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### THE IMPACT OF THE MISREPRESENTATION OF JIHAD ON THE INTEGRATION OF A MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Misrepresented discourse presents Muslims as people whose purpose in life is to harm non-Muslims and to target them with violence. And that their legal discourse legitimises the use of force for that purpose. This paper uses social psychology as to examine the impact of the misrepresentation of jihad on the social level especially the social dynamics in a multi-faith society after terror attacks.

This has participated in creating the cognitive aspect of prejudice against Islam and Muslims, and that terror attacks which target multi-faith societies stimulate prejudice against the Muslim population of that particular society. It is particularly dangerous, as these misrepresentations have been normalised in the discourse. This paper has analysed the impact of misrepresentation and how it affects the integration of a multi-faith society. This work was done using performativity in Speech Act theory, social psychology, schema theory and framing theory. This paper has discussed that misrepresented discourse creates the cognitive aspect of prejudice by confusing a legal term (*jihad*) in Islamic International law with criminal act (terrorism), normalising misrepresentation and categorising Muslims as out-group members who pose a threat to the in-group. For that reason, terror attacks targeting a multi-faith society are the stimulus that activates prejudicial acts against the Muslim population. This paper has also asserted that misrepresentation causes the domination of radical ideology and demonises the role of legal discourse and counter-terrorism policies because misrepresented discourse uses the performative of "*jihad*" as it occurs in radical discourse and it effects the integration in the in a multi-faith society.

## INTRODUCTION

Misrepresented discourse is consistent in producing 'Islamic terrorism' schemas, resulting in framing a 'new wave' of terrorism that is committed only by Muslim perpetrator(s), is motivated by *jihad*, and targets non-Muslims or threatens Western countries. Misrepresentation defines the in-group as the West or non-Muslim individuals who are threatened by the out-group, which is defined in misrepresented discourse as those Muslims who are motivated by *jihad*. Thus, the out-group members include the perpetrators of a terror attack alongside the Muslim population who are considered as either 'potential' terrorists or, in more positive discourse, the people who are supposed to safeguard the 'in-group' from their fellow Muslims' terror.

This is opposite to the categorization of legal discourse as, from a social psychology perspective, obedience of the law is the central criterion in categorizing the in-group and the out-group. The out-group in legal discourse is the criminals who violate legal norms and thus threaten the rest of society, while the rest of society is supposed to obey the law and thus is treated as the in-group. Thus, this paper has aimed to explore and discuss that misrepresented discourse has participated in creating the cognitive aspect of prejudice against Islam and Muslims, and that terror attacks which target multi-faith societies stimulate prejudice against the Muslim population of that particular society. This paper has used social psychology in examining the impact of a terror attack targeting a multi-faith society on the dynamics of relations between the in-group and the out-group [1].

This paper consists of four main sections. The first section is an introduction that will briefly tackle integration as part of the Prevent strategy for countering terrorism in the United Kingdom [2]. The second section of this paper has discussed the impact of misrepresentation in forming the cognitive aspect of prejudice against Muslims. The third section of this paper is on the ripple effect of terror attacks. This section has discussed that terror attacks are the stimulus, which activates prejudice against Muslims in a multi-faith society. The fourth section of this paper has discussed that misrepresentation is not only a threat to integration but also constitutes an obstacle to counter-terrorism policies achieving their goals for creating a cohesive society that is able to fight radicalization, since misrepresentation causes the domination of radical ideology

### *A Brief On Integration*

Integration implies that there are diverse groups who can live cohesively, and the salient focus is on the common factors that bring the diverse groups together. Therefore, racial, religious, or ethnic differences are not salient for establishing an integrated society [3]. In other words, one of the objectives of integration is to find a common feature between diverse groups that makes them all members of the same group - in-group members. Integration is one of the objectives of the Prevent strategy for counter-terrorism in the United Kingdom [4].

The Prevent strategy considers integration as one of the solutions that prevents radicalisation or prevents individuals from joining terrorist groups or committing terrorist acts. Therefore, it can be argued that integration is a defence mechanism of a multi-faith society to prevent radicalisation or extremism [4]. In addition to this, integration seems to be a coping or recovering mechanism after a terror attack, which targets a multi-faith society. The question is why is a terror attack considered a threat to the integration of a multi-faith society?.

Terrorism has a ripple effect on multi-faith societies because the terror attack targets the in-group, and thus, they are threatened by the terrorists who are the out-group due to their criminality (following the categorisation of the social groups in legal discourse).

Misrepresented discourse makes religion the salient categorising factor between different social groups. The severity of the ripple effect of a terror attack is dependent on the degree of misrepresentation that dominates the discourse in the targeted multi-faith society. The terror attack disturbs the dynamics between the social groups in a multi-faith society because radical discourse categorises a society as in-group and out-group. The in-group of radical discourse includes the group members of a terrorist organisation, or like-minded individuals who are considered 'true Muslims', as well as Muslims in general, as radical discourse claims to represent them. Meanwhile, radical discourse excludes everyone who opposes its radical views - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - by defining them as members of the out-group. The common expression that appears in radical discourse, which is used to define the out-group members, is "infidels". It should be noted that in radical discourse "infidels" does not allude only to non-Muslims, but even to Muslims. Consequently, a terrorist organisation and/or self-starting terrorists target the out-group with terror attacks. It is not necessary that the categorisation for the out-group is expressed with direct referent terms because pronouns can also be used as referent terms to the in-group and out-group members [5].

When a terror attack is committed with a claim of representing Muslims and the targets of the attack are people who have nothing to do with the government of a certain state, the attack threatens the integration of the social groups in multi-faith societies because neither the representees nor the targets of the terror attack are actually involved in a real conflict. The dilemma occurs when misrepresented discourse identifies terrorist personas or groups based on their religious identity rather than their criminal act. Misrepresented discourse has made its own categorisation of an outgroup and in-group. The in-group in misrepresented discourse are the actual/potential victims of a terror attack and are usually Western, non-Muslim targets, while the out-group members are the terrorists, and the Muslim population who have been excluded from the in-group because they were 'represented' by the terrorist. Thus, religious categorization in misrepresented discourse encourages the exclusion and alienation of individuals who belong to the same religious group as the terrorists in multi-faith societies, because the out-group is defined based on religious belief, not on the criminality of the acts. Thus, this demonstrates that

misrepresented discourse contributes to the ripple effect of a terror attack in a multi-faith society, as it seems to encourage further religious categorization that appears to challenge the integration of a multi faith society.

### ***Misrepresented Discourse And The Cognitive Aspect Of Prejudice***

Misrepresented discourse participates in framing the cognitive aspect of prejudice that is linked to the so-called 'Islamic terrorism' phenomenon. Van Dijk [6] explains that prejudice should be seen as a set of specific strategies of social (ethnic) information processing of 'thinking', based on some more or less fixed opinions or attitudes, but flexibility adopted to the various other kinds of social information people possess as well as the information from the actual context [6].

The Oklahoma bombing in 1995 led to an increase of the level of prejudice against Arab Americans [7]. However, the level of prejudice decreased only after the identity of the terrorist was released that the terrorist was neither a Muslim nor of Arab origin. The rise of prejudice against Arab Americans after the Oklahoma bombing and before the release of the perpetrator's identity is an indication that the terror attack made offenders of prejudice believe that the terrorists were either Arabs or Muslims. Misrepresented discourse is the most important device that not only expresses misrepresented statements but also transmits prejudice [8]. It can be argued that misrepresented discourse is 'prejudiced discourse and that prejudiced discourse occurs in various contexts [6].

Misrepresented discourse changes beliefs, emotions and perceptions of a terror attack, Muslims and Islam. This is confirmed by Salancik [9], who observed that 'subjects derive their attitudes from processing information about related behaviors. The manipulation of cognitive set had a powerful effect on directing the information used to derive the attitude. Slone [10] also found that media reports on terror attacks influence the audience, and that biased coverage may influence the public in different directions.

Misrepresented statements and stereotypes are both about sharing a belief about a group.<sup>594</sup> It can be argued that a misrepresented statement is a form of stereotyping Muslims. Allport [11] explains that stereotypes cause prejudice, that 'The stereotype acts as both a justificatory device for categorical acceptance or rejection of a group, and as a screening or selective device to maintain simplicity in perception and in thinking'. Therefore, misrepresentation generates a certain belief about *jihād* that it is a 'terror code', which communicates violence against non-Muslims. Ultimately, this makes Muslims appear to be a threat or causes suspicion, since they are believed to commit 'Islamic terrorism [12]. Furthermore, It can be argued that part of the impact of misrepresentation that occurs in relation to 'Islamic terrorism' is that Muslims become the target of special counterterrorism policies [11]. For example, stop and search and random checks at the airport, and making Muslims appear to be 'suspect communities'. Thus, misrepresentation contributes to increasing the victimisation of citizens of Muslim faith by different actors through unexpected/uncontrolled prejudice

that is committed by individuals, and controlled prejudice in the form of special counterterrorism policies which target Muslims, requiring them to be active citizens and to engage with the state in countering radicalization [11].

There are four criteria that led misrepresented discourse into creating the cognitive aspect of prejudice against Muslims following a terror attack. These are: confusion, normalisation, categorising Muslims as out-group members, and the occurrence of a terror attack.

As a consequence of misrepresentation, the performative of “*jihad*” in radical discourse dominates the performative of “*jihad*” in legal discourse (Islamic international law), so that *jihad* is defined as the use of force and violence against Muslims and non-Muslims instead of being a legal rule that regulates the use of force. Due to misrepresentation, *jihad* activates the mental representation of terrorism. As a result, the receiver of misrepresented discourse can no longer distinguish between what constitute terrorism offence or a legal rule that legitimise the use of force for self-defense. Receivers of misrepresented discourse are victims of misrepresentation because it is deeply rooted in the discourse. The receiver of misrepresentation is not an illiterate or a prejudicial person, in fact they are exposed to misrepresented discourse that participated in framing these beliefs about *jihad*, Muslims and Islam. Misrepresented discourse confused *jihad* with terrorism, for example, the definition of *jihad* does not seem different from the definition of terrorism.

According to Jongman [13], terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent actions, employed by (semi-)clandestine individual, group, or state actors, to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. Thus, misrepresentation is not an issue of mistranslation, as the English language has sufficient tools to correspond to jihad's schemas and to terrorism. Due to misrepresentation, a receiver of misrepresented discourse can no longer distinguish the difference between the performative of *jihad* in legal discourse (Islamic international law) and the performative of terrorism. And so *jihad* activates the mental representation of terrorism offences instead of legal rule that regulates the use of force in Islamic international law.

Normalisation occurs in the classical form of stereotypical statements in which the issuers of a misrepresented statement state that they are using the term “*jihad*” in a similar manner to the radical use, and not how jihad is regulated in Islamic international law. For example, to allude to the 'new wave' of terrorism requires the distinction between ‘Islamic terrorism’ and other types of terrorism, or the distinction of the motives of the perpetrators. Additional justification for the use of this form of normalisation is that it describes terrorism in the terrorist’s own terms. Hence, this form of normalisation seems to serve as a stereotypical statement as it appears that the issuer of a misrepresented statements is trying to save time, as Lippmann [14] says, ‘consequently the stereotype not only saves time in a busy life and is a defense of our position in society, but tends to preserve us from all the bewildering effect of trying to see the world steadily and see it whole. Thus, normalisation justifies misrepresentation, which seems to prevent or stop us questioning or observing the impact of these misrepresented statements, and makes it normal

to denote terrorists as “jihadists”, or to identify violence that targets non-Muslims as “Islamic terrorism” and similar notions that emphasise the religious identity of the perpetrators rather than their criminal act.

Individuals are subject to different types of categorisation. However, since misrepresented discourse introduces the notion of ‘Islamic terrorism’, a terror attack motivates religious categorization in which religion becomes the salient category that divides a multi-faith society. For example, misrepresentation categorises the social group into ‘Islamic terrorism’ vs. ‘non-Muslims’ [15]. Accordingly, misrepresentation causes the exclusion of Muslims, especially when a terror attack is sufficient to raise such categorisation of ‘Muslim communities’ or questions regarding, for example, British Muslims, American Muslims, etc., and doubts about their loyalty [15]. In principle, terrorism is a criminal act; thus, when a crime is committed, regardless of its nature, there is a distinction between an in-group and an out-group in which criminals are considered the out-group for breaching the law. Interestingly, despite the fact that terrorism is a criminal act, it does not seem to raise the same standard of categorisation in misrepresented discourse. Instead of a categorisation that is based on law obedience and disobedience, or between terrorists and victims, misrepresentation encourages religious categorisation in which the out-group members are considered the representation of an entire Muslims. Thus, the out-group includes terrorists and Muslims, while the in-group is the rest of the population even if some Muslims may share the same position in rejecting terrorism and violence as the in-group does.

Misrepresentation motivates religious categorisation in a multi-faith society by focusing on the similarities between the victim(s) of terror attacks and the ingroup, and between the terrorists (out-group) and the Muslim citizens of a multifaith society (a subgroup of the in-group) [16]. As a consequence of that, a terror attack participates in inducing anger towards Muslims, as they are seen as members of the out-group (Islamic extremist/terrorists). Thus, in this situation prejudice occurs as the offenders may feel angry towards the out-group (which consists of terrorists and Muslims) [17]. Thus, religious categorisation in misrepresented discourse offers schemas that, on the one hand, focus on the similarities between the victim(s) of a terror attack and the in-group and, on the other hand, focus on the similarities between Muslims and the out-group (terrorists). Ultimately, this changes emotions towards the Muslim population, especially after a terror attack.

### ***The Ripple Effect Of Terror Attacks***

The ripple effect of a terror attack does not occur only at a local level, but also at a global level. Terrorism has a ripple effect on a multi-faith society does not necessarily imply that a terror attack will result only in another terror attack. In fact, religious prejudice is part of the ripple effect of terrorism. This is due to the fact that terrorism and religious prejudice are all acts that are based on categorisation and targeting the out-group. Yet, the only difference between religious prejudice and terrorism, according to Ronczkowski [18], is that terrorists are politically oriented while other criminals seek opportunities and are not committed to a cause or ideology.

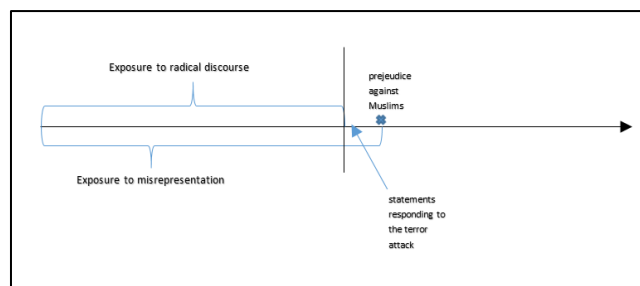
The most important features of post-terror attack prejudice are, firstly, time - prejudice occurs after the terror attack within a period of two to three months; secondly, victims of prejudice are mainly Muslims or persons who appear to be Muslim and thirdly, prejudice against Muslims increases particularly after a terror attack. Prejudice against Muslims increases dramatically after a terror attack in the period starting from the day of the terror attack to two to three months after the terror attack itself. Muslims seem to be targeted not because of their religion, race, or for being a minority group, but because they seem to constitute a threat to the in-group members (the rest of the population). Post-terror attack prejudice against Muslims suggests that the terror attack motivates the offenders to categorise Muslims as out-group members who threaten and/or cause harm to the in-group and thus deserve punishment or 'vicarious retribution'.

It can be argued that a terror attack is the main stimulus for increasing the level of prejudice against Muslims. A terror attack that targets a multi-faith society seems to activate the cognitive aspect of misrepresentation causing prejudice against Muslims and those who appear to be Muslim. However, in post-terror attack prejudice, race and ethnicity are regarded as indicators of religion since the likely targets for prejudice are those who appear similar to the image of 'Islamic terrorism' that has been created in misrepresented discourse [17]. The terror attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 caused a dramatic increase of hate crimes against Arab and Muslims [19]. It can be argued that terror attacks on multi-faith societies are an uncontrolled stimulus for prejudice acts against Muslims because it is hard to control the impact of misrepresentation and terror attacks on a recipient since not all receivers of misrepresentation are active prejudicial actors [20]. Thus, a terror attack seems to induce anger in some of the in-group members towards Muslims [17]. If Muslims were not seen as an out-group that intentionally targets the in-group to harm them, Muslims would not be the subjects of post-terror attack prejudice.

Supposing a terror attack has already been committed by a terrorist in a multi-faith society, the terror attack is an indication of a successful perlocutionary effect in which the issuer of the radical discourse succeeded in making the receiver understand the message (illocutionary effect), which is evidenced in the committing of violence against non-Muslims and/or Muslims (perlocutionary effect). What follows the terror attack is the issuing of statements by representatives of the state and representatives of the Muslim community.

Statements issued after the terror attack by different representatives in a multi faith society (governmental and religious) do not have the required effect in controlling the level of prejudice that is sparked after a terror attack. A terrorist individual was radicalised because he/she was exposed to radical discourse over time and a certain conflict or political event 'stimulated' the person to undertake a terrorist act; the radical discourse forms the cognitive aspect of the crime of terrorism, while political conflicts are stimuli that may encourage individuals to participate in terror activity.

Similarly, concerning the rise of prejudice against Muslims, long-term exposure to misrepresented discourse is one of the most important factors that contribute to forming the cognitive aspect of prejudice and the terror attack is merely a confirmation or evidence for misrepresented statements about Muslims: ‘prejudice and racism are not simply an isolated consequence of media stereotyping or ill-conceived counter-terrorism laws. Rather they are endemic phenomena, expressed through and across institutional discourses and practices’[21]. Thus, the issuing of a statement by governmental or religious bodies after a terror attack is not sufficient to confront misrepresented discourse that has been producing alienating schemas and misrepresented statements about Muslims and/or Islam for a long time. Due to the nature of the statements issued after a terror attack by political and religious representatives in response to the attack, these statements have a short-term impact. Thus, the perlocutionary effect of these statements, if successful, cannot intervene alone in the social formation processing of radical discourse or the misrepresented discourse as shown in Figure 1, which explains that terrorism is a successful perlocutionary effect of long-term exposure to radical discourse. While prejudice is a successful perlocutionary effect as a result of long-term exposure to misrepresented discourse, a terror attack is an important factor that compounds the effect of motivating prejudice, as it seems that the attack confirms misrepresented statements.



**Figure 1.** Illustration of what happens before and after a terror attack

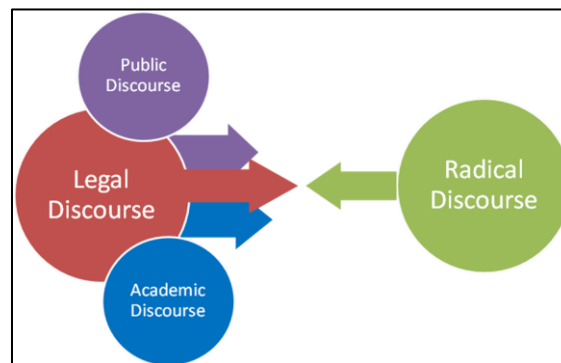
It can be said that although statements issued after the terror attack underline the peacefulness of Islam and the integration of society as a multi-faith society by addressing notions of togetherness, they are not sufficient to tackle or reduce the ripple effect of the terror attack. This is due to the fact that these statements have a short-lived/short-term perlocutionary effect (instant nature) in comparison to radical and misrepresented discourse.

### ***Misrepresented Discourse And The Domination Of Radical Ideology***

Misrepresented statements suggest that Islamic criminal law does not punish/criminalise terrorism. In addition to this, misrepresented statements – particularly those misrepresenting *jihad* – imply the legitimacy of terrorism, not the criminality of the act. There are two cases in which public discourse and academic discourse participate in the clash. First, it is assumed that public and academic discourse sides with legal discourse. This happens when public and academic discourse enforces legal ideology by using the same legal

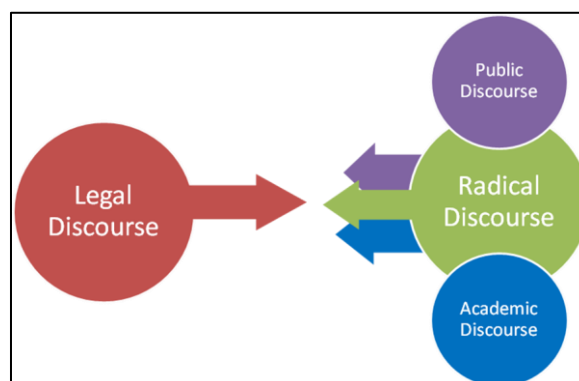


language and argumentation in identifying terrorism. The engagement of public and academic discourse is productive, because the definition of jihad demonises the performative of it in radical discourse, which creates an effective counter terrorism ideology as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** The effective role that public and academic discourses take in the clash causing terrorism (without misrepresentation)

However, the second case is when misrepresentation occurs in public and academic discourse. As a result, the engagement of public and academic discourse in the clash becomes counterproductive, because public and academic discourse are weakening and jeopardising the role of legal discourse in countering radical discourse, as public and academic discourse use covert legal argumentation, which legitimizes violence against others. Misrepresentation results in a counterproductive engagement of public and academic discourse in the clash between legal and radical discourse over the legitimacy of the use of force, causing the domination of radical ideology as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The ineffective engagement of misrepresented discourse (public and academic discourse) in the clash causing terrorism

Thus, misrepresented discourse causes the domination of radical ideology as it seems to enforce similar legitimacy of terrorism as that produced by radical discourse. Radical discourse intends to influence potential targets to commit violence. If the perlocutionary effect of radical discourse is successful, it could lead us to face a radicalised person and/or a person who is willing to commit a terrorism offence. Counter-terrorism policies intervene in successful

perlocutionary effect of radical discourse. Some governments conduct programmes that aim to rehabilitate radicalised persons: for example, the rehabilitation programme in prisons in Saudi Arabia [22]. Furthermore, the prevent counter-terrorism strategy by the UK government recognises the perlocutionary effect of radical discourse on targeted persons; therefore, it aims to stop vulnerable people from being radicalized [23].

The interaction between radical and legal discourse involves recognising the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of radical discourse. While public discourse seems to be interested only in reporting the action, academic discourse seems to examine the root causes of the actions and the study of *jihād*. There are three possibilities for the perlocutionary effect of misrepresented discourse: it radicalises a person by asserting the legitimacy of the act in identifying it as *jihād*; it has no impact on the receiver; or it fuels and increases prejudice against Muslims (persons, communities, or even policies). In addition to this, misrepresentation may influence counter-terrorism policies in which Muslim citizens may become the main subject and/or the target of such policies, or the target of disproportionate use of certain powers. Van Dijk says [6], in explaining the impact of elite discourse on influencing policies, 'indeed their control is limited to the domain of words and ideas, even when indirectly, these may have a significant effect on the minds of other elites (e.g. those of the politicians) and hence on public policy.

Thus, misrepresented discourse causes the domination of radical discourse by producing the same perlocutionary effect as radical discourse, which creates a major obstacle to counter-terrorism policy as two sources are producing a radical ideology. However, while radical discourse might be controllable, misrepresented discourse is not, as misrepresented discourse sources are considered 'credible' or, as Van Dijk [6] identifies them, 'elite discourse'.

## CONCLUSION

This work has explained the impact of the misrepresentation of *jihād* on the integration of a multi-faith society. It has been argued that terrorism from a social psychology perspective is a crime that threatens the integration of multi-faith societies. A terror attack targeting multi-faith societies has a ripple effect. The increase of prejudice against the Muslim population after terror attacks is part of the ripple effect of the terror attack targeting a multi-faith society. It has been found also that misrepresented discourse is a threat to the integration of a multi-faith society, because it forms the cognitive aspect of prejudice in which the Muslim population is perceived as constituting a threat against the rest of the population. As a result, misrepresented discourse justifies and legitimises prejudice against Muslims, and other acts of counter terrorism policies. This paper has found that misrepresented discourse causes confusion because *jihād* activates the mental representation of a criminal act instead of a legal rule, categorises the Muslim population as the out-group and this misrepresentation participates in forming the cognitive aspect of prejudice against Muslims. It has been found that misrepresentation creates a state of normalisation in which misrepresented statements seem to be normalised, unproblematic and acceptable. Furthermore, it was found that that misrepresentation causes the dominance of radical ideology over all the

discourses particularly legal discourse which weakens the de-radicalisation process and counter-terrorism policies.

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