

The weekly briefing | 27 October 2014

Political and security risk updates

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Africa: Egypt declares three-month state of emergency in restive Sinai Peninsula.

Americas: Gunman attacks Canadian parliament after shooting dead soldier at National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Asia and Pacific: Chinese Communist Party expels six officials and announces improvements to legal system as 4th plenary session closes.

Europe: Pro-European parties look to have won Ukrainian parliamentary election.

Middle East: Uncertainty remains following latest negotiations between Iran and P5+1/EU3+3.

Polar regions: Russia developing underwater combat robots for use in Arctic.

Africa

Egypt declares three-month state of emergency in restive Sinai Peninsula

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has announced a three-month state of emergency in the Sinai Peninsula following two attacks that killed 33 soldiers on 24 October. The al-Qaeda-inspired militant organisation Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, has been blamed for the attacks, in which a car bomb attack targeted a military checkpoint and gunmen later attacked another military checkpoint. However, no group has yet claimed responsibility for what is some of the worst anti-state violence in Egypt since al-Sisi came to power following the overthrow of Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

Al-Sisi announced a night-time curfew and his intention to upgrade the Egyptian military's presence throughout the peninsula in a bid to clear the country of armed groups and terrorist organisations. The government has expressed concern that the continued unrest in Sinai may pose an existential threat to the state of Egypt, a goal al-Sisi asserts foreign forces are actively conspiring to achieve. It remains unclear, however, which foreign groups the president believes are supporting the state-targeted attacks. Ansar Beit al-Maqdis have previously supported Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, though the group has no official ties or known lines of communication with the terrorist group.



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The curfew is to take place between the hours of 17:00 and 07:00, local time, though it is not immediately clear how this will be enforced. Al-Sisi's government and the Egyptian army will continue to target and detain armed rebels and their sympathisers within Sinai in the coming weeks and months. Moreover, as the state of emergency involves the closing of Egypt's Rafah crossing with Palestine's Gaza Strip, it is unclear if or how this may impact Egypt's dialogue with Hamas.

Other developments

A lasting ceasefire between the Nigerian government and Islamist rebel group Boko Haram is unlikely in light of new attacks and kidnappings. The ceasefire that had been agreed on 17 October is being repeatedly undermined. Suspected Boko Haram militants have allegedly abducted an additional 60 women from a mountain village near the border with Cameroon. Boko Haram is also considered responsible for the bombing of a bus terminal in Azare, Bauchi state, on 23 October, which killed at least five people and injured 12 others. In addition, it appears that government forces have failed to uphold the ceasefire agreement, as reports indicate that there have been clashes between troops from the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army and Boko Haram militants in the town of Damboa in Borno state.

The total number of cases of Ebola has surpassed 10,000 according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Mali has reported its first case of the virus after it was learned that a two-year-old girl that had been travelling by bus from Guinea was infected. WHO considers the case a severe emergency, as the girl was symptomatic during her travel, and Mali has quarantined all persons travelling on the bus. Mauritania has closed its border with Mali until further notice.

The UN Security Council has extended the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until 30 November 2015. By adopting resolution 2182 (2014) the Security Council also amended a number of imposed sanctions. Under the new provisions, vessels in Somali waters can be controlled by any state in order to enforce the export ban of charcoal and arms. Furthermore, the arms embargo has been partially lifted in order to supply forces loyal to the Transnational Federal Government. Locally, the fight against al-Shabaab continues.

On the radar

- **US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, will visit Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea this week** in an effort to improve the international response to Ebola.
- **Nationwide strike by the Coalition against the Cost of Living (CCVC) is planned in Burkina Faso** on 29 October.
- **Activists to protest in Algiers, Algeria,** on 1 November.
- **Further protests likely in North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of the Congo,** against the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).
- **Public sector workers plan to strike throughout Morocco on 29 October** to demand an increase in wages and denounce socioeconomic policies.

Americas

Gunman attacks Canadian parliament after shooting dead soldier at National War Memorial in Ottawa

Shortly before 10:00 local time on 22 October, an unarmed Canadian Forces reservist guarding the National War Memorial in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, was shot and killed by a masked gunman with a hunting rifle. Michael Zehaf-Bibeau shot Corporal Nathan Cirillo in the back at his post by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier before returning to his car and driving towards Parliament Hill. Zehaf-Bibeau then entered the Centre Block parliament building and exchanged gunfire with security guards. He was shot dead by the House of Commons Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Vickers, in the Hall of Honour, as Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the leader of the opposition, Thomas Mulcair, held caucus meetings in rooms on either side of the hall. The prime minister was reportedly hidden in a cupboard, while MPs barricaded the doors and sharpened flagpoles to use as spears. Harper was evacuated by his security detail shortly after the incident had ended.

The attack on the war memorial and parliament came just two days after Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent was killed in an unrelated hit and run attack by Martin Couture-Rouleau in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, south of Montreal. Rouleau was shot and killed by police after his car flipped during the ensuing chase. Zehaf-Bibeau and Rouleau were both recent converts to Islam. Rouleau was known to federal authorities, who were concerned that he had been radicalised. Zehaf-Bibeau had a criminal record for drug and theft offenses. There is no evidence at present that either man was linked to Islamic State (IS), though both are thought to have wanted to travel to Iraq or Syria to fight with the extremist Islamist organisation. In September, the Canadian government approved providing assistance to the Iraqi government in the fight against IS, which was later expanded to providing fighters and other aircraft for the US-led coalition fighting the group.

Although Canada was a significant player in the war in Afghanistan, it did not participate in the invasion of Iraq, and was until recently considered a relatively low-value target by Islamist militants. That may have changed with Canada's participation in the attacks on Islamic State in Iraq. Canada will now undoubtedly go through a period of debate on the balance right between freedom and security in relation to possible new anti-terror laws. In the week prior to the attacks in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa, Canada's public safety minister had revealed that the government was preparing to boost the powers of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. On the day after the attack on parliament, the prime minister said that the law must be strengthened in the areas of surveillance, detention and arrest. Many will argue that the police and intelligence services will need greater powers if they are to prevent future terrorist attacks; while others will point out that existing laws are enough if enforced properly. Either way, it is likely that Canadian parliamentarians will shortly be voting on much-strengthened surveillance and detention powers.

Other developments

High ranking officials from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) met in Havana, Cuba, on 24 October to speed up negotiations seeking to end the longest running conflict in Latin America.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos launched the peace talks in August 2012. Newly elected for a second term in May 2014, Santos has pledged to solve the country's ongoing civil war with FARC during his new mandate. The presence of high ranking FARC officials on the island is likely to now speed up the negotiation process as both parties struggle to reach an agreement on the matter of legal and financial compensation for the victims of the conflict.

The party of Uruguayan President José Mujica, the Broad Front, faces a challenging presidential election. Exit polls and partial results indicate that Mujica's successor, Tabaré Vázquez, who governed the country from 2005 to 2010, has won the most votes in the election on 26 October, though has fallen short of the outright majority needed to avoid a run-off. Vázquez is likely to now face a second round run-off against his closest competitor, Luis Lacalle Pou of the conservative National Party. The electorate of the other opposition force, the Colorado Party, will be the key to winning the second round on 30 November. Pou hopes to broker an alliance with the Colorado Party, as it has already successfully done for the gubernatorial elections next May. The Broad Front is also expected to lose control of congress, which would give greater influence to the two main conservative parties as politics becomes more consensual.

In a television interview on 21 October, the Ecuadorian minister of the interior, José Serrano, has denied allegations of torture and police abuse detailed by a Human Rights Watch report published the previous day. The report highlighted police brutality against protesters in the capital, Quito, on 17 and 18 September. The protestors blamed the government for increased transportation costs, relaxed policies concerning extractive industries, and the lack of access to education. The report indicated that 270 individuals were detained with dozens more subject to beatings and other physical abuse. Although three policemen have been investigated for alleged attacks, Serrano denied the accusations outlined in the report. The government of President Rafael Correa has constantly come under criticism from Human Rights Watch since Correa first took office in 2007.

On the radar

- **Further student protests are expected against Chilean President Michelle Bachelet's education reform.**
- **Severe drought in Honduras puts thousands at risk of hunger**, and also impacts Guatemala and El Salvador.

Asia and Pacific

Chinese Communist Party expels six officials and announces improvements to legal system as 4th plenary session closes

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has expelled six officials, including some of the party's more senior members, such as Yang Jinshan, Li Dongsheng, Wang Yongchun, and Li Chuncheng. Their expulsion was ratified by the CCP at their 4th plenary session last week, though it had been discussed prior to the meeting. Although the plenary session was held behind closed doors, state officials indicated that the major theme of the meeting was the rule of law in China. Specifically, the delegation agreed that the Chinese constitution should be at the nucleus of the legal system, that the government should establish a mechanism to report public officials who interfere in judicial proceedings, and that the Supreme People's Court should establish inter-regional courts aimed at increasing judicial independence. In addition, the plenum decided to increase the number of lawyers and legal professionals in the government in order to improve law making and implementation throughout the country. Also, the plenum agreed that the implementation of these changes should be used as an indicator of the performance of local officials.

Looking more closely at those expelled from the party, Yang Jinshan was formerly the deputy commander of the Chengdu military region, and Li Dongsheng, Wang Yongchun and Li Chuncheng were politically associated with the now-retired Zhou Yongkang. Zhou is the former head of China's security apparatus and law enforcement systems. Zhou is also one of the highest-ranking officials to be the subject of a state-led corruption investigation. The seniority of those sacked is not particularly surprising, given the recent crackdown on political graft in the Chinese Communist Party. Also consistent with President Xi Jinping's efforts to reduce graft within the party are the changes to the legal system announced after the close of the session.

Prior to this plenary session, some observers had suggested that the campaign to prosecute corruption at high levels within the party and government were a ploy by the president to further consolidate his influence within the party's top decision-making apparatus. Nevertheless, the recent statements bode well for the future development of the Chinese legal system. It is largely observed that the legal system in China is characterised by 'rule by law' rather than 'rule of law'. Such a distinction implies that government officials are typically above the law. These changes, if implemented throughout the country, would have a significant impact on the public's perception of the Chinese legal system. Nevertheless, many Chinese citizens in areas distant from Beijing and other major urban areas, have expressed a lack of confidence that such changes will permeate to more remote regions of the country.

Other developments

On 21 October, the United States military delivered an X-Band radar system to a US military communications station in Kyoto, Japan. In recent months, Japan has expressed increasing concerns over North Korean missile tests. Two of North Korea's medium-range missiles have the ability to strike Japan. In addition to concerns over North Korean aggression, the Japanese have also expressed concern regarding China's increasing assertiveness in defending its claims in the East China Sea. In addition to the advanced missile defence radar system, the US military has also stated that it will send two navy destroyers, capable of missile defence, to Japanese waters. The stated purpose of these deployments is to protect against North Korean provocations. Nevertheless, Hua Chunying, a spokesperson from the Chinese foreign ministry, expressed concern over the bolstering of anti-missile systems and stated that 'seeking unilateral security' in northeast Asia is not beneficial to stability in the region.

The Indian government has approved more than \$13 billion in defence modernisation projects. On 25 October, the Indian Defence Acquisition Council approved a number of defence acquisitions projects that had been pending. These approvals follow a smaller round of approvals in June 2014 that were worth roughly \$3.5 billion. Currently, the Indian armed forces import roughly 70% of its defence equipment. Earlier this year, the United States surpassed Russia as the largest arms provider to India. Nevertheless, the approvals on 25 October included tenders to indigenously construct, at the very least, Indian submarines. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in the past emphasised the need for the country to focus on domestic research, design and manufacturing. Additionally, the previous Congress Party government received criticism for its delaying of several procurement approvals that had left the military short of sufficient equipment. These procurements are a part of an aggressive push to modernise the country's military, as it has recently engaged in deadly border clashes with Pakistan and experienced elevated tensions on its border with China.

On Thursday 23 October, the United States and South Korea agreed to indefinitely delay the transfer of wartime control over the South Korean military. The United States agreed to South Korea's request at a joint meeting in the Pentagon. The purpose of the US military control has been to allow the South Korean army to develop the command and operational ability to better counter the North Korean army, either by deterrence or direct military engagement. The United States maintained operational control of the country's armed forces between 1950 and 1994, when peacetime control was transferred back to South Korea. The United States had previously agreed in 2007 to transfer wartime control in 2012. However, in 2010, the North Korean military allegedly torpedoed a South Korean naval vessel, which heightened the risk of armed conflict on the peninsula. At this point, the two sides agreed to further delay the transfer until 2015. Instead of setting a new date of transfer, US and South Korean officials have agreed to refocus on achieving operational and technological goals to counter the North Korean threat. It is currently projected that the transfer will occur in roughly 10 years' time.

On the radar

- **Former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda is expected to meet Chinese President XI Jinping** on 29 October.
- **The Chinese People's Liberation Army is expected to increase ties with the Iranian Army,** following a high-level meeting last week.
- **India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to meet with officials in Myanmar and Australia** from 10 to 18 November to discuss economic and security issues.
- **Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung will meet with Indian officials this week** to discuss deepening economic cooperation.
- **Chinese State Councillor YANG Jiechi is expected to meet with Pham Binh Minh, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister** this week.

Europe

Pro-European parties look to have won Ukrainian parliamentary election

Ukrainians voted in parliamentary elections on 26 October – the second set of elections to take place since the start of the political crisis in Ukraine in November 2013. The elections were expected to determine the degree of popular support for both Kiev's rapprochement with the European Union and the pro-Russian separatism that has swept eastern Ukraine. On 25 October, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko emphasised the necessity for the election of a majority of pro-European deputies in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's supreme council) in order to ensure that Ukraine break with its Soviet past and pass a radical reform agenda. Early exit polls indicate that pro-European centrist parties have swept the election. Pro-Russian separatist leaders have refused to hold elections in the eastern regions. On 23 October, the prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, called off the ceasefire that had been in place since 19 September, and announced plans to take control of the cities of Slavyansk, Kramatorsk and Mariupol, claiming that a peaceful transfer of power was impossible.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine, the economy, and the energy crisis are the key issues on concern for voters. Poroshenko faces a tough election, as he has come under heavy criticism for his government's handling of the conflict with rebels in eastern Ukraine and the worsening economic conditions. Those who protested on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti and participated in the overthrowing of former president Viktor Yanukovich have accused Poroshenko of failing to implement political and social change and for being too soft on the separatist movements in eastern Ukraine. Poroshenko and his government hoped that a last-minute gas deal with Russia at a meeting in Brussels would sway voters; however, Russia and Ukraine failed to broker an accord on gas supplies. Since June, Gazprom has demanded that Ukraine pays for its gas in advance; however, Kiev does not have the means to do so. On 24 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin called for the European Union and the United States to provide Ukraine with funds to pay for the gas and announced that Russia hoped a gas deal would be reached at a meeting with energy ministers in Brussels this week.

It is likely that the parties backing Poroshenko will win a majority in the election, and thus Ukraine will begin to implement a number of reforms that would begin to align the country with European Union standards. However, a crucial task for the new parliament will be to solve the crisis in eastern Ukraine. With few voting stations open in eastern Ukraine, the Kiev government will fail to achieve legitimacy in the eastern regions. Furthermore, on 7 November separatists are planning to hold elections, which pro-Russian figures and the Russian government will likely use to demonstrate the legitimacy of self-proclaimed separatist states. It is likely that a pro-EU parliament will be unstable and may struggle to pass necessary reforms, as there is still a strong undermining influence from oligarchs and Yanukovich supporters behind the scenes. It is therefore possible that the parliament will fail within the next year. Should the parliament collapse or the new government fail to solve the crisis in eastern Ukraine, it is likely that another round of protests would be experienced in Ukraine.

Other developments

The Swedish defence ministry has announced the termination of a week-long naval search operation around Ingaro Bay, near the capital, Stockholm, and the Baltic Sea. The operation involved minesweepers, helicopters and naval vessels. Ingela Nilsson, the spokesman for the ministry, added that ground troops would remain on alert. Swedish forces were searching for a supposed Russian submarine that had encountered difficulties; however, the operation failed to find any such submersible. On 21 October, the Russian defence ministry denied the reports of a Russian submarine in foreign waters, or that a Russian oil tanker in the Baltic Sea was assisting a vessel in distress. However, on 23 October, NATO reported that NATO jets had intercepted a Russian Ilyushin-20 spy plane flying over the Baltic Sea. A Russian defence ministry spokesman defended the exercise, claiming the aircraft had flown over neutral waters, and had adhered to international regulations on the use of airspace.

On 23 October, the Kosovan foreign minister paid the first official visit to Serbia since Kosovo seceded from Serbia in 2008. Enver Hoxhaj attended a regional meeting of foreign and finance ministers in Belgrade, where the ministers of Kosovo, Serbia and Albania and European Commission representatives discussed economic management and ties between the countries. During the meeting, Hoxhaj also asked Serbia to recognise the independence of Kosovo through a peace treaty. Kosovo is currently recognised by 100 states. The Serbian government did not immediately respond to the Kosovo foreign minister's request.

On the radar

- **Budget officials from the EU member states are to meet this week in Venice, Italy**, to discuss the additional payments imposed on some European countries last week.
- **The European Commission will publish its verdict on François Hollande's budget for France for 2015.**
- **Jean-Claude Juncker will officially take over from Manuel Barroso as the head of the European Commission this week.**

Middle East

Uncertainty remains following latest negotiations between Iran and P5+1/EU3+3

Ambiguity remains following the latest negotiations between Iran and the UN Security Council permanent members and Germany (P5+1/EU3+3) in Vienna, Austria, on 22-23 October. Statements released from both Tehran and Washington on 24 October indicated any failure to reach consensus by the 24 November deadline would be the result of unwilling oppositional parties. Nonetheless, Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, announced on 25 October that Iran would not dismantle any nuclear facilities, despite the continued threat of sanctions.

Araghchi's latest comments are indicative that major difficulties remain in finding acceptable terms for Iran's nuclear capacity. Negotiations have already been extended by four months from 20 July. The United States' position remains clear that minimising the number of Iran's nuclear centrifuges, capable of enriching weapons-grade uranium, will be the only acceptable concession. This stance is implicitly affirmed by the willingness of the United States to continue imposing sanctions throughout the diplomatic process.

The parties appear to be caught in further deadlock over acceptable gains and losses. The talks have been criticised for over-politicising the negotiations. The role of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, and their influence on blocking the lifting of sanctions – a key demand of Iran – is likely to emerge as an important issue in the coming weeks. Moreover, critical negotiations are likely to occur between UN Security Council permanent members China and Russia over sub-regional non-proliferation.

Other developments

Violence continues to spread throughout Yemen as the country slips closer toward civil war. Upwards of 80 Houthi fighters were killed in the western district of Rada'a on 25 October. Houthi rebels have continued to push south in an attempt to overthrow and capture elements of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and tribal strongholds. AQAP announced on 24 October that they had entered a military coalition with a number of tribal fighters against the Shi'ite advance. Both the United States and United Nations are likely to be drawn further into the country's crisis, with the United States threatening sanctions and drone strikes against the rival groups.

British troops have ended their combat operations in Afghanistan and handed control of Camp

Bastion to Afghan forces. The 13-year operation came to an end on 26 October in a ceremony involving US, British and Afghan armed forces in Helmand province. British forces originally built Camp Bastion in 2006 in order to aid Afghanistan's reconstruction process, but were soon drawn into further conflict with the Taliban. While some successes have undoubtedly been made within Afghanistan, it remains unclear how the national army will cope without the backing of western forces. Following the country's recent presidential deadlock, the country's economy has struggled and, as such, foreign aid and investment will remain integral to domestic security.

On 24 October, the consulates of the United States, Canada, Belgium, Germany and France in Istanbul, Turkey, received suspicious packages containing unidentified yellow powder.

Turkish authorities despatched chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) specialists to examine the packages. Sixteen people who had direct contact with the yellow powder were sent to hospital following precautionary procedures. Authorities have not released any information on the source of the packages or any known motives for the incident. However, all five of the aforementioned countries are participating in the coalition fighting Islamic State militants. Results from tests on the powder are due on 27 October.

On the radar

- **Hamas announced that Israel-Palestine peace talks are to resume** in Cairo, Egypt, on 27 October.
- **Iraqi Kurds are expected to send troops to the Syrian border town of Kobani.**
- **Further protests are highly likely in the east of Jerusalem and the Old City** following recent violent clashes between protesters and police, which erupted after a convicted terrorist drove his vehicle into a crowd of people at a rail stop on 23 October.
- **China to host the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on 30-31 October**, which is aimed at supporting regional bilateral relations and confidence building measures with Afghanistan.

Polar regions

Russia developing underwater combat robots for use in Arctic

The deputy general director of the Russian Foundation for Advanced Research Projects, Vitaly Davydov, has detailed plans for a new breed of Russian underwater technology that is intended to strengthen Russia's Northern military capacity. Davydov claims that the new underwater combat robots will be able to protect Russian infrastructure in the Arctic, including its oil rigs and emerging shipping routes. Furthermore, it is planned that the devices will be capable of detecting, tracking and destroying potential enemies, and will be deployable from both the seabed and Russian submarines.

The announcement comes amid increased insecurity between states in the region over natural resources, an especially prevalent issue given that the Arctic is estimated to contain 22% of the world's supply of oil and natural gas. Davydov has confirmed that the robots are part of Russia's plans to ensure the stability and security of Russia's Arctic territory, given the number of rival countries contesting the region's abundant mineral resources.

Announcements such as this risk increasing tensions and deepening the rift between Russia and Western Arctic states. Together with Russian President Vladimir Putin's vow to further militarise the Arctic and moves already made to bolster the Northern fleet, this announcement adds to the risk of further militarisation of the region by other Arctic states.

Other developments

The UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has completed its Polar Code environmental rules. The UN's maritime organisation has created a set of international regulations that aim to protect the environment in the Polar regions from industrial harms. Coming into force at the start of 2017, the regulations confront issues relating to Arctic shipping between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, excessive ship noise, vessel efficiency and pollutants. While industry leaders have claimed that the regulations are too rigid and prohibitive, environmental NGOs have argued the opposite. Paul Crowley, head of the World Wildlife Fund's Canadian Arctic programme, has pointed out that the code is missing crucial components, such as a ban on heavy fuel oils in the Antarctic.

The controversial Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (Sea Shepherd) has stated that the NGO will return to the Southern Ocean to confront illegal toothfish operators in the region. Sea Shepherds has a long history in the Antarctic confronting Japanese whaling ships and are accused of using extreme and sometimes dangerous manoeuvres, including ship ramming, butyric acid deployment and propeller jamming. In August and September 2012, Interpol issued a Red Notice, or international wanted persons alert, for the organisation's leader, Paul Watson, at the request of the Costa Rican Japanese authorities respectively.

Russian state oil company Rosneft has requested over 60 new licenses from the Russian government in response to Western sanctions that have put the company in jeopardy. One major setback to Rosneft as a result of the sanctions, was the swift exit of ExxonMobil from a joint comprehensive cooperation agreement in the Kara Sea. Rosneft is seeking to gain new licenses that will reinvigorate the company's prospects and open up larger offshore operations.

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