding, Nigeria's treatment of her immediate neighbours with "kid's glove" is occasioned by her foreign policy/politics of Afro-centrism. Thus, Nigeria still maintains some aggression within the comity of nations. Thus:

> Nigeria stood against the apartheid regime in South Africa on a number of occasions and on July 8, 1986 led 30 out of the 59 members of the Commonwealth of Nations to boycott the 13th edition of the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland. This was in condemnation of the pro-Apartheid actions and statements of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. It severed diplomatic relations with France in 1961, in protest of French atomic bomb test in the Sahara. Also, the setting up of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its military force the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), is a clear indication

that the country's foreign policy is more aggressive than is generally projected (Ibebunjo and Udeoji, 2019: 166).

In this regard, Kabia (2009: 59) pointed that that "Nigeria's motivation for the establishment of ECOWAS can be linked to three factors: Security, hegemonic ambitions, and the desire to expand its market". Nigeria and some other African countries have been threatened by the West for what the West considered a harsh move by not legalising same sex marriage. The Senate passed the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill that stipulates up to 14-year jail term (with no option of fine). The UK government threatened to stop its financial assistance to any country that legislates against gay marriage. These is an indication that financial aids are also means to alter a government's policy against policies in its own country. The government of the UK was told categorically to hold its aids as the practice of same sex marriage remains strange to the Nigerian cultural values and practices (Akogun and Ohia, 2011). Under the subject of foreign involvement, questions have been raised as to how a local extremist religious group could have developed to the point of sustained attack on the country since 2009. In fact, in some quarters, the machinations of France, has been linked to the potency of Boko Haram (Kolawole, 2019).

In view of Nigeria's geo-political position in Africa, it therefore follows that any incursion into Africa and West Africa would have significant impact on Nigeria's national cohesion, peace and security. It therefore becomes cogent to investigate the implications of overt and covert foreign interventions into the country for these reasons.

In order to successfully carry out the above, the under-listed objectives have been raised.
1. To determine the causes of foreign interventions in Nigeria; and
2. To analyse the consequences of such interventions to the study area.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings**

In order to grasp the subject matter of this study fully, the following section will be used to tackle conceptual and theoretical underpinnings as they relate with this study. Included in this section are concepts such as security, national security and interventionism. Theory examined is basically realism theory as it related to power dealings in international affairs.

**The Concept of Security**

Security has been viewed from various dimensions by different. Ewetan&Urhie (2014) posited that the issue of security has been a global. In the same vein, the word, insecurity connotes different meanings like lack of safety; threat; risk and so on. According to Adepelumi (2018), lack of security is for citizens not to be protected against harm. Ewetan&Urhie (2014) defines insecurity from two perspectives. First, lack of security is for the government and other relevant authority to protect her citizens against danger. Secondly insecurity is the condition of exposing citizens to threat or nervousness and unpleasant emotion in the society. These definitions of insecurity clearly mean that citizens who suffer insecurity may not be aware of what is happening but can be helpless in any of the intimidation and dangers that affect their lives. In this study insecurity is defined as absence of peace as a result of historical, religious, ethno regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contribute to frequent conflicts that destroy lives and property.The benefit of a secure nation includes development, peace and National cohesion. The concept of security is not new and has been a source of concern to many societies. The imperative

of security to the peaceful development of any country has made many citizens to surrender to trust government in the protection of lives across the world. Ake (2001) thus argued that the idea of development has become a problem because of the conflict between its manifest and latent functions. He noted that anytime that development is the outcome of economic growth when there is peace.

**National Security**

Holmes (2015) explains that for most of the 20th century, national security was had its focus on military security. However, its conception expanded over time to include elements that were not directly related to armed forces and their involvement in security. He further explained that in 1947, the United States created the National Security Council to "advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security.... (National Security Act, 1947)".

Currently, the definition of national security has been expanded to include other aspects of a nation's strategic objectives including economic security; energy security; environmental security; and even health, gender, food security and so on. National security thus entails both national defense and the protection of a series of geopolitical, economic, and other interests, it affects not only defense policy, but foreign and other policies as well (Holmes, 2015: 23). In this light therefore, McNamara (1968: 149) opined

> In a modernizing society, security means development. Security is not military force though it may involve it, security is not military hardware, though it may include it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security… The security of any nation lies not solely or even primarily in its military capacity; but equally in developing relatively stable patterns of economic and political growth (McNamara, 1968:149).

**Understanding Interventionism**

Interventionism is a concept that addresses the characteristics, causes, and purposes of a country's interfering with another country's attitudes, policies, and behaviour. Political, humanitarian, or military intrusion in another country's affairs, regardless of the motivation, is a highly volatile undertaking whose merits have long been debated by philosophers and politicians. The term has also been used in economics to mean any type of government action that affects its own economy (Finnemore, 2004).

According to Rabe, (2005), interventionism is any significant activity intentionally undertaken by a government to influence the political or economic affairs of another country. Again, this may be military, political, cultural, humanitarian, or economic in nature, and intended to maintain international order, peace/prosperity. It may also be strictly for the benefit of the intervening country. To Downes (2021), an act needs to be coercive in nature to be considered interventionism. In other words, an intervention is defined as a threatening act that is unwelcome by the target of one's intervention. Aggressiveness can be said to be central to the concept of interventionism in foreign affairs as an interventionist action always operates under the threat of violence. A state can engage in a variety of interventionist activities, but the most notable is military intervention. Such intervention can take many forms depending on its stated goals. For

example, a country may invade or threaten to invade another in order to overthrow an oppressive regime or to force the other to change its domestic or foreign policies. Other interventionist activities include blockage, economic boycotts, and assassinations of key officials (LoNigel and Barry, 2008).

**Realism Theory**

Hans Morgenthau's Realist Principles. Hans J. Morgenthau (1904–1980) developed realism into a comprehensive international relations theory. The leading systemic-level approach is realism theory,' which begins with the assumption of the primary role of sovereign states who act rationally to advance their security, power, and wealth in an anarchic international system. The first assumption of realism is that the nation-state (usually abbreviated to 'state') is the principal actor in international relations. Other bodies exist, such as individuals and organisations, but their power is limited. Second, the state is a unitary actor. National interests, especially in times of war, lead the state to speak and act with one voice. Third, decision-makers are rational actors in the sense that rational decision-making leads to the pursuit of the national interest. Here, taking actions that would make your state weak or vulnerable would not be rational.

According to Stewart (1989), realism suggests that all leaders, no matter what their political persuasion, recognise this as they attempt to manage their state's affairs in order to survive in a competitive environment. Finally, states live in a context of anarchy – that is, in the absence of anyone being in charge internationally. The often-used analogy of there being 'no one to call' in an international emergency helps to underline this point. Within our own states we typically have police forces, militaries, courts and so on. Hunt (1989) noted that as realism frequently draws on examples from the past, there is a great deal of emphasis on the idea that humans are essentially held hostage to repetitive patterns of behaviour determined by their nature. Central to that assumption is the view that human beings are egoistic and desire power. Realists believe that our selfishness, our appetite for power and our inability to trust others leads to predictable outcomes. Perhaps this is why war has been so common throughout recorded history. Since individuals are organised into states, human nature impacts on state behaviour. In that respect, Niccolò Machiavelli focused on how the basic human characteristics influence the security of the state. And in his time, leaders were usually male, which also influences the realist account of politics. The state emphasizes an interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world. Power is a concept primarily thought of in terms of material resources necessary to induce harm or coerce other states (to fight and win wars). The use of power places an emphasis on coercive tactics being acceptable to either accomplish something in the national interest or avoid something inimical to the national interest. This also explains why states can intervene in other states, which basically relates to power and interest(s).

**Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The area of study is Abuja Federal Territory in Nigeria. Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, is located in this territory. Purposive sampling was used as it enabled us to use our own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. This technique was also used as it usually can help a

researcher to obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, saving time and money (Black, 2010). Six categories of purposive sampling are: typical, extreme, critical, heterogeneous, homogeneous, and theoretical sampling. Out of these, homogeneous sampling was chosen as it "focuses on one particular subgroup in which all the sample members are similar, such as a particular occupation or level in an organization's hierarchy" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

Followed the appropriate groups by snowballing into others which are diplomats, security agencies and peace ambassadors within the FCT, Abuja. Since the researcher do not have the total number of population to sample. The sampling will be carried out thus:

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents**

| S/No | Agencies | Sampled |
|------|----------|---------|
| 1 | Diplomats | 50 |
| 2 | Security agencies | 50 |
| 3 | Academia | 50 |

Therefore, the sampled population is 150 respondents to represent the entire population of the study.

Data obtained from questionnaires above were analysed quantitatively using Likert sclae, and sorted with the aid of tabulation and computed using simple percentage and ratio in tables and percentages. Similarly, data obtained from interview was analysed using descriptive techniques and triangulated with secondary materials.

**Data presentation and Analyses**

Data obtained were from questionnaires used in gathering was analysed using Likert Scale and presented below. A total number of 150 questionnaires were administered to a sub-group of respondents. Due to the closed nature of the group, 100 per cent was returned.

**Objective 1: Causes of foreign interventions in Nigeria**

In the section below, causes of foreign intervention in Nigeria was analysed from our questionnaires, and presented in the table below.

**Table 2: The causes of foreign interventions in Nigeria**

| | Causes interventions | SA | A | D | SD | $\bar{X}$ | Sd | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Insecurity as a cause of foreign intervention | 92 | 69 | 20 | 2 | 2.88 | 0.723 | Agree |
| 2. | Interest of foreign powers | 83 | 74 | 24 | 5 | 2.72 | 0.778 | Agree |
| 3. | Poor economic condition and other infrastructural challenges are responsible international intervention | 85 | 75 | 15 | 8 | 2.66 | 0.560 | Agree |
| 4. | Lack of respect for human rights and poor justice system. | 96 | 56 | 25 | 6 | 2.93 | 0.858 | Agree |
| | | | | | | **2.78** | **0.727** | |

**Agree**

**Source:** Field survey, 2023.

Table 2 above shows mean scores of 2.88, 2.72, 2.66 and 2.93 in support of the causes of international interventions in Nigeria for items 1, 2, 3 and 4. The overall mean scores of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.727 respectively to indicate that the causes of foreign interventions in Nigeria include insecurity, interest of foreign powers, poor economic condition and other infrastructural challenges, human rights abuses and poor delivery system.

In an interview with a respondent, who is a diplomat, it was affirmed that the abundant human and natural resources (like we have in Nigeria) will always lead to foreign intervention because that was even what brought the Europeans to Africa in the first place. He further noted that:

> The European came to Africa in the name of bringing development but they ended up causing more harm than good to some extent. Look at Africa with all the resources yet insecurity is everywhere. They are also interested in who becomes the leader. While governments of Western-style democracies, for example, often take into account the wishes and desires of various interest groups that wield domestic political power, autocratic and dictatorial governments define their national interest with less concern for inputs from domestic interest groups. However, within a state whether democratic or autocratic, different individuals and different groups define the national interest of the state in different ways. Even though national interest is a concept that does not have universal meaning, scholars agree that it is a useful concept that provides them with a tool with which they can understand the goals of nation states in their interaction with one another in the international system (KI Interview, 2023).

Another respondent (an academic in relevant field of study), attributed other causes of foreign intervention to poor economic condition that make leaders to seek for international intervention. He posited that Nigeria's political leaders believe that committing Nigeria to a foreign policy that encourages and promotes peace, security and development in the West African sub-region would enhance her national interest. Thus, Nigeria's national interest of domestic peace and regional responsibilities placed heavy commitment on her. Until leaders of Nigeria and other African countries assumed responsibilities and proper status of good governance, our economic policies will be on paper only. Nigeria's big brother role in Africa has had very serious implications for the country's foreign policy in Africa and argued that Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy posture is actually beyond her capabilities. He points out that "Nigeria size, population and resources do not make a leader; regional leadership is not only a function of geography and resource endowment, but more importantly, of the capability to convert and utilize them to advantage and command respect of regional peers

This position is supported by the third respondent from a security organization who believes that Nigerian statesmen gave the country what he described as a "grandiose regional policy," which has drained her development resources, and has failed to maximize the objectives towards the realization of her national interest. For instance, a Nation that pride itself as the big brother in Africa is described as one of the poverty capitals of the world. He believes that "every single action shall be adjudged by how much it advances our national power and influence, and how much it advances our interest, objectives and purposes." These Nigerians have advanced their

argument against Nigeria's intervention in African affairs after taking into consideration the enormous funds Nigeria spends in military interventions in Africa, especially in West Africa, while almost all the domestic sectors are yearning for attention, and above all the standard of living of many Nigerians is grossly inadequate.

The fourth respondent (an Ambassador), argued that national economic interest and insecurity interest are some of the justifications for foreign intervention. He said these are done on the belief that conflicts do have spillover effects which at times destabilizes other regions or states by promoting insecurity, poverty and political instability. He believes that the foreign interference on conflict resolution initiative within Nigeria and West Africa is premised on the notion that the UN's security is inextricably tied to the security of world to achieve global peace. He added that the majority of Africa is underdeveloped because they are neocolonial states. He also noted that African state leaders often derive authority from the support obtained from neocolonialist masters and not due to the people's will or their freedom of right. The leaders of these states rarely derive their authority to govern from the people's will; instead, they derive their authority from the support obtained from neocolonialist masters. He added that the overriding aim of international intervention should be to ensure global peace, provide an international legal framework for resolving conflicts and fostering such agenda that will guarantee the enjoyment of the universal human rights, the impacts of interference in countries under international conflicts are arguably far from sustainable.

**Objective 2: Consequences of foreign interventions to Nigeria**

Below, some of the consequences of foreign intervention in Nigeria are analysed and presented in the table below.

**Table 3:** The consequences of such interventions to the study area?

|  | Consequences of intervention | SA | A | D | SD | $\overline{X}$ | Sd | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Insecurity and poverty | 96 | 74 | 12 | 2 | 2.82 | 0.846 | Agree |
| 2. | Exploitation by foreign nations | 80 | 71 | 20 | 2 | 2.70 | 0.718 | Agree |
| 3. | Breaking Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth. | 85 | 73 | 20 | 5 | 2.76 | 0.763 | Agree |
| 4. | Religious and ethnic rivalry | 78 | 77 | 19 | 9 | 2.65 | 0.658 | Agree |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **2.85** | **0.875** | **Agree** |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, mean scores of 2.82, 2.70, 2.76 and 2.65 in support of the consequences of such interventions to the study area for items 1, 2, 3 and 4. The overall mean scores of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 0.875 respectively to indicate that the consequences of such interventions to the study area include insecurity and poverty, exploitation by foreign nations, breaking Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth, religious and economic rivalry.

In support of the above result from questionnaires, a Respondent (a member of the Diplomatic corps), noted that consequences foreign intervention in Nigeria is the creation of more insecurity, and poverty, which intervening countries claim to want to resolve. According to him, also,

hegemonic states attempt to control other states economically, politically, and culturally through military force, in neocolonialism, hegemonic states utilize political and economic power to ensure states' dependency and exert their influence. He argues that one of the result of neocolonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Categorically, hegemonic powers' investment activities increase rather than decrease the gap between the rich and the poor states.

Another respondent (an Academic) posited that national interests in Nigeria should include: the defence of the country's sovereignty, independence and integrity, the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, the creation of relevant political and economic conditions of the country, the promotion and improvement of economic well-being of the Nigerian citizens and the promotion of world peace and justice. She thus noted that Foreign intervention has led to the exploitation of many African countries including Nigeria. The West is even making efforts to break Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth. Having championed the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, Nigeria remains at the fore front of conflict resolution in West Africa. The creation of ECOWAS Cease Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which facilitated the resolution of the Liberian and Sierra Leone conflicts and the restoration of democracy in both countries and other countries in West Africa was Nigeria's idea. She added that Nigeria has played a prominent leadership role in the West African sub-region through her commitment of substantial military capacity, notably in supplying the leadership and majority of troops for ECOMOG, the ECOWAS sponsored peacekeeping force in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

A top management security personnel, opined that Nigeria's Big Brother status in Africa is a source of vexation for some countries of the West, particularly France. According to him, this consequently makes for insecurity and national security disaster for Nigeria, as aggrieved countries will do all in their power to destabilize Nigeria. He therefore blamed some of Nigeria's security challenges such as the Boko Haram insurgency on some of these foreign powers.

**Discussions of findings**

From the fore-goings, it can be seen that some of the consequences of interventions to Nigeria include insecurity and poverty, exploitation by foreign nations, breaking Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth, religious and economic rivalry. The aligns with the views of Schmidt (2018: 293), who linked the Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria to external factors, noting that the insurgents had established links to al-Qaeda and were trained in Mali's al-Qaeda camps, and subsequently returned home with weapons acquired from Libyan stockpiles. Were more direct as to the linkages between Boko Haram insurgency and extra-Nigerian actors (Ekumaoko and Ezemenaka, 2020). Likewise, Babawale (2007) argues that the history of economic crisis in Nigeria can be traced to the period of British colonialism which led to the disruptions and dislocation of the country's pre-colonial mode and relations of production. For him, colonialism brought about distortions into the economy and deepened the country's dependence on the metropolis.

International intervention by the western nations can be mitigated by improved security network, employment generation and sustainable human development, transparent and accountable leadership as well as improved economy. This is relevant to the submission of Al-Hassan, 2008; Eke, 2009; and Idumange, 2011) that Nigeria's foreign policy is unprogressive and not beneficial to majority of Nigerians because of the inability of the leadership of the country to define what constitutes Nigeria's national interest. These scholars believe that, since foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, Nigeria's domestic environment does not support her frequent interventions in African affairs that cost the country monumentally in terms of financial, material and human resources. They maintain that Nigeria exhibits false generosity outside the shores of Nigeria in order to create a wrong impression that the country's political economy is healthy. As a result of the inability of the country's leadership to define her national interest, her frequent involvement in conflicts in Africa, especially in West Africa at the expense of her domestic development and welfare of her citizens is viewed with mixed feeling by Nigerians.

**Conclusion**

From the study above, it becomes obvious that Nigeria, due to her rich wealth in human and material resources, and standing as the major powerhouse in West Africa and its Big Brother status in Africa is constantly plagued by interference from foreign powers. As a result of this, there are mostly overt (rather than covert) interferences that can be linked to insecurity, interest of foreign powers, poor economic condition, infrastructural challenges as well as lack of respect for human rights and poor justice system. It has also been determined from above that consequences of such interventions to Nigeria include insecurity and poverty, exploitation by foreign nations, breaking Nigeria's hegemony in the sub-region leading to poor economic growth, religious and economic rivalry.

Stemming from the above, the under-listed recommendations are given:
1. Political and military leadership in Nigeria should understand the tenets of realism and act in the interest of the country, as foreign leadership does;
2. Interventionism detriment to the countries interests can be mitigated by improved security network, and improved diplomatic engagement along the lines of National security cooperation;
3. Reasons for interventionism have been outlined to include insecurity, democratic development, infrastructural deficit and human right issues. These issues should therefore be addressed to ensure there will be little or no excuse for intervention;
4. Nigeria's hegemonic capacity is also a source of concern to the powerful nations of the world. This potential should be blended with strong international cultural, political and economic ties for foster relationships.

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