

The War on ISIS and Russia's Role: The Covert CIA Agenda, Media Deception and Propaganda

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Ever since Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the UN General Assembly on 28 September, the spokespersons for the US regime and its propaganda apparatus have tried to present Russia as a nostalgic power seething with envy. Such misrepresentations of current Russian policy and Russian history in the US are not unusual- in fact they have been the rule since 1917. Unlike the US, Russia is not an island whose ignorance and idiocy have been preserved by two oceans separating it from the rest of humanity (except the non-whites and half-whites south of Miami and the Rio Bravo).

Hence when Julia Ioffe quotes Putin in English except for a single Russian word in her *Foreign Policy* article, it is more than pedantic.[1] Her point is to reassure the journal's readership that a single Russian word *gosudarstvennik* from an approximately 70 minute speech is more important than any of the complete sentences that composed President Putin's polite but firm indictment of US imperial policy, especially as practiced in the Middle East. However as if to prove that she either has no comprehension of Russian or is simply illiterate, she elaborates:

The same is true when the two men talk about a certain post-war world order. In Obama's mouth, the phrase evokes certain American ideals, however patchily or hypocritically implemented: human rights, democracy, and the idea that governments serve their people, not the other way around. It is about the democratic peace theory — the idea that democracies don't go to war with one another. It is a force of progress and, often, progressivism. In Putin's understanding, however, it is the vessel of a certain brand of standpatter conservatism and, most significantly, statism. Putin, at his core, is a *gosudarstvennik*, a believer in a strong unitary central government.

In fact, Putin used the term *gosudarstvennost'* — the stability and strength of the state — and its linguistic derivatives no fewer than 10 times in his address. And he didn't use it the way someone like Obama might. Libya's *gosudarstvennost'*, Putin said, "was destroyed through the grave violations of U.N. Security Council Resolution No. 1973." When he spoke about the refugee crisis engulfing the Middle East and Europe, he spoke not of the responsibility of governments to help those in need, he spoke of *gosudarstvennost'*. "Without a doubt, the refugees need sympathy and support," Putin said. "But the only way to definitively solve this problem is to restore *gosudarstvennost'* in the place where it was destroyed, by strengthening state institutions where they still exist or are being recreated.

Ioffe uses another standard liberal rhetorical device when she insists that "post-war world

order” “evokes certain American ideals, however patchily or hypocritically implemented”. She does not explain why precisely anyone but Americans should consider patchy and hypocritical behaviour to bear any connection to ideals, let alone “American ideals”. According to Ioffe Putin is a “statist”, a believer in a strong unitary central government. Of course David Cameron is too. Moreover since the Patriot Act is still in force to assert that the US regime does not advocate strong unitary central government (in the form of the POTUS) is to be on the verge of delirium.

No mention is made of a conspicuous difference between Putin’s speech and Obama’s:

The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region. We will confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf War.

We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends on the region’s energy supply and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy. [2]

In US jargon “free” anything means the unrestricted ability of US corporations and their allies to extract labour, raw materials and any other resources from any place in the world without interference by the people or governments of countries that may be in possession of them. US “core interests” are just what George Kennan said they were in 1947—everything the US wants to satisfy its gluttonous ruling class, just like the slave labour that made the US from the very beginning. Israel and Saudi Arabia are US allies in the region for this purpose. In sub-Saharan Africa the allies are now Uganda and Rwanda. Human rights and national sovereignty have never been core interests of the US, except to the extent its courts treat corporations as if they were human beings or sovereign entities.

What escapes Ioffe—and is characteristic of most Anglo-American imperial thought on the matter—is that Putin uses the word *gosudarstvennost* to mean “sovereignty”. Putin has rightly said that the violation of national sovereignty has caused today’s conditions—the post-war order, in which the US claims to be the sole absolute sovereign. That is obvious even with no knowledge of Russian.

In his speech today, Putin spoke of the vital importance of other international bodies, like the G-20 and the World Trade Organisation. But their significance lies in the same basic fact: These bodies allow Russia to use its historic and unparalleled talent at bureaucratic manoeuvrings to punch above its weight...

In other words, Russian policy always has to be subordinated to US policy—because even Russia is not big enough to have its own foreign policy. The *Washington Post*, in a more diluted form for its semi-literate bureaucratic readership, describes the Russian government’s position as if it were merely the reaction of lower class day children to being spit-balled by the upper-class boarders at some New England prep school. While not everyone expresses such blatant ignorance as former Hewlett-Packard mistress Carla Fiorina, the propaganda experts in the US know that the best way to manipulate public opinion in the US is by maintaining a rigorous “no fact zone” over US airspace.[3]

With even sophomores able to reason the possible consequences of Russia’s intensified

support for its long-time ally, Syria, a combination of irritation, condemnation and confusion can be found among the usual suspects who opine in the *faux gauche* media. Joshua Frank condemns Russia and anyone who supports its action in *Counterpunch*:

Russia's latest involvement in the ever-worsening Syrian catastrophe — which has no doubt been fuelled by the U.S. and its regional allies — is being embraced by much of the anti-imperialist Left as a direct confrontation to U.S. intentions in the region. If one is to buy Russia's propaganda more than Western disinformation, we'd have to believe that Vladimir Putin's invitation to drop bombs in Syria is solely meant to aid the Syrian Army against the growing threat of the Islamic State. That's it. It's a pseudo-peace mission. Get it? Indeed, the Syrian Army is in retreat in much of the country and any help they can get is being welcomed by President Bashar al-Assad, who only controls 20% of the country. Assad needs victories, and he needs them fast. Yet, there is most certainly other geopolitical issues at play that shouldn't be ignored. [4]

Frank is one of those closet cold warriors who believe that Columbia has the duty to carry Britannia's torch throughout the world. He calls Russian statements "propaganda" because the word generates knee jerks throughout the outer party in the US. For Frank "Western disinformation" is obviously nicer, it sounds like "distress" or "distortion"; in the "land of euphemism" it means outright lies. In order to give his rant the quality of America's favourite masturbatory tactic—even-handedness—he begins with reference to "Two bullshit talks at the UN, one from the leader of the "Free World", the other from the head of the Russian Federation..." Needless to say the "Free World" has been extinct since 1989 but Frank hasn't noticed. The point is to reassure readers that no facts will penetrate Left cyberspace if Frank can do anything to prevent it.

In a story by Vijay Prashad, also appearing in *Counterpunch* but originally published in the Indian journal *Frontline*, confusion is sown in a discussion of General John Allen's assessment of the alleged war against ISIS.[5]

Misused reports

Not long after Allen's strong statement, 50 intelligence analysts who work at the U.S. military's Central Command formally complained that their reports had been misused. They noted that their own assessments were less rosy than those of the upper administration. The Pentagon's Inspector General has opened an investigation into these claims. Its spokeswoman, Bridget Serchak, noted: "The investigation will address whether there was any falsification, distortion, delay, suppression or improper modification of intelligence information." Senior military officials at the Central Command—such as Major General Steven Grove, who ran its intelligence operation—are said to be targets of the investigation. The Central Command would not comment on the allegations. [6]

The excuse of bad or misused intelligence has been around at least since the US re-invaded Korea in 1951. Then the complaint was how could the Koreans north of the 38th parallel not only cross it by "surprise" but also nearly drive the US military and its Korean lackeys in the South into the Sea of Japan. This story of poor intelligence was repeated in Vietnam too. As a rule the "poor intelligence" song is sung whenever the official policy is faced with embarrassment or there is faction fighting within the ruling elite.

The “Leftist” mouthpiece *The Nation*, suggests one of the avenues the imperial elite is likely to consider.[7]

On the other hand, Obama is surely correct in his insistence that the Assad regime’s brutality “is not just a matter of one nation’s internal affairs—it breeds human suffering on an order of magnitude that affects us all.” And it’s certainly reasonable for Obama to call for ‘a managed transition away from Assad and to a new leader, and an inclusive government.

The parties to a new peace conference must focus on creative ways to bridge that divide, even as they pursue other steps to de-escalate the conflict. Those interim steps should include support for local cease-fires, like the one recently agreed to in Zabadani and Idlib province. A second step should be deeper cooperation among all nations in stemming recruitment by jihadi extremists, in particular ISIS. A third step is an arms embargo, preferably one agreed to by the UN Security Council. That may seem a distant possibility now, given Russia’s recent steps to buttress its military base in Latakia and increase the flow of arms to Assad’s government, not to mention the continued supply of weapons to rebel groups, whether moderate or jihadi. But an embargo agreed to by Washington, Moscow, and the other P5 nations, as well as the Gulf monarchies, Iran, and Turkey—and applied to all parties, rebels as well as government forces—is an eventual necessity.

The Nation editors support “regime change” provided it is “creative” and has the veneer of diplomacy. The proposed peace conference is a way in which Syria can be dismantled like Yugoslavia under CIA pacifier Richard Holbrooke was at Dayton. To even suggest that the Gulf oil despots, euphemistically called Gulf monarchies, should have anything to say in the restoration of peace and sovereignty in the Middle East is nothing more than the polite form of cynicism that prevails among the glitterati on the Hudson. An arms embargo is one of those old tricks used in Iraq and elsewhere to make sure that only covert weapons supplies to US proxies arrive. The dishonesty of the proposal is apparent by the conspicuous omission of Israel, whose settler-colonial regime has waged overt and covert war against Syria since it was part of Nasser’s United Arab Republic. Since the recruitment of jihadi extremists has been US (CIA) policy, for which Saudi Arabia and the Gulf tyrannies are amply paid, the only party that can stop these recruitments, not to mention training and arming them, is the very foreign policy establishment for which the journal regularly speaks.

The British shadow foreign secretary, Hilary Benn[8], bane of deceased, serious Left MP Tony Benn, was reported in the *Guardian* to have said:

Russia needed to ‘urgently clarify what the aims are of its airstrikes in Syria.

‘There is wide international agreement on the threat from Isil/Daesh [Isis], but, while the Russians say that this is who they are targeting, reports from Syria suggest that this is not the case,’ he said.

What has happened in the last 48 hours makes it all the more pressing and important that the British government lead the way in seeking to secure a UN security council resolution to deal with the threat from Isil/Daesh, safeguard civilians, increase humanitarian aid and agree a plan to try to bring peace to the long-suffering Syrian people.’ [9]

Either Benn does not read or it is not only his ministerial pretension that is in the shadows.

Russia has always stated its objectives in Syria quite clearly—ever since Mr Obama threatened President Assad with his “red line”.[10] Unlike the US regime or HM Government and Opposition, the Russian government has consistently respected the letter and the spirit of the UN guarantees to the sovereign integrity of its member-states.

When the US regime subverted the UN Charter by declaring that NATO and OAS were merely “collective self-defence” arrangements—supposedly compatible with the Charter—it abrogated one of the primary terms by which states were encouraged to join this successor to the League of Nations: an end to aggressive war by military alliances. In 1991 and again in 2003 the German government subverted the provisional basic law (de facto constitution) by claiming that military participation in the invasions of Yugoslavia and Afghanistan were ultimately within the NATO framework, although they constituted neither self-defence nor actions within NATO territory at the time.

Wintour continues to confuse the *Guardian’s* “Left” readership with this thinly disguised regime polemic:

The immediate dilemma facing the UK was whether it would be forced to accept that the price of the ejection of Islamic State from northern Syria was the strengthening of President Bashar al-Assad. Cameron has always insisted that there can be no long-term settlement unless Assad goes, even if he remains during a transition. The Labour frontbench also recognises that Assad is the cause of most deaths in Syria. [11]

This is not far from the position that Frank intends to give respectability. Since it is clear—but not openly explained—that ISIS cannot be defeated without bombing then the best thing is for NATO to bomb because murdering Assad—Gaddafi-style—is worth killing every Syrian between Nusaybin – Al Qamishli and Damascus.[12] The announcement that the French are joining the bombing can be explained easily—since the conclusion of the secret Sykes – Picot agreement in 1916, France has considered Syria a part of its republican empire. If Assad and the Ba’ath Party are to be vaporised or sodomised, the French elite has at least sentimental reasons to collect their share of the booty a century later.

The Economist, by no means Left but enjoying a large readership among the “outer party” of the Empire, advises the white, middle-class bureaucrats, academics and business people who read it[13]:

Both Kunduz and Russia’s bombing are symptoms of the same phenomenon: the vacuum created by Barack Obama’s attempt to stand back from the wars of the Muslim world. America’s president told the UN General Assembly this week that his country had learned it ‘cannot by itself impose stability on a foreign land’; others, Iran and Russia included, should help in Syria. Mr Obama is not entirely wrong. But his proposition hides many dangers: that America throws up its hands; that regional powers, sensing American disengagement, will be sucked into a free-for-all; and that Russia’s intervention will make a bloody war bloodier still. Unless Mr Obama changes course, expect more deaths, refugees and extremism. [14]

The myth of the benevolent emperor, soon to be punished for his ill-placed mercy, is a trope that appeals especially to patients with Vietnam Syndrome. *The Economist* cautiously advises of the risks of *coitus interruptus* when an empire is in the process of raping a

country.

The principal mouthpiece of the US corporate elite, the *New York Times*, presented the Russian airstrikes in Syria in the style consistent with the feigned objectivity for which the US propaganda flagship is renowned:

Russian aircraft carried out a bombing attack against Syrian opposition fighters on Wednesday, including at least one group trained by the C.I.A., eliciting angry protests from American officials and plunging the complex sectarian war there into dangerous new territory.

Russia's entry into the Syrian conflict, foreshadowed by a rapid military build-up in the past three weeks at an air base in Latakia, Syria, makes the possibility of a political settlement in Syria more difficult and creates a new risk of inadvertent incidents between American and Russian warplanes flying in the same area. And it adds a powerful but unpredictable combatant to a civil war that has already resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and a flood of refugees.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia justified his country's entry into the conflict by saying that Russia was acting "preventatively, to fight and destroy militants and terrorists on the territories that they already occupied, not wait for them to come to our house." [15]

This article is riddled with deception. First of all the modifier "at least one group trained by the CIA" suggests that CIA-trained groups, of which ISIS/ ISIL is entirely composed, are distinguishable, "good CIA" and "bad CIA". What could the "dangerous new territory" be? Syria is not the Netherlands, known to have expanded its national territory with land drained using dikes. Then the *Times* refers to a build-up at an air base. The reader is not told that the Latakia air base has been maintained by Russia since the days of the Soviet Union. The Latakia base and its naval station in Tartus have all the legitimacy of USAFB Ramstein, Germany or the USN Sixth Fleet station in Naples, Italy. To call Russia unpredictable is simply mendacious given the consistency with which Putin has always announced his government's intentions and actions well in advance of implementation. The *Times* editors—who are intimately connected to the US national security establishment know very well that since Brzezinski replaced Kissinger in the National Security Council, Muslim militants and terrorists have been a major instrument for attacking Russia.

In fact were pundits like Joshua Frank to write what they really mean—and what many of the faux gauche in the US and UK believe—they would admit that they share the ambitions of the US regime to maintain their empire's exceptional privilege in the world. Their quandary is namely that of speaking from both sides of their mouth while chewing the lies they have been regurgitating for decades.

So what is the real story that has the imperial establishment in a state of apparent panic? I propose the following explanation—just based on what ordinary people with some historical memory can construct.

Ever since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 by CIA-trained mercenaries, the bulk of US wars have been conceived and managed at Langley. This was also the case with Vietnam as I argued in my essay (attached just for ease of reference). The regular US military provides a screen for these wars. At least that is Langley's intention. After Vietnam there were in fact

many regular military who were highly averse to fighting CIA wars (although not opposed to wars themselves, like in Iraq.) This led consecutive POTUS to increase the appropriations for so-called Special Operations forces. These irregulars dress like US military but are essentially nothing more or less than the US equivalent of the *Waffen SS*. They operate under direct political command structures that are more frequently than not completely distinct from the legislated chain of command. They wear regular uniforms in public in part to conceal their irregular role and also to promote an illusory “super-soldier” competence in the regular armed forces that is simply absent.

There are only two regular military forces active in the Middle East under “normal” US command, the US fleets in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. The rest, especially after the draw down in Iraq, is under the control of Langley, either directly or through Israel/ Saudi Arabia or SOC.

The recent push by the CIA forces in Syria is essentially a copy of the Vietnam bombing campaigns intended to depopulate the countryside and create “free fire” zones. The refugees serve two purposes; one is to create a space between Turkey and Damascus where Syrian forces can be destroyed with impunity (like the gap between Benghazi and Tripoli) and two, to provide the justification for “humanitarian bombing” campaigns. This strategy against Assad relies upon the deniability of the ISIS and the illusion that “moderate opposition” is actually Syrian. (Recall the problems the US regime (CIA) had in creating a “third force” in Vietnam.) Since ISIS is a mercenary army with little or no Syrian participation it cannot be treated as part of the “opposition” to Assad which the US regime claims justifies its war.

It is very important to remember that every CIA war has at least three basis components:

- a) the covert policy target: e.g. overthrow of Assad;
 - b) the exploitation of the covert economy: weapons, drugs/ contraband, and shadow finance;
 - c) the ideological/ political manipulation of the “white” population (US and/ or Europe).
- This means that the covert policy target may enjoy support of different regime factions.

At the same time obtaining the covert policy objective may have little or nothing to do with the Company’s main business– profiting from the covert economy and regulating it on behalf of the sectoral executive management (e.g. illicit drugs and the pharmaceutical industry). Moreover ideological manipulation of “whites” in Europe frequently poses different problems than the rather simple strategies needed to manipulate the US population. In the present case there are several levels at which internal policy conflicts can arise within the Company which are then magnified when tabled with the interests of other factions in the US ruling class.

Now shift to Russia (and apparently China). Putin has made clear on numerous occasions that he does not support separatism in the Ukraine or pseudo-Islamic terrorism in states bordering Russia. Putin is a staunch defender of national sovereignty (something utterly foreign to US/ CIA doctrine). Until now Washington has relied on the propaganda and sanctions against Russia, as well as pressure in the Ukraine, to keep Putin’s government divided. (He has to contend with those USD billionaires inherited from Yeltsin, too.) Putin sees– correctly– the strategy behind the sudden flow of refugees to Europe. If the CIA is

allowed to do to Damascus what they did to Tripoli, any action to preserve Russian presence will become untenable.

The overdue decision to intervene and actively support Assad is based on the general knowledge– reiterated in his UN speech– that the Syrian army is competent and battle-worthy but needs support against the covert warriors. Putin knows that the US is not bombing ISIS but bombing Syrian infrastructure and military. (Evacuating the population helps keep this fact concealed.) If Putin actually destroys the ISIS bases and creates the shield the Syrian army needs to mop up, then the CIA will lose this war and even worse, Russia may produce all the smoking guns needed to show everyone whose war it is.

Ideally the CIA would like to have Russia forced to restrict its operations to NATO rules (essentially grounding them). Russia won't accept that. So now the question for Langley is: can they get a USAF shield in place to prevent Russia from neutralizing their mercenaries (to use a CIA term)? That would risk a real war, which the regular US military would have to fight (from a considerable disadvantage). Or do they sacrifice the ISIS and help kill them off so that they remain deniable assets– while perhaps evacuating and regrouping them in Saudi Arabia or Turkey. Turkey is a risky place to hide them. Evacuating them under cover of refugee streams will save manpower but brings a number of other problems (especially in Europe).

So the folks in Washington are not “numbskulls”– just incredibly vicious. There is an understandable fight over who is responsible for the policy in the Middle East now. The CIA has never willingly conceded its prerogative to make foreign policy (after all it is the organisation closest to the Business elite that runs the country.) However it depends on all sorts of regular military and political assets to impose its strategy and implement its decisions. That is the core of ambiguity and “confusion” in Washington, a struggle among the factions (in which the psychopaths in Tel Aviv play no small role, as the principal US offshore enterprise.)

I confess, as I have argued elsewhere in these pages, that the primarily white male supremacist establishment on both sides of the Atlantic are still embarked on the war-driven campaign for global domination begun by Britain in the 19th century. While David Cameron wants to recreate himself as a 21st century Palmerston[16] and imagines he is fighting Russia like in 1853, the folks who run Langley hope—“they can” perpetuate the role they assumed when Britain was ruined in 1918. Generations of white imperialists, whether Progressive, Fabian or Tory, cannot bear the thought that Asia—Russia and China—could restore some semblance of the global equity that the United Nations promised seventy years ago and Anglo-American atomic bombs and mercenaries have obstructed since 1945. It is not Russia that suffers from nostalgia and obsessive delusions of global *grandeur*.

Notes

[1] Julia Ioffe, The Remarkable Similarity of Putin's and Obama's Speeches at the U.N. Foreign Policy <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/29/the-remarkable-similarity-of-putins-and-obamas-speeches-at-the-u-n/> pp. 3-7

[2] Barack Obama, Address to the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations, 24 September 2015

[3] “I believe we must tell the Russians that we will conduct [and] we will secure a no-fly zone around anti-Assad rebel forces that we’re supporting,” she said on Fox News’s “Hannity.”

“Does that mean we might use force against Russian jets?” host Sean Hannity then asked.

“Well, hopefully not,” Fiorina responded. “Hopefully, if we are signaling clearly to the Russians are intention, it will not come to that.” Quoted in

<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/255598-fiorina-we-must-be-prepared-to-use-force-o-n-russia> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2NS_BTko4U

“But if it does come to that, I think we must be prepared,” the former Hewlett-Packard CEO added.

[4] Joshua Frank,

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/02/why-we-need-to-oppose-all-foreign-military-intervention-in-syria/> It must be said here that Mike Whitney is one of Counterpunch’s regulars who has by far the most sober analysis of the situation.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/02/putins-lightning-war-in-syria/> along with Michael Hudson.

[5] General John Allen USMC (retired), in addition to his rank in the US Empire’s traditional storm troopers, is a graduate of the National Defense Intelligence College. The mission of the college is to be the center of academic life for the intelligence community—will help shape graduates who address the range of mission challenges as a fully integrated community, and encourage lifelong learning as they continue to serve this nation.” It must be remembered that “intelligence community” is the official euphemism for the US enormous political warfare organisation.

[6] Visjay Prashad,

<http://www.frontline.in/world-affairs/the-syrian-dilemma/article7701679.ece?homepage=true>

[7] *The Nation* is effectively the flip side of its nominal nemesis *National Review*, started by CIA alumnus W F Buckley. Run by “OSS diapers” like CFR member Ms K Vanden Heuvel, *The Nation* features the opinions of the “Reform liberal” (and Democratic Party) wing of the US national security establishment. <http://www.thenation.com/article/the-syria-crisis/>

[8] Hilary Benn (b. 1953) is the second son of deceased Labour MP and minister Tony Benn (1925 -2014). In a reported conversation with Tony Benn about the right-wing views of socialist Ralph Miliband’s (1924-1994) two sons (David and Edward, who are both senior members of the British Labour Party), he was to have lamented that he had the same problem with one of his sons.

[9] Patrick Wintour,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/01/russian-intervention-in-syria-makes-commons-vote-on-airstrikes-less-likely>

[10]

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/06/president-obama-and-the-red-line-on-syrias-chemical-weapons/>

[11] Patrick Wintour, *op. cit.*

[12] The town is one of the Turkey – Syria border towns still under control of the Syrian government.

[13] “Outer party” is the term Orwell used in 1984 to refer to the class of imperial functionaries that Noam Chomsky has said are the most heavily propagandised segment of the population, needed for maintenance of the empire at home.

[14]

<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21669950-danger-russias-intervention-syria-and-americas-timidty-afghanistan-putin-dares>

[15] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/europe/russia-airstrikes-syria.html?_r=0

[16] Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865), British prime minister when Britain and France defeated Russia in the Crimean War. He was also prime minister during the greater part of Britain’s Opium Wars against China. In that sense, like Cameron today, played a major role in the maintenance of Anglo-American control of the global narcotics trade. Today British forces protect the opium industry in Afghanistan along with the CIA assets, covered by the ISAF.

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