Corruption and Its Economic and Social Impacts on Iraq's Economy Developmental Reality

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It is clear to specialists that Iraq's economy has experienced and continues to experience many problems. Most notably, it is a rentier economy, and it lacks the diversity of sources of income due to its almost absolute dependence on the production and exportation of crude oil, and the decline of most other productive sectors to contribute to the composition of the gross domestic product (GDP), which enhanced its chronic structural imbalances. It has also caused growing unemployment and poverty levels, poor income distribution, accumulated balance of payment deficits, staying in the non-indebtedness circle, and other factors that have contributed effectively to the decline in the development indicators. It is no secret that financial and administrative corruption is prevalent in the country, and its impacts have extended to include the different economic and social levels of the country. It is known that corruption in Iraq is not a new thing, but it has increased remarkably after the fall of the former regime for various reasons, which contributed as a major cause to faltering development processes, which could have been achieved at high rates to commensurate with the size of the resources, and the natural, economic and human capabilities possessed by Iraq. However, the rampant corruption, confusion in policies and unplanned governmental programs, which is not mature because it is based on the concept of achieving private gains at the expense of public interest, in addition to the legitimization of some aspects of the corruption by the political class, and the complexity between the halls of the legislative and executive authorities, led to generating a disability in addressing the deficit in the economic file in an optimal way that could enable Iraq to achieve its development goals in a sustainable manner. The study aims to shed light on the size of economic and social impacts that corruption has had on the development reality in Iraq, and learning the size of corruption using a number of indicators that have been adopted in this area in order to develop appropriate solutions to
eliminate this phenomenon, and then reactivate the role of economic policies and programs that would promote Iraq economy and achieve its desired goals.

**Key words:** Corruption, Economy, Iraq

**Introduction**

Despite the fact that prevalence of corruption the phenomenon in Iraq is not a new thing, it has noticeably spread after the fall of the regime in 2003. This increase is due to several factors, perhaps the most notable is the lack of strategy and scientific vision with clear features to lead and guide the Iraqi economy with great economic and human capabilities and resources that lean towards growth and prosperity. This has led to heavy losses, waste of resources and a decline in most indicators of economic growth, in addition to the grievous damages to the principle of social justice and its serious consequences.

The research aims to identify the concepts and content of the phenomenon of corruption, in both financial and administrative parts, which has taken a dramatic turn in Iraq. The heritage is blended with the exceptional circumstances experienced by Iraq, to make corruption an obstacle that threatens the economic future of the society and State. At the same time, it constitutes a challenging factor for successive governments who will be faced with the possibility of combating and investing in the available resources optimally and providing methods to improve the reality of Iraq’s economy and realize its development goals. The essence of the problem that the study aims to discuss, research, and analyse the relation between the phenomenon of financial and administrative corruption, and some indicators of economic and social growth, comparing them in a manner that enables the identification of the losses incurred by Iraq due to this phenomenon. The study stems from the hypothesis that states that financial and administrative corruption has negatively affected the various indicators of economic and social growth in Iraq, which resulted in significant losses that have undermined the reconstruction and advancement of development reality that goes in line with the great capabilities and resources available, so it is important to know the size of corruption through a number of international standards in order to develop effective solutions to counter it. In order to validate the hypothesis, the study was divided into the following sections:
First: The concept of corruption

The origin of the term corruption in the language means everything contrary to the good thing, and corruption as a concept includes a set of meanings, each according to its specialization to be diversified into the: financial, administrative, political, social and moral corruption and each of these types has its own definition. The World Bank has defined corruption as abusing public office for private gains. Corruption is when a public official commits an unlawful act that deviates from their formal duties when exercising his job, with the intent to gain private interest for personal gain. Financial corruption is the theft of State funds, violation of financial rules and regulations governing the workflow, and violating the instructions of the financial control agencies. In fact, the manifestations of corruption in its both forms are multiple and overlapped and the emergence of one often lead to the spread of other manifestations. Some types of corruption forms are bribery, embezzlement, extortion, forgery, nepotism, favouritism, evasion of responsibility, fake contracts, ghost employees, violation of laws and instructions or not applying them or manipulating them and the circumvent professional rules and ethical principles which can cause a deviation from the right track of the administrative system, leading to significant damages to the public interests.¹ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines corruption as the "misuse of public office for private gains. Corruption usually occurs when an employee accepts a request, extortion or bribery to facilitate a contract or public tender, it can also occur when corporate or private businesses agents or intermediaries offer bribes to take advantage of public policies or procedures to beat their competitors or make profits outside of the law. Corruption can also occur through the exploitation of public office without recourse to bribery, by appointing relatives or embezzling state funds directly".² The Arab Anti-Corruption Convention defined corruption as "a polymorphic criminal phenomenon with negative impacts on moral values, political life and economic and social aspects". According to Transparency International (TI), corruption is “the exploitation and use of authority or public office for private and individual or group interests”.³

Despite the fact that corruption is an old phenomenon, international and academic interest was not serious until the early nineties of the last century, when the European Council established the Multidisciplinary Group on Corruption, then anti-corruption efforts gained an official dimension, and the work commenced towards taking preventive and corrective measures, as well as focusing on linking the fight against corruption with human rights frameworks and their violations.⁴

In parallel with this international interest of anti-corruption, there have been calls urging many countries to undertake administrative, political and economic reforms with a view to combat corruption effectively. The financial and administrative corruption occurs due to several reasons, that cannot be mentioned in detail, such as administrative, economic, social,
political, structural, individual and external reasons. This corruption is able to take place due to the weak laws and negligence in their application, especially with corruption reaching both the legislative and judicial authorities.\(^5\)

In general, it can be said that corruption is an act that violates both laws and ethics, and is one of the most serious and complex types of crimes because it leads to multiple negative impacts, that are not only linked to the time and place of their occurrence, but extend and branch beyond that and the implications and problems are exacerbated at various levels.

**Second: Corruption economic impacts**

The most obvious form of the impact of corruption on the economic aspects is manifested by the direct correlation between corruption and economic growth, as most applied studies indicate. The greater the corruption in society, the more likely it is that a small group will control the state's resources, thereby weakening the state's ability to use those resources in the advancement of development.\(^6\)

In addition to the prevalence of multiple poverty indicators, the low standard of living of most strata of society, low GDP per capita, high rates of inflation, high rates of unemployment, and the failure to attract foreign investments through costs added by corruption. In addition to the loss of confidence in the country's working conditions, investors are reluctant to start new businesses in the most corrupt countries, and this will deprive these countries of aid and development assistance, and lead to domestic capital flight out of the country. Studies also suggest that more corrupt governments spend less on education and health, and perhaps more on public investments, such as lower revenue infrastructure projects, while countries that are more interested in human development are less corrupt.\(^7\)

In a rentier economy - as in Iraq - the potentials of manipulating government deals and contracts increase with the state's vast potential for large purchases in most sectors, as well as weak economic growth in non-oil sectors. On the other hand, the level of economic development has an important impact on determining the sectors in which corruption appears in. In addition, the damage that occurs in the economy commensurate with the power of the economy, so it is severe whenever the economy is fragile and unbalanced. The impacts of corruption extend at the level of financial policy by exaggerating government spending, lower tax revenues due to illegal exemptions and exceptions in exchange for taking bribes, in addition to the increasing volume of tax evasion, which leads to a decrease in the volume of public revenues. As well as the leakage of foreign exchange, the flight of investors and capital out of the country, the increased volume of imports of poor, mostly of a consumer-driven, commodities, and the aggravation of balance of payments deficit, as well as the serious decline in GDP rates when excluding the oil sector. The negative impacts of
corruption are not only limited to macroeconomic indicators, but they extend to microeconomic indicators, on the level of marginal tendencies of the saving and consumption of individuals, changes in the elasticity of demand for different commodities and the level of prices, etc., especially since the most common pattern in developing countries, is the consumption pattern versus the serious decline of the production pattern.8

The diversion and theft of public resources contributes to the redistribution of national wealth in favour of the beneficiaries of corruption, especially the groups that monopolize authority, their parties and those who have common interests, thus reducing the share of the majority of the population of this wealth. This leads to a growing gap between the rich and poor, and increases the number of people below the poverty line. Corruption also increases the cost of access to public services, which will burden the general public who are outside the layers of corruption, thereby affecting the distributive justice, paving the way for societal disparities and social and economic inequality. Corruption also has negative impacts on economic productivity, undermines the foundations of economic efficiency, raises the costs of building and operating public projects, reduces economic efficiency, weakens the incentive to invest, threatens market competitiveness, reduces opportunities for private sector growth away from political leaders and adversely affects the quality and efficiency of infrastructure projects and public utilities and services provided to citizens in general, in the sense that it will hinder the development process and cause the decline of its indicators or at the very least achieve small increases that does not commensurate with the size of available resources, which results the accumulation of problems and an increase in processing costs over time.

Third: Social impacts of corruption

The negative impacts that appear on the economic aspects due to the spread of corruption, must extend to social conditions through the disturbance of work ethics, the contradiction in societal values, frustration, apathy, negativity in dealing between the individuals of society, loss of sense of citizenship and the affiliation that is based on a contractual relationships between the individual and the state, due to distrust of the political system. As well as the brain drain and skilled migration for the lack of hope to obtain positions that suit their educational and professional qualifications, which significantly affects the various elements of the advancement of society, in addition to the spread of crimes in its different forms. Failure to combat this dangerous scourge would entrench its existence and highlight a culture that encourages individuals to engage in corruption, as it will become a normal behaviour in society, and then it is justified as a reaction to the collapse of the system of moral values, inequality of opportunities and the widened gap between social strata. It can also develop into organized crime and then terrorism.9 After the spread of corruption and the worsening of its complications, the hidden, illegal incomes that result from corruption in its various forms become the basic incomes, which sometimes outweigh the nominal incomes, which leads to
the loss of work value, entrenches unprofessionalism, encourages the negligence of job functions and supervisory duties, and deepens the decline in public interest and lack of national sense. Thus, corruption culture prevails and the moral fabric of society begins to collapse, especially with individuals making sure that the law is not applied against explicit violations of corruption cases, which increases the feeling of injustice by the majority. This leads to social tension among all segments of society, increases the size of marginalized groups, spread of poverty, decline of most social indicators, the rise of services cost of individuals by more than 10% due to additional costs resulting from corruption, as well as an increase in capital formation costs due to commissions that reach in some developing countries, as in Iraq, above 50% of the real cost of projects.\textsuperscript{10}

This is in addition to the other consequences of corruption on the level of the institutional environment of the state, politics, legislation, culture, foreign relations and others that cannot be mentioned, which impose restrictions on the state and society and undermine the chances of achieving justice, equality, rule of law and building society on the basis of freedom, justice and equality.

**Fourth: Iraq economy and corruption**

Corruption was rampant in most sectors of the Iraq economy after 2003, it was hidden before this date as a result of the collapse of the legislative and regulatory structures in the country. This was in addition to the adoption of a set of laws set by the civil authority of the occupation, some of which are still enforced at the present time. The power vacuum that resulted from the collapse of the former regime created new structures of corruption, in which two things contributed: first, the disintegration of the institutional system and the disruption of all production sectors except for the extraction and export of crude oil (on the understanding that most other oil industries have also been disrupted). The other thing is that the representatives legislated the laws in a way that serves their personal interests and the parties they belong to, without paying attention to the public interest. Successive governments and their failure to follow real economic policies and programs aimed at the reconstruction and development of the country with what commensurate with the size of the large resources available, which expand successively without the people touching any positive steps in the near horizon at all levels after more than a decade and a half of the political change that took place and in light of the transition from a dictatorship to a system that is supposed to be based on democratic foundations. This has plunged Iraq into a dark tunnel of chaos of corruption, conflict of interests and the struggle for maximum gains at the cost of the public good.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the shift from totalitarianism and state control over the economy to a market economy that Iraq has adopted after 2003, the index of economic freedom are still recorded at low rates, since the state is still interfering in everything, and its intervention was not in favour of assessing the path and reconstruction and the real
developmental advancement of Iraq economy. On the contrary, it has recorded the highest scores according to the failed state index due to its blunder and legitimization to corruption, away from achieving the simplest economic and developmental goals that are supposed to fit with what Iraq has of enormous potentials and elements of success.

According to the Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) survey of 2011, 8% of Iraqis faced direct or indirect attitudes towards bribes, while the prevalence of bribes was estimated at 11.6% by measuring the proportion of citizens who have dealings with civil servants, which causes them to be exposed to extortion and harassment. The rates vary widely among different sectors of the public administration, as citizens are forced to bribe police officers, land registry officers, Tax Authority, customs, car registration and many other departments. At the provinces level, there is a large variation in the cases of taking bribes suffered by citizens. In Baghdad, the prevalence of bribes is up to 29.3%, and the rate drops in the provinces of Kurdistan Region to 3.7%, while in other provinces the proportion reaches 10.2%. Bribes are more common in urban areas, 12.5%, than in rural areas, 9.7%.12

Fifth: Measurement of corruption

The measurement of corruption is one of the most important procedural problems that has arisen since attention was given towards corruption. Measurement, which enables the diagnosis of the size, quality, severity and extent of corruption leads to the identification of its impacts and reflections and provides the possibility of monitoring and controlling it, and therefore it is an important step towards its treatment and preparing the ground for international comparisons. Although there is no clear, direct and specified measure of corruption in any country, due to the difficulty of calculating the acts of corruption, whether in number or the size of stolen amounts, or the number of persons involved in this act? However, it is usually resorted to indirect methods of measurement, which depends mainly on obtaining the information from different sources. Among the most important ways to measure corruption are the following:

1 - Opinion or Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): it shows the measurement of corruption by the public’s perception among public officials and politicians, and this is an indicator adopted by TI, as it monitors the level of corruption in the public sector of the world based on assessments and opinion polls and questions related to the abuse of power for private interests, and it publishes an annual guide showing the degrees of corruption in the countries in the classification. The value of its classification range from 10 (least corrupt) to zero (most corrupt).13 It is noteworthy that Iraq was not included in the table of corruption perceptions globally until 2003 and beyond. This is because of the inability to access to information under the former regime, which led the organization to exclude it from this indicator in its annual reports before this time interval.14
Available measurements indicate that Iraq’s position is very low in the level of transparency, this is as a result of the prevalence of corruption in state institutions, in addition to the exclusion of ten out of thirteen criteria for assessing corruption perceptions in Iraq. Hence, the competing identification of perceptions is already low before starting to examine the other criteria of the index, which caused the perceptions to decline by relying on only three criteria. Table 1 shows Iraq sequence at the global level of CPI.

**Table 1:** Corruption perceptions at the global level during the period 2003-2013 and the sequence of Iraq.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of countries in the classification</th>
<th>Iraq sequence</th>
<th>Iraq corruption perception index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Transparency means the availability of accurate and timely information on their date and to everyone which enables good decisions making in general policy areas, particularly in those related to fiscal and monetary policies. The government and public and private economic institutions are the source of this information, and they should publish it publicly and periodically in order to expand the participation and control circle, alleviate waste and curb corruption. It is noticeable that there is a paradox between the size of corruption and the CPI in some globally ranked countries, where there is a huge corruption in reality. In cases of this, the perceptions of corruption are limited, so the index is low on the contrary to reality, as is the case in the Arab Spring countries before the events, where perceptions came less than what appeared later, and revealed many facts of these system regulators. Or on the contrary, such as the amount of corruption being at some measurement and its perceptions do not reflect the actual reality, as is the case in Iraq. The direct cause may be the relation between the level of transparency in some countries, political systems and the nature of governance. The higher the transparency, the more it helps access to information more accurately.
Sometimes this information may indicate the existence of real indicators and at other times there is an exaggeration because the source is being based on impressions that tolerate a percentage of error. While countries with low or no transparency - including Iraq - access to accurate information will be difficult, what leads to the possibility of manipulation in order to cover up the amount of corruption, hence the findings will come out unrealistic.15

2 - Corruption sub-index in the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG): it is concerned with measuring corruption within the sub-group of risks, and depends on a statistical model to calculate the main risks, which include three sub-groups:16
- Political risks: they measure the level of political freedom and all related topics.
- Financial risks: they measure the degree of financial and administrative corruption and everything that affects the achievement of public interests.
- Financial risks: they measure the degree of financial and administrative corruption and all that affecting the achievement of public interests.
- Economic risks: they measure the size of economic freedom in all its sub-details.

The collective index of the ICRG is obtained by taking half of the total risk points for the three groups (the score ranges from very high 0 to 100 points that indicate no risks).

3 - Governance index: an indicator developed by the World Bank to adopt several aspects of governance is represented by: expression, accountability, the quality of government intervention, the rule of law, control of corruption, and rely on a statistical approach to enable the use of information available from databases standardization of indicators of governance. The values of the indicators are between -2.5 and +2.5, and the high values of this indicator mean greater respect for the application of laws, while negative values reflect a flaw in governance. Here we find that Iraq stands among the worst performers according to this indicator and is ahead only on Somalia! In Iraq, this indicator recorded a negative value of -1.2 in 2005.17

Self-control Corruption Index on Governance is compiled from various sources and measures the perceptions of the following concepts: corruption among government officials, corruption as an obstacle to business, the frequency of providing “illegal funds” to officials and judges, and the perception of corruption in the civil service.

4 - Measurement of experiences: This tends to measure direct and actual experiences with government agencies, and its most common indicators: participation in corruption dealings and the corruption pressures index.

5 - Institutional environment analysis: Some analysis’s have focused on the institutional conditions that facilitate corruption, including: bureaucratic complexity, the authority available to employees, decisions transparency level, ambiguity or clarity of standards and instructions, control and accountability, adequate wage levels for employees, community
culture towards corruption and mechanisms and controls of reward and punishment associated with integrity and corruption.

6- Measuring corruption through publicly available information in dealing with corruption phenomenon to be measured. This can be done by adopting monthly questionnaires to determine the level of corruption. The success of this index depends on the extent to which people cooperate in reporting on cases of corruption, as well as the available information from the work of anti-corruption institutions and agencies, such as investigated cases, convictions, recovered funds, etc.

There are several other indicators that can be adopted in this area, such as the measurement of the volume of foreign investment, as it is known that corruption is one of the expelling elements of foreign investment. The importance of foreign direct investment is undeniable in the growth of many countries’ economies, especially in the growth of particular sectors, for many of them, especially for Arab oil countries, including Iraq. Investments in general and foreign direct investments in particular are one of the economic growth and development pillars, as it leads to an increase the country's productive capacity, and it has a direct impact on domestic investments by encouraging the creation of serious investment opportunities for the domestic private sector. This can also increases the exports of the host country, as well as other gains such as the transfer of advanced technology, creating jobs for local workers, which contributes to the reduction of unemployment rates, the fight against inflation, meeting the demand of local market of goods, and limiting the dumping policies practiced by other countries on the investment host country. Table 2 illustrates the indicators of investment environment and its role in stimulating development in Iraq economy.
Table 2: Indicators of investment environment in Iraq for the period 2005-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>KOF Globalization Index Rank</th>
<th>Human Development Index Rank</th>
<th>Transparency Index (Corruption Perceptions) Rank</th>
<th>ease of doing business index Rank</th>
<th>Direct foreign investment Rank</th>
<th>Annual percentage change in foreign direct investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>137 2.2</td>
<td>114 0.515</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>160 1.9</td>
<td>114 0.383</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>178 1.5</td>
<td>145 0.972</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>178 1.3</td>
<td>141 2</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>176 1.5</td>
<td>152 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>175 1.5</td>
<td>153 1</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>175 1.8</td>
<td>166 2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>169 1.8</td>
<td>164 3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>171 1.6</td>
<td>165 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(-) No assessment (Iraq joined KOF Globalization Index in 2009, and in Human Development Index in 2011).

However, there are many theoretical and practical problems surrounding the process of measuring the size of corruption, most of which may arise from being a phenomenon surrounded by secrecy to avoid accountability and punishment, and in anticipation of the use of corrupt acts as a tool of extortion. Hence, the difficulty of measuring the phenomenon based on traditional methodological foundations, so most of these methodologies tend to be based on creativity, composition and diligence, and this makes them vulnerable to criticism and objection. For all the above, curbing the phenomenon of corruption entails attracting capital, creating an environment conducive to investment, providing employment opportunities, reducing poverty, providing a greater chance for the success of governmental
and non-governmental economic programs, and making the trust in public office a reality. All of these are combined factors to create viable communities and governments at all levels.

Conclusion

The size of corruption in general, financial and administrative areas in particular has recorded very high rates in Iraq in recent years, which led to the loss of funds, achievements, and development projects. These achievements would have improved the various of economic, social and environmental development indicators, had an impact on eliminating poverty, achieving high standards of living for all individuals of society, a strong economy that is clear of problems and structural imbalances, and the crises Iraq is exposed to every now and then, with any decline in global oil prices due to its almost absolute dependence on oil revenues in financing its budget. In light of Iraq's resources and possibilities and what was spent of them under the pretext of reconstruction on fake or unsuccessful projects, the apparent confusion by successive governments in the management of the economic file and not coming out with any concrete positive results. It is necessary to study and analyse the phenomenon of corruption in terms of the causes which led to its emergence and impacts to work on combating it through a comprehensive process to reform Stat's organs and its various institutions, enact the laws and legislations necessary to prosecute the corrupt and recover stolen money, redraft the administrative system of all State's institutions, in accordance with the scientific and functional bases that create workflow and contribute to the completion of development projects away from the bureaucracy, activating the role of regulators, verifying the separation of links between corruption and the shadow economy widespread in Iraq in order to fight and eliminate them in a short time, setting clear rules of ethical, professional and religious behaviours to fight corruption, strengthening the social role and raising public awareness to defend their legitimate rights and report cases of corruption, increasing the level of transparency in undertaking various projects and laying the foundations and programs based on planned and thoughtful proposals by qualified personnel and specialists in order to initiate real economic reform process that is based on a comprehensive and clear-cut strategy of reform, as well as the possibility of benefiting from the experiences of other countries in the fight against corruption towards achieving the desired and sustainable development objectives.
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