Examining the September 11 Terrorist Attacks; Can Democracy and Economic Development Purge the "Clash of Civilizations"

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Abstract

According to Hadstaedt (2001) American foreign policy is often the result of balancing military actions, diplomatic actions and economic development actions. With the horrific terrorist destruction of the World Trade Center, the subsequent overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan and, the war in Iraq, this balance has reached a new and critical stage.

Some view the intentions of the 19 hijackers, and Islamic Jihad, as motivated by a desire to create political and economic upheaval in and between Middle East states, and with the West. Samuel Huntington talks directly to this point in his 1993 essay, "A Clash of Civilizations". In this essay he warned of an emerging "clash of civilizations" centered on religious and political economic disharmony. Fuller (2002) sees the 911 attacks as the fulfillment of Huntington's prophecy.

These issues require U.S public policy makers to delicately manage and balance military policy, diplomacy and political economic development. A content analysis was performed which included a thorough review of the pre and post September 11 literature. This information includes articles by staff of the National Institute of Mid East Studies, The Central Intelligence Agency, and the Broodings Institution. The data also included investigative reports by the New York Times and Newsweek following the September 11 attacks. This paper poses the following questions from this analysis:

- *Has the "clash of civilizations" arrived?*
- *Can political economic change in the Middle East purge this clash?*
- *What role can democracy play in this change?*
- *What role can economic development play in this change?*
- *What are the American foreign public policy options?*

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Has the Clash Between Civilizations Arrived?

Almost one decade ago Samuel Huntington (*1993*) warned of an emerging "clash of civilizations" centered on religious and political economic disharmony. In the end, he envisioned a world of West versus East. Islam versus Non Islam; a Confucian-Islamic alliance on a collision course with the West.

According to Huntington the "clash of civilizations will dominate global politics". In this environment of conflict, nations are reluctant to adapt to American culture; as these nations are unable to mobilize and reap the potential economic advantages of globalization, the "clash" intensifies.

Benjamin Barber *(2000*) views the conflict of nations and civilizations from a different perspective. In "McWorld versus Jihad", Barber takes Huntington's prophecy to a new level. According to Barber, forces of separation and independence drive Jihad. In contrast, McWorld is empowered by globalization and the idea of a democratic free capitalism. Because these worlds are so fundamentally different, both will clash on a political level.

According to Barber, "McWorld" stands to unite the world in one common pursuit: free markets and the right to consumerism for all. It is characterized by "fast music, fast computers and fast food… pressing nations into one commercially homogenous global network" (*Barber, 2000, p 23*). McWorld ignores national boundaries, traditions, religions, and cultures while replacing them with technology, communications, commerce, and free-flowing capital. McWorld functions according to the unifying rules of democratic free capitalism, and ultimately global integration. McWorld cares little about "blue laws… pub-closing British paternalism, Sabbath-observing Jewish Orthodox fundamentalism, or no-Sunday-liquor-sales Massachusetts Puritanism" (*Barber, 2000, p 24*).

In contrast, Jihad is based on religious solidarity and local identity. For Muslim extremists this identity is secured through war against outsiders. Extremists who embrace this vision believe that the individual should acquiesce to non-secular authority. Jihad is rooted in parochialism and exclusion from the world market. Democratic principles and capitalistic economies are a threat.

Barber attempts to answer the question: can politics and democracy survive the eventually clash of Jihad and McWorld? He states,

> Democracy in any of these variations will, however, continue to be obstructed by the undemocratic and anti-democratic trends toward uniformitarian globalization and intolerant tribalization that I have portrayed here. For democracy to persist in our new McWorld we will be able to commit acts of conscious political will – a possibility but hardly a probability under these conditions. Politics will require more than just a quick fix of transfer of institutions (*Barber, 2000, p. 32*).

In a study, "Economic Repression Breeds Terrorism" (*Driscroll and Holmes, 2001*), economic freedom was examined vis a vis associated levels of terrorist activity within 88 nations. The report concludes that economic repression does, in fact, breed terrorism. The authors found that economic freedom (measured by excessive government regulation, the existence of a "black market" economy) was inversely related to nation states that harbor or support terrorism (e.g. Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Sudan).

The September 11 attacks brought the political economic conflict addressed by Huntington, Barber, and Driscoll and Holmes to a new and real level. The world and public policy makers are reawakened. We know that the "19 hijackers" were part of a terrorist network seeking to tear down both the symbols and structure of the U.S. economy. This hideous act made Islamic Jihad known to the world. The New York Times and its series, "A Nation Challenged", seeks to examine the events preceding and following September 11. In "Response to Attack Splits Arabs in the West", Cohen (*2001*) explained the nature of the September 11 attacks vis a vis the political-economic climate of the Middle East, and U.S. policy.

Cohen believed that the acts of the Saudi and Egyptian "19" were partially a response to U.S. policy with these countries. Both Carothers (*2003*) and Fuller *(2002*) echo similar points of view. Carothers states, "national origins of the September 11 attackers make clear that these nations are in fact breeders and financiers of extremism" (*Carothers*, *2003, p.4).* Fuller sees this act as the ultimate action by Islamic extremists in using general Islamic ideals as a "touchstone" for overthrowing the regimes of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This, combined with America's support of Israel (and its inability to see lands seized in

the 1967 war returned to the Palestinians) gave the Muslim extremists justification for such an irrational act as September 11, 2001. Following the attacks, Barber (2002) re-visited his "Jihad versus McWorld" theory. He concludes that the September 11 attacks brought the conflict of Jihad and McWorld to a terrifying and new explosive level.

As we know, the response of the Bush Administration called for swift military action against states that harbored and supported terrorism (e.g., Afghanistan and Iraq). As the U.S. implemented this policy, its Middle East allies have removed groups that actively support terror. However, there is a continued fear that systemic crackdowns will further ignite public opinion against these governments and the U.S.

Fuller contends that unless Washington departs from policies of accommodation with oppressive and insecure regimes, popular Muslim opinion will continue to be "gratified" with acts of terrorism. Cohen offers a similar opinion. She suggests that U.S. policy must depart from past policies (socio-economic blindness) and develop alternatives, which address political and economic unrest in the Middle East.

Can Democracy Ease the Conflict between Civilizations?

According to Fuller (*2002),* the first phase of U.S., policy in the wake of the September 11 attacks is one of engaging, military operations against state sponsors of terror (Afghanistan and Iraq) and impose a change of regimes. The policy also extends to the Arab-Jewish conflict when the U.S. successfully sought a change in the Palestinian leadership.

By effecting regime change, the goal is to "establish a successful model of Arab democracy that will have a powerful demonstration effect" (*Carothers, 2003, p.4)*. However to accomplish this ultimately requires a massive, and demanding, long-term reconstruction effort. Some view these directions as "far fetched" *(Carothers, 2002, p.5).* Others warn of the risks of supporting moves toward democracy in these countries since the outcome may be risky at best *(Kibble, 1998).* It is clear that these propositions are being tested in Post-War Iraq.

However, effective policy alternatives require a deeper understanding of the sources of political violence and terror that mark the Muslim world today. If democracy is, in part a solution, policy analysts must ask, can democracy and Islam mutually co-exist? How does democracy fit with the vision of Islam's "new breed" of thinkers and leaders? How can we learn from the democratic lessons of Jordan and Kuwait and others? Can democracy respond to the challenges in these and other countries? Finally, should and can the U.S. "export" democracy to Iraq and other Middle East states? What are the policy issues and alternatives given these important questions?

Islam and Democracy: Is there any common ground?

According to Fuller (*2002)* the fact that Quran and the Hadith (traditions of the Prophet's life) direct the way in which society should be governed, makes these readings "the most powerful ideological forms in that part of the world". To the many Islamic faithful, the Quran is seen as the ultimate source of authority. Muslims do interpret the Quran and the Hadeth to derive the meaning about good governance and concepts of social and economic justice. According to Kibble (*1998)* although fundamentalism does deny democratic values, many Muslim leaders practice forms of democracy. Through Iljma, religious leaders use consensus to reach action. Iljma is acceptable as long as its decisions fit within the parameters of Quran's teachings. Unfortunately, this is where Islam's relationship with democracy begins and ends.

Other scholars (*Fuller, 2002 and Haliday, 1995*) take the position that Islam is incompatible with democracy. For example, Haliday states there are no true human rights and democratic values in a nation state that is overtly non-secular or religious (e.g. witness the Taliban's oppressive rule in Afghanistan). As an example, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini warned not to use the word democracy, in any way, to describe his Islamic republic and revolution in Iran.

According to Fuller, the real issue is not, what Islam is, but what Muslims want. The type of Muslim leadership (radical or moderate) that addresses these needs will dictate the political/governance process (democratic or authoritarian). In this regard, there are two possible roads for Islam and democracy. The first includes the continued practice of Islamic fundamentalist of using the general idea of Islam to attack or overthrow existing government authorities. The second road may include the emergence of moderate Islamic intellectuals who can direct grassroots political economic change. However even under the latter scenario the result may not be ideally democratic.

Takeh (*2001*) believes that moderate Islam may be "democracy's last hope". According to Takeh, moderate Islam may be the only, and most effective long-term solution in the war against terrorism. In Post-war Iraq Takeh's position is being tested. Moderate Islam in Iraq faces a watershed moment. In a July 2003 report, Tyler (*2003*) explains how post war Iraq's "governing council" was formed through main Iraqi opposition groups, and the office of the American civilian administrator for the occupation. The council is a 25-person group representing Iraq's Kurd, Shiite and Sunni populations. The council is developing a new Iraqi constitution and process that may "win the acceptance of the grand ayatollah (of Iraq)". If successful, Iraq's reform may become a model for moderate Islam to bridge and ease the clash of civilization prophesized by Huntington.

Is the Middle East on a Road to Democratic Reform?

In order to address the efficacy of democracy in the Middle East, we will look at the path of democracy in the Middle East. Attention will focus on Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This analysis may also provide valuable insight into building a post-war Iraq.

Bahrain

Bahrain had an elected National Assembly until the ruling Al Khalifa monarchy unilaterally dissolved it in 1975. Since 1975, the government has been managed by royal decree, although there is a 40-person appointed Majilis that advises the monarchy. In 1995, the Al Khalifa attempted to reach a compromise with opposition leaders. When talks failed, the monarchy began arresting scores of opposition leaders and charged them with plotting to overthrow the monarchy. Currently Bahrain is in a stall position to reinstate national elections.

Kuwait

Kuwait has a ruling monarchy that reinstated national assembly elections following The Gulf War of 1991. Initially members of three Islamist groups won 18 of the 40 parliament seats. These groups were able to retain that power with the same number of seats retained in the 1996 elections.

Jordan

Jordan has taken gradual, successful steps in introducing democratic reforms. With the 1993 elections, a number of old and new parties were legalized

in the parliament. The Islamic Action Front (the political face of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood) has emerged as the largest group in Jordan's parliament. However, the parliament has minimal government authority. King Abdullah's vision is one of a democratically elected parliament serving in an advisory capacity to the monarchy. According to Kibble (*1998*), Abdullah "believes that Jordan might evolve as a model for democratic development in the Middle East".

Turkey

Recently, Turkey has experienced dynamic political reform and change. In 1995, the Welfare party polled over 21 percent and received 158 seats in the national assembly elections. According to Fuller (*2003*), Turkey is gradually emerging as a model of democracy in the Middle East. Fuller says, "Turkey has evolved rapidly out of an initially narrow and non-democratic understanding of Islam into a relatively responsible force, whether it overlaps with American ideals or not".

Pakistan

Pakistan is moving in a unique democratic direction following General Mushariff's military coup in 1999. Mushariff has gradually reinstated elections, while ruling the country under martial law. The elections of fall 2002 saw the emergence of Islamic majorities in major regions of Pakistan. The goal of the Mushariff government is to eventually forfeit military rule and give up political power. Mushariff however has democracy on a very short leash. In the fall of 2002, he forced passage of a referendum that authorized his constitutional power through 2004.

Israel

Israel has used a parliamentary form of government since its creation in 1948. Modeled after Great Britain Israel's national elections determine the political party that leads the country. In Israel, all citizens have the right to vote. It is an open and dynamic electoral process that has led to frequent changes in the ruling political party. Currently there are two majority parties (the Likud and Labor party) competing for power in Israel politics. There are approximately 20 minority parties represented in the Israel Knesset. Religious and cultural diversity also characterizes the Israeli parliaments; there are both Israeli Jews and Arab Israelis serving in the Knesset. In fact, some of Knesset's Arab members openly oppose the government and policies of Israel.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has experienced turbulent times in seeking a more open and democratic society. In 1992, King Fahd established a 60 person Majilis to consult with the monarchy. In 1997, Fahd enlarged the Majilis to 90 members. There is however, no elections and the Majilis serve only in an advisory capacity: The role of the Majilis is to debate policies submitted to the King, interpret laws, and examine reports delegated to it by the national authority. It is a weak parliamentary system. The current climate in Saudi Arabia is one of growing dissatisfaction with the monarchy. This has spawned the growth of fundamentalist Islamic opposition and most notably, Osama Bin Laden. Economic and social problems, corruption within the royal family, and a disparate distribution of wealth often are the focus of such criticism.

Egypt

In contrast to Saudi Arabia, Egypt has a parliamentary electoral system The Mubarek government has suppressed all opposition to its authority. On the eve of the 1995 elections, 100 Muslim Brotherhood leaders were arrested and subject to meliorate trial. Clearly, the Mubarek government will continue its crackdown on the Muslim brotherhood as these challenges intensify.

There are grim reports of human rights violations in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Amnesty International has condemned the use of Islamic punishments in Saudi Arabia. For example, in 1995 11 people were flogged between 200 and 1500 lashes for alleged crimes. In the same year, one Egyptian was sentenced to 4000 lashes in addition to 7 years for burglary.

In this post September 11 era the political climate in Saudi Arabia and Egypt has exposed many things. One of them is the important role that democratic and economic reform must play in their future. At the same time (as Iraq and Afghanistan reform politically and economically), real progress is needed to resolve the 50-year-old Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine. I must note that these warnings are not old (Murphy, Gause, and Gregory, 1997). September 11, 2001 has brought a new sense of urgency to these warnings.

Can the Road to Democratic Reform be Accelerated?

In light of the aforementioned political climate in the Middle East, we ask; can democratic reform succeed in these countries and how? Is it in the best

interest of the United States to encourage such reforms?

Currently United States foreign policy is in a "Catch 22". It must maintain diplomatic relations with long standing Middle East allies, while engaging its war on terrorism, and press for democratic reform. Fuller characterizes this environment as a "vicious cycle":

> Dissatisfaction (by Muslims) leads to anti-regime action, which leads to repression, which in turn leads to terrorism, U.S. military intervention, and final further dissatisfaction (*Fuller*, *2003, p.5).*

According to Fuller, this cycle fulfills Samuel Huntington's prophecy in the "clash of civilizations"; the West and Muslim fundamentalism are engaged in a collision course. In dealing with this dilemma Monshipouri et al., (*1993)* and Caruthers (*2003*) believe that the U.S. must balance relationships with regimes (albeit autocratic), while trying to live up to American ideals of liberty, freedom and human rights. According to Monshipouri et al., this dichotomy is likely to remain unreconciled.

Since September 11, the Bush Administration finds itself managing foreign relations within the context of this dichotomy. The pre and post Iraqi war circumstances serve as a case in point. Many feared that a unilateral invasion of Iraq (void of UN Security Council approval) would strengthen the hand of hard line fundamentalists. Although this has not occurred, with the U.S. overthrow of Sadaam Hussein, Islamic hard liners continue to call for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. These demands will only continue as the U.S. maintains its occupation force, while Iraq develops a new constitution and process. As the U.S. maintains its presence in Iraq, the existing monarchies will tighten their grip on civil liberties. Burns (*2003*) believes this may slow down all previous and on-going attempts of political reform.

The dichotomy proposed in this paper is further supported by events in Malaysia. Prior to September 11, 2001 the Clinton administration criticized Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad's authoritarian rule. Since the September 11, attacks Mohammed began arresting Islamic militants, sharing intelligence and cooperating with the Bush Administration's antiterrorism campaign. By May 2002, the Bush Administration reversed the 1998 stance lauding Mahatir as a "force for regional stability".

All of the aforementioned developments alter American policy action in

two ways. The first requires encouraging existing regimes to continue to open up their political systems in an evolutionary peaceful way. The argument is made that Jordan and Turkey may emerge as models of change. This may support the goal of long-term stability, while bringing about needed democratic reform and improved human rights. The disadvantage is that America may have to live with short-term transitions that may not be in its interests until full participatory democracies are in place.

America also must encourage Pakistan's leadership and civilian population to work towards a common vision of democratic innovation. This same dialogue can occur in post war Afghanistan and Iraq. We must see if these innovations can be mirrored in Kuwait, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the U.S. must proactively exert pressure on these regimes to open up political dialogue and achieve real economic reform. It must support attempts to engage in dialogue with moderate Islamist groups to bolster democratic reform.

Can Regional Economic Development Further Purge the "Clash of Civilizations"?

In a recent interview with television personality Charlie Rose, former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres stated:

> The road to peace in the Middle east partially rests on the ability of these governments to give the younger generation hope…these countries need to break out of the dark ages…innovation, product development and technology is almost non existent (*Peres, 2003*).

Peres' offers a challenge to leaders and Middle East scholars. We must determine how the principles and ideals of economic globalizations can reduce economic stagnation in the Middle East.

Ceglowski (*1998*), Ohmae (*1993*), Sachs (*1998*), and O'Meara and Krain (*2001*) see globalization in its most positive light. Economic globalization can raise the standard of living for developed and "developing" countries.

If done correctly, economic globalization allows a free and effective flow of goods, services and information technology across borders (*Ceglowski, 1998).* Ceglowski cites Thailand and the United Kingdom as role models for developing nations of the world.

As economic globalization unfolds, there can be noticeable gains in trade and gross domestic product growth. This may result in a "level playing field" for all nations seeking economic improvement. According to Sachs, a level playing field will result in having most nations playing an equal role in a global economy. Developed countries can reach a larger market and enjoy the fruits of innovation across borders.

As we assess the future success of globalization, we need to look at these four issues:

- Can globalization promote faster economic growth?
- Will globalization undermine or promote macroeconomic stability?
- Can globalization bring about a more equitable distribution of income?
- Can it lead to improve economic governance?

In contrast to these positive outlooks, there are also many negative considerations. First globalization may exert downward pressure on the wages of under skilled workers in industrialized countries. This can further exacerbate economic instability. According to Amsden (*2002),* globalization may result in the loss of the freedom to subsidize company formation. In addition, different countries require different policies for different economic stages.

Under globalization, developing countries seeking to join the growing international economy often start with weak economic infrastructures. According

to Amsden, "the poorest countries have too few skills to create professionally manageable forms to alleviate poverty".

Annan *(2000),* Barber (2000*)* and Huntington (*1993)* all warn of the dangers that globalization may bring; it may increase the growing disparity between the rich and the poor. Kofi Annan states:

> Any belief that either the end of major ideological competition or the revolutionary process for economic globalization would prevent conflict…is utterly wishful thinking (*Annan, 2000, p.125)*

Annan believes that in order for globalization to succeed it must tackle the "political roots…and economic roots of the problems now griping much of the world" (*Annan, 2000, p.125)* According to Annan, real peace is contingent on "legitimate responsive politics". Another challenge is that as countries reap the benefits of globalization they must change institutions and policies. Unless globalizers open up important "windows of opportunity", human rights and economic improvements may not follow.

As developing nations engage in macroeconomic programs like the European Union and North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), its poorer neighbors will expect to see economic relief. Sachs believes that the key to unlocking the mysteries of globalization rest with the use of "trade, finance and production and growing web of treaties and instructions" with and between developing nations.

Can Globalization Improve Social and Economic Conditions within Critical Middle East Nations?

Following the September 11 attacks, the New York Times' "A Nation Challenged" series examined the relationship of globalization to the war on terrorism and, issues in the Middle East. According to Brainard *(2001)* and Purdum and French (*2002)* billions of dollars in aid, and free trade agreements were instituted with Afghanistan and Pakistan to bring them into the international economic community. The goal is to bring about greater economic stability to these countries. Under these arrangements, Afghanistan and Pakistan may uncover new economic resources. The economic playing field may be leveled and provide them with greater access to the world markets. Purdum and French warn however that the brunt of this responsibility should not fall on the United

States. Other European countries need to also make investments and engage in improved trade policies. The World Bank needs to open its doors to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Another issue relating to globalization and the improvement of socio-economic conditions in the Middle East is the role oil production and profit must play in regional economic development. This is central to Iraq's development in post-war Iraq. In addition, it is important that oil-rich countries must play with its poorer neighbors. In 1993 Monshipouri et al., indicate little or no desire by Saudi and Kuwait governments to assist in development of its poorer neighbors. If these trends continue, the Middle East appears headed for new cycles of economic stagnation and militarization. In dealing with this issue, it has become imperative that American foreign policies facilitate greater cooperation between the oil-rich nations and the poorer nation states.

Conclusions

The horrific attacks on the World Trade Center by Muslim radicals placed America at the center of the religious and political conflict that has punctuated the Middle East since World War II. It also actualized scholar Samuel Huntington's theory of a "clash of civilizations" between factions of Islam and the West.

This paper finds that American foreign policy is often the result of balancing military actions, diplomatic actions and economic development actions. Since September 11, U.S. policy has been twofold: military engagement against state sponsors of terror; and the imposition of regime change. By effecting regime change, the goal is to establish a model of democracy that may spread throughout the Middle East. Democracy and moderate Islam now face a watershed moment in post-war Iraq. A central question is can Iraq's "governing council" execute a blue print that will improve Iraq's political and economic quality of life?

At the same time let us not be naïve. We will continue to see religious resistance (both moderate and extreme in nature) to the U.S. presence in Iraq and the Middle East. Achieving a real democratic reform in Iraq requires a deeper understanding of Muslim unrest. The real issue is not what Islam is, but what Muslims want. The type of Muslim leadership that addresses these needs will dictate the political/governance process in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

As the U.S. continues to implement these policies, it also must be prepared to deal with two likely scenarios. The first includes the continued practice of Islamic radicals using general ideas of Islam to attack the West or replace existing governments. With each passing day in post-war Iraq, this first scenario becomes likely as radical Shiite and Sunni leaders call for an Iraqi Islamic republic. The second scenario includes the emergence of moderate Islamic intellectuals who can direct grassroots political economic change. The latter may be the only way to bring long-term stability in Iraq and in the Middle East. We must find ways to open up dialogue with these moderate Islamic groups.

As the U.S. adjusts to these scenarios, it must also work closely with countries which become breeding grounds for future terrorists like the notorious Sept 11 "19". If President Bush's premise is correct (that democracy will bring regional stability), can Saudi Arabia and Egypt learn from the democratic lessons of Jordan and Turkey? Alternatively, will Iraq become democracy's template in the Middle East?

Finally purging the "clash of civilizations" also requires achieving a win-win economic solution for the Middle East people. Economic globalization can facilitate a free and effective flow of goods, services and information technology and improve the quality of life for the Middle East population. As developing nations engage in macroeconomic programs, its poorer neighbors expect to see economic relief. There has been success with the European Union and NAFTA. There are marked improvements in trade, finance and production capacities (e.g. Poland).

There is a need to apply new economic formulas in the Middle East. In fiscal year 2002 and 2003 billions of dollars in aid have been given to Afghanistan and Pakistan. For fiscal year 2004 President Bush has proposed new grants exceeding $80 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. The key to achieving real economic stability in the Middle East rests with these countries.
However, America cannot do this alone. European countries must invest in the Middle East and engage in new and dynamic trade policies. The World Bank must open its doors to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Improving the socioeconomic conditions in the Middle East also requires oil-rich countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to help their poorer neighbors. Unless all of the above is done, we may soon see new cycles of economic stagnation and militarization. As America continues to find itself in the middle of the "clash", it cannot loose

sight of its role in fostering political and economic change.

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