

# ***A Study on Translation Strategies of the White Paper China's Energy Transition from the Perspective of International Communication—Also on the International Communication Impacts of the Shift in Translation Strategies***

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**Abstract.** In the context of globalization, the Chinese government has strengthened external publicity to present China's policy discourse system to the world, which has become a major research focus for Chinese scholars in recent years. As an important official document issued by the Government of the People's Republic of China, the English version of the white paper *China's Energy Transition* acts as a key tool for China to build a sound national image. It also exerts extensive influence on China and the whole world and serves as an effective way to enhance China's soft power. Taking this white paper as the research object and referring to relevant overseas research achievements, this paper explores its translation process and approaches by adopting variational translation theory and discourse reconstruction methods. The research results show that translators adopt literal translation, free translation, structural adjustment, annotation and other methods in translation. On the premise of retaining the original meaning, these methods greatly improve the readability of the text and readers' experience. Different translation methods also reflect the trend that China's policy discourse is transforming from internal-oriented publicity to external-oriented publicity, which promotes China's status and role in global energy governance. Meanwhile, this paper provides references for related research and puts forward new ideas for the study of China's international communication.

**Keywords:** China's energy transition, international communication, translation strategies, policy discourse, discourse reconstruction

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research background**

As global warming becomes increasingly severe and profound changes take place in the traditional energy system, how to achieve green development and low-carbon transformation has become a common concern of all countries. As a major country in the world, China's energy restructuring meets the demands of domestic economic and social development, and also helps address global

energy governance issues. The white paper *China's Energy Transition* fully introduces China's theoretical understanding, institutional mechanisms, relevant experience and lessons in promoting the green and low-carbon transformation of energy. It also puts forward prospects for future development, clarifies the principles and goals China adheres to in the energy field, and has aroused widespread responses at home and abroad.

In the current globalized world where English is the dominant international language for communication, policy white papers are no longer merely traditional information dissemination tools. They have become a medium to interpret China's governance philosophy, establish a positive international image and facilitate international consensus on various issues. Therefore, the translation quality of Chinese policy documents directly determines how the outside world perceives and recognizes China's development path, goals and model. This is not a simple task of textual translation. It relates to improving the effect of cross-cultural communication, optimizing the international discourse system and accurately conveying the intentions of the Chinese government, and also reflects the importance of interdisciplinary talents [1].

During this period, translation studies have undergone tremendous development and changes. Early research mainly focused on the word-to-word correspondence between words and phrases. In the new era, translation is regarded as an activity with interpretive value, communicative function and practical effect. When China's political thoughts, policy documents and diplomatic literatures go global, translation involves not only linguistic adjustments, but also comprehensive consideration of cultural backgrounds, audience psychology and diplomatic norms. All these efforts aim to transmit information and values more effectively. Hence, the choice of translation methods is not just a technical issue, but concerns communication effects, discourse construction and national image building [1, 2].

As a document with strong political attributes, professional characteristics and contemporary relevance, the white paper *China's Energy Transition* systematically elaborates China's distinctive strategic goals and development paths, including green and low-carbon development, energy security guarantee and the construction of a new energy system. It also illustrates China's role and proposals in global energy governance. For this reason, its English translation cannot be done through rigid word-for-word rendering. Instead, translators need to carry out refined conversion and re-creation in terms of conceptual understanding, information transmission, stylistic features and expression patterns. This paper mainly discusses how the policy discourse in the Chinese version of the white paper realizes effective communication, which is of great practical and theoretical significance.

## 1.2. Research significance

This study has remarkable theoretical and practical values. Theoretically, it conducts a preliminary exploration on the translation of policy discourse in international communication and lays a solid foundation for further relevant research. Practically, it makes a comprehensive analysis of the translation methods adopted in the English version of *China's Energy Transition* White Paper and the relations reflected by these methods. Previous domestic research on international communication mainly focused on research subjects, media attributes and communication effects, while translation studies mostly concentrated on linguistic conversion and text production. Against the backdrop of deepening globalization, to enable foreign audiences to understand and accept policy documents smoothly, it is necessary to remove barriers caused by cultural differences and deliver information accurately, which requires the coordination of communication and translation research. Therefore, the research on translation strategies of the English version of *China's Energy Transition* helps us

explore how translation affects international communication and the role of translation strategies in discourse construction based on a typical case [1, 2].

In practice, the English translation of the white paper is a valuable attempt to promote the internationalization of policy documents. It can provide references for the external communication of China's policy texts and offer enlightenment for cross-cultural exchanges of various written materials such as professional reports and international cooperation brochures. Energy issues have strong global and regional features. If China's energy policies cannot be accurately understood by the international community, China's stance and influence in global energy affairs will be greatly weakened. In this sense, an in-depth analysis of the translation of such documents helps spread China's policy propositions across the world and build global trust in China.

This paper focuses on the translation of policy texts and discusses the characteristics and existing problems of such texts. Different from literary works and commercial documents, policy texts have unique traits. They require readers to grasp the connotation of professional terms, take into account acceptability in the target language culture, and ensure fluency and readability on the basis of guaranteeing information authenticity. An analysis of numerous policy white papers shows that translation is far more than a simple linguistic conversion between two languages; it is also the understanding and dissemination of a culture.

### 1.3. Research questions

Taking the English version of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* as the research object, this paper carries out discussions from three perspectives: first, analyzing the translation methods and techniques applied in the text; second, exploring its major communication intentions and functions from the perspective of international communication studies; third, reflecting on the existing and potential impacts of the white paper on promoting the global spread of China's policy ideas.

### 1.4. Research methods

This paper uses text analysis and case study as its research methods. It looks through the content of both Chinese and English editions of *China's Energy Transition White Paper*, picks out typical phrases and sentences to make comparisons, and looks into different translation ways used when turning Chinese texts into English ones. Besides, it sorts out and studies the features of policy words, proper names and descriptive language, so that we can sum up common situations and existing problems [1, 2].

This paper gives a full and organized discussion with the support of international communication studies, variational translation theory and discourse reconstruction theory. When we study how translated works affect local cultures of target readers, we can make clear what role the white paper plays in global communication. We also look at the changes and new ideas translators add to the original text, and learn how to make translated works fit local conditions better. From the angle of discourse reconstruction, this paper points out that translating policy papers is more than just changing one language into another. It is also a process to pass on various ideas and fully deliver deep meanings between different cultures [1-3].

### 1.5. Paper structure

This paper consists of six chapters in total. Following the introduction, Chapter Two reviews translation studies, the construction of international discourse system, policy text translation and

relevant translation theories from the perspective of international communication, and points out deficiencies in current research and directions for future studies. Chapter Three elaborates on the core viewpoints and related issues of international communication theory, variational translation theory and discourse reconstruction theory, laying a theoretical foundation for further argumentation. Chapter Four takes the English version of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* as a case to illustrate the translation methods and procedures adopted. Chapter Five discusses the impacts and diverse outcomes of the above-mentioned translation strategies on international communication. The final chapter serves as the conclusion, which summarizes the main content of the whole paper, analyzes the research values, limitations and suggestions for follow-up studies.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Translation studies from the perspective of international communication

In recent years, "international communication" has become a high-frequency keyword in foreign language studies and translation research. Relevant studies point out that although international communication and translation are closely connected, they are not identical. Essentially, international communication is a cross-cultural information exchange activity guided by national will and public communication purposes. Translation, by contrast, focuses more on cross-linguistic meaning conversion and expression reconstruction. Therefore, when discussing translation issues from the perspective of international communication, translation should not be regarded as mere linguistic equivalence. Instead, it needs to be examined within the overall framework of national narration, audience reception and communication effects [1].

From this perspective, the English translations of policy documents, especially official white papers released by governments, have gone beyond the basic function of information transmission. They have become important carriers to voice China's propositions on the international stage. Accordingly, the evaluation criteria for such translations have changed. More emphasis is placed on communication effects, audience feedback and discourse construction, rather than merely linguistic accuracy.

### 2.2. Research on international discourse system

Research on the "international discourse system" has remained a hot topic in domestic academic circles for more than a decade. Though this field started relatively late, it has achieved vigorous development. Existing studies mainly focus on the significance, principles, paths and values of constructing an international discourse system. Key research themes include the Belt and Road Initiative, the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, Chinese Stories and international discourse power [4].

These studies lay a solid foundation for this research. As a major form of national external publicity, policy white papers play a positive role in constructing China's international discourse system, so their translation should be planned from the overall national perspective. At present, scholars pay more attention to the cognitive characteristics of target readers and adaptation strategies for cross-cultural communication, while less attention is paid to specific translation techniques and their impacts on communication effects.

### 2.3. Research on the integration of translation and communication

A new research perspective, namely the "integration of translation and communication", has emerged in studies on the overseas dissemination of China's discourse. Translation belongs to translation studies, while communication falls into the category of communication studies, and the two fields have long been studied separately. In the global dissemination of China's discourse, translation and communication do not follow a sequential order; instead, they interact with and influence each other [2].

The integration of translation and communication serves as the basic premise of this paper. As an official government document, the translation of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* in cross-cultural contexts is of great significance. This paper mainly explores how translators' choices affect the accurate delivery and integrity of the original text, as well as foreign readers' understanding and acceptance of China's stances and proposals. This also proves that there is an intimate connection between linguistic translation and cultural communication, which exerts influences on people's perceptions.

### 2.4. Research on policy discourse and political discourse translation

With the continuous development of research on the international communication of China's discourse, increasing attention has been paid to the translation of political and policy discourse. Some scholars discuss the characteristics and relevant problems of political discourse translation from the perspective of discourse reconstruction. Existing research shows that translation is not a simple linguistic conversion, but a cross-cultural communication activity involving cultural differences. Political discourse features innovative concepts, inter-textual relevance and rigorous logical relations, which bring difficulties to translation. Although English translations can generally convey the main ideas, deficiencies still exist in conceptual accuracy, cultural connotation transmission and consistency of argumentation structure [3].

Based on the Global Civilization Initiative, some scholars argue that China's political discourse is mostly delivered in a one-way manner to mass audiences, which may be misinterpreted as cultural centrism in some cases. To address this problem, translators can add modifiers and modal particles to enrich the hierarchical structure of translated texts, expand cross-cultural exchanges, and help more foreign people understand and recognize China's political ideas [5].

### 2.5. Research on translation strategies: From faithful conversion to international expression

Some researchers explore the internationalization of news text translation from the perspective of variation, and stress the need to take readers' cultural backgrounds and thinking patterns into account in external communication. Hence, it is essential to distinguish between internal-oriented publicity and external-oriented publicity and attach importance to their respective characteristics. Translators can add or delete content, adjust paragraph order and revise word meanings to make texts conform to international norms and facilitate global communication [6].

This paper conducts discussions based on variational translation theory, which has high research value. Its greatest contribution lies in providing a more flexible and practical approach for the English translation of policy documents. Different from traditional translation schools that emphasize formal equivalence, variational translation theory allows translators to adjust sentence structures according to the target language culture and readers' habits on the premise of retaining

core content. This is also the requirement for official document writing in current external publicity work.

## 2.6. Research on energy discourse

Compared with general policy documents, energy white papers have stronger professionalism and international attributes, and a number of scholars have conducted research on the translation of energy discourse in recent years. Statistics show that high-frequency words in *China's Energy Transition* include energy, China, power, green, development, carbon and transition. These keywords indicate that the white paper mainly delivers ideas of green development, energy transition, energy security and international cooperation to the outside world [7].

Relevant research points out that the English version of this white paper frequently adopts the expression "material flow" to elaborate content. It details China's efforts and achievements in energy transition and green development, which helps project China as an active participant in global affairs and elevate China's status and influence in the international community.

## 2.7. Review of existing research

Current studies on policy discourse translation are relatively comprehensive, covering international communication, the construction of international discourse system, the theoretical framework of integrated translation and communication, discourse construction mechanisms and corresponding translation strategies. Research from the perspective of international communication breaks the traditional linguistic research paradigm. It focuses on the role of translation in building a positive national image and promoting mutual understanding, and puts forward relevant requirements. The concept of integrated translation and communication, the idea of discourse reconstruction and flexible translation methods provide valuable references for sorting out the compilation ideas and optimizing the English version of policy documents [1-3, 6].

Nevertheless, deficiencies still exist in current academic research. Most studies focus on macro-level analysis while neglecting specific translation methods adopted in individual policy documents and their corresponding impacts. Although the importance of internationalization has been recognized, few studies discuss how to adopt diverse translation strategies to achieve better international communication. Energy transition is a highly political, technical and global issue with unique translation characteristics, yet relevant discussions remain insufficient. Therefore, future research needs to make up for these gaps.

## 3. Theoretical framework

### 3.1. International communication theory

Different from traditional translation studies which regard translation merely as linguistic conversion, this paper adopts the perspective of international communication studies and focuses on how information crosses cultural and political boundaries and spreads worldwide to generate influences. In this sense, translation is no longer a simple tool, but a driving force for global information flow, playing an indispensable role in enhancing mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries [1].

Research on international communication adopted in this paper is of great academic value. From the perspective of audience orientation, it is necessary to analyze audience characteristics and their

influence on information reception. From the perspective of communication effect, it evaluates the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication and analyzes underlying reasons. In addition, it reflects on China's national image construction. Combining the above perspectives, this paper analyzes the translation strategies of the English version of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* and the underlying reasons from the aspects of characteristics, goals and expectations of both communicators and audiences.

### 3.2. Variational translation theory

Variational translation theory holds that translators can make appropriate adjustments to the original text according to practical conditions and target readers under specific communication purposes, instead of pursuing complete formal equivalence. Compared with the traditional translation principle of "faithfulness and equivalence", this theory is more applicable to the translation of functional texts such as policy white papers. Such documents carry strong political implications, professional knowledge and cross-cultural communication features, so their translations must feature clear concepts, fluent expressions, reasonable layout and compliance with target cultural conventions [6].

From the perspective of variational translation, this paper summarizes major problems encountered in translation practices, including the combined use of literal and free translation, restructuring of information structure and interpretive reconstruction. It helps explain why multiple translation methods are applied in the English version of the white paper and how these methods serve the goal of external communication.

### 3.3. Discourse reconstruction theory

The theory of discourse reconstruction explains the true meaning of policy translation. Policy translation is not just passing on messages from one language to another. Instead, it means breaking down and rearranging the original words and expressions. Since it is a kind of communication between different cultures, policy translation asks translators to think about the culture, social situations and ways of thinking of readers who use the target language. After studying the main ideas, structure and writing styles of the original text, we can make proper changes to help readers understand it more easily [3].

Discourse reconstruction means remaking related ideas, rearranging logical orders and changing the flow of expressions. It looks into and sums up how China's policy explanations have changed from domestic public work to overseas public work, and finds out the hidden rules behind such changes.

### 3.4. Comprehensive analytical framework of this paper

This paper uses international communication theory, variational translation theory and discourse reconstruction theory to build a full analysis framework, which is named "communication purpose — translation method — discourse effect". The theory of international communication looks at the reasons and goals behind translation work. Variational translation theory mainly discusses how to pick and use proper translation approaches. Discourse reconstruction theory studies what influences translated contents bring to texts in the target environment. This framework helps explain the different values and long-term effects of translation from various sides.

This research takes international communication as the starting point and refers to functional equivalence theory. It also makes use of discourse construction theory to talk about translation ways

for the English version of China's Energy Transition White Paper, as well as its results in international communication.

## 4. Translation strategy analysis of China's Energy Transition White Paper

### 4.1. Textual features of the White Paper

As an official policy document issued by the Chinese government with strong political guidance, *China's Energy Transition White Paper* embodies distinct political stances, solid professional content, diverse target audiences and a broad international vision. It explains the basic ideas and future development of energy transition. It also talks about the ways to achieve green growth, keep energy safe and carry out international cooperation. The whole content clearly shows China's general plans, practical work and gains in the energy field. In terms of writing style, this white paper uses explanatory writing. It keeps a serious and professional tone, and meanwhile is easy to understand for international readers [7].

From the view of communication research, the English copy of this white paper lets people around the world know China's energy policies well. It also helps show the country's image, explain its development ideas and routes, and build up global influence. For this reason, translators need to make sure ideas are correctly passed on, cultural expressions fit well and communication between different cultures works smoothly.

### 4.2. Literal translation strategy analysis

The English edition of this white paper mainly uses literal translation for technical words and proper names that need accurate expression. When these words and names have fixed rules in global energy policy areas, literal translation can well show the professional nature and official standing of the whole text. For example, phrases such as "green and low-carbon development", "energy security", "clean energy" and "renewable energy" are all translated word for word following standard rules.

Based on communication research, literal translation works well for technical terms and common ideas that most scholars around the world accept. This translation method has obvious strengths. It can clearly pass on the real policy meaning of the original content, make translated texts more professional and reliable, and also enrich information and win more trust in cross-cultural exchanges.

### 4.3. Free translation strategy analysis

Free translation is a main translation method for expressing unique cultural elements, political ideas and language characteristics of Chinese. If we translate official papers with strong political meanings and formal tones word by word without flexibility, the expressions will sound unnatural and hard to understand. When translators use free translation, they can convey the original ideas correctly. It helps foreign readers understand and accept the content, and create emotional connection between both sides.

Free translation matters a lot in the translation of policy writings. Chinese policy documents often use words like "promote", "accelerate", "advance", "uphold" and "continue". When translating these words into English, we need to choose suitable synonyms such as "promote", "advance", "accelerate", "commit to" and "carry forward". All choices should fit the cultural background and formal writing style of the target language [6].

#### 4.4. Information restructuring strategy analysis

Information restructuring is an important translation method for the English version of this white paper. It shows the obvious differences between Chinese and English, which are the original language and the target language. Chinese policy articles usually explain content step by step and use combined sentences with parallel parts. This makes the logic hard to follow and sentences quite long. But English policy texts pay attention to clear levels, direct logic and simple expressions, and most paragraphs are made up of single sentences. This creates a big difficulty for translators. They need to fully get the original meaning and adjust sentences and text structures properly. Only in this way can cross-cultural communication work well.

When doing translation work, information restructuring means splitting long original sentences, rearranging their forms, changing word order and sorting out the logic of the whole text. The goal is to help target readers understand the content more easily and stop them from being troubled by too much information.

#### 4.5. Explanatory translation strategy analysis

Explanatory translation is a common method used in the English version of this policy white paper. It helps push forward cross-cultural communication and lift China's influence across the world. Some content closely connected with China's national situations is easy for domestic readers to understand, yet it may confuse foreign readers. So translators will add extra notes, explain technical words and clarify unclear parts. These efforts can get rid of understanding troubles caused by different cultures and systems. Foreign readers can then catch the key ideas correctly and get complete information.

Explanatory translation is widely applied to translate political theories and system-related terms with special local cultural features. Translators mainly stick to two goals in this work. They need to deliver the original meaning exactly, and also think about the cultural background of target readers so that the content is easier for them to accept [5].

#### 4.6. Chapter summary

The English edition of *China's Energy Transition* White Paper uses mixed translation methods, including literal translation, free translation, structure adjustment and explanatory translation. We use literal translation for professional words and terms to keep the content accurate and formal. Free translation is adopted for expressions with unique Chinese cultural features, so people can communicate and understand the content more easily. Adjusting text structures arranges the content in a better way and makes the writing flow naturally. Explanatory translation helps foreign readers learn about China's real situations, development plans and inner meanings.

These translation ways are different from the old style that only focuses on simple language conversion, and they fit well with international communication needs. The translation work of this white paper never copies the original text in a stiff manner. Instead, translators first get a clear understanding of China's energy policies. The whole work tries to help people across the world know, recognize and accept China's viewpoints.

## 5. Impacts of the shift in translation strategies from the perspective of international communication

### 5.1. Improving international audiences' comprehension and acceptance

Now the whole world is closely connected. Translating policy papers for cross-cultural exchange is to spread key ideas and bring about good publicity results. White papers are official works issued by government departments and formal institutions. Their English translations use literal translation, free translation, content rearrangement and explanatory notes. These methods match the reading habits and thinking ways of readers from other countries. They help foreign audiences learn the related content quickly and prevent misunderstandings caused by cultural differences.

People no longer only focus on keeping the original sentence forms. Instead, they pay more attention to conveying real meanings and sharing core ideas. This change shows China's continuous efforts in foreign publicity work. It helps different cultures blend well, shortens the gap in understanding and builds emotional connection with foreign audiences. Meanwhile, it also lets the international community form a new understanding of China's policies.

### 5.2. Promoting the international expression of China's policy discourse

Changes in translation methods bring deep impacts on the texts. They also help China's policy ideas spread widely across the globe. Nowadays, the English versions of policy papers focus more on easy reading for foreign readers. Meanwhile, they keep professional standards and smooth language for cross-cultural communication. All these changes help China build greater influence and strengthen international cooperation in the energy field.

We can understand the global development of policy statements from several sides. First, these writings use expressions that are widely accepted around the world. Second, they are supported by true facts and specific data. Third, they keep a fair and objective tone when introducing ideas to foreign audiences. Today, China's policy statements have got rid of old restrictions. They use an open way to explain China's ideas and win more recognition worldwide [1, 2].

### 5.3. Shaping China's national image in global energy governance

Changes in translation methods bring long-term effects on how China builds its national image and plays its part in global energy management. Policy white papers are important official files. They not only pass on information, but also show a country's ideas and voices. In this case, translation turns local expressions into phrases that the whole world can understand. Different translation skills work in different ways. Because of their own features, they help build and spread a country's image in various manners.

The English version of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* uses a mix of translation methods. It fully shows China's position in the global energy field. The paper presents China as an active member in developing clean energy technology and a leader in sustainable development. China keeps pushing forward communication and cooperation across the global energy industry. All these actions show its key status and great potential [7].

### 5.4. Profound implications of the shift in translation strategies

From a broad view, the changes made to the English text of *China's Energy Transition White Paper* show new progress in making China's policy statements more international. It means we have

moved away from the old way of explaining policies mainly for domestic use, and adopted new styles to communicate with the whole world. In the past, when translating official papers for overseas release, people mostly tried to pass on all information correctly to foreign readers. Now, more attention is paid to helping foreign audiences understand and agree with the content, as well as building smooth ways for communication.

This tells us that translation is not just an extra helper any more. It has become a necessary part of China's foreign communication work, and it is playing a more and more important part in international publicity [2].

## 5.5. Chapter summary

From the view of international communication research, the translation work of *China's Energy Transition* White Paper greatly helps its content spread overseas. It enables target readers to understand and learn about the content better, and makes it easier for China's policy ideas to reach all parts of the world. With simple words and clear logical arrangements, the white paper clearly shows China's image as a responsible major country. It also helps build a good public atmosphere among international groups.

## 6. Conclusion

Taking the English version of *China's Energy Transition* White Paper as the research object, this paper analyzes its translation methods and communication effects by applying theories of international communication, variational translation and discourse construction from an international perspective. The research finds that the English translation of the white paper is not a simple linguistic conversion between two languages. It is a translation activity that integrates policy interpretation and cultural communication, featuring obvious discourse reconstruction and meaning reconstruction.

The English version of the white paper adopts diversified translation methods. Literal translation is used for professional terms and conventional industry expressions to guarantee professionalism and accuracy. Free translation is applied to culturally distinctive content and concise Chinese expressions to convey the original intentions faithfully. Proper structural revisions optimize the text logic for better comprehension and fluency. Explanatory translation eliminates comprehension barriers caused by cultural differences. All these methods are adopted to achieve optimal cross-cultural communication effects.

In terms of international communication effects, this set of translation approaches accelerates information acquisition, and improves foreign audiences' comprehension and recognition of relevant content. From a linguistic perspective, the English version reflects profound changes in China's official discourse system. China's discourse is breaking past constraints and moving toward greater openness and globalization, which actively enhances the international influence of Chinese culture and improves China's overseas image.

Despite efforts to ensure comprehensiveness, systematicness, objectivity and impartiality, this research still has limitations. Restricted by length and available materials, this paper only conducts literature review and case analysis, without large-scale corpus statistics or questionnaire surveys targeting foreign readers. This to some extent affects the universality and credibility of the research results. For further research on translation strategies and external communication effects of China's policy white papers, future studies can adopt corpus technology, user behavior analysis and cross-text comparison to enrich research dimensions and improve the practical value of relevant findings.

The English translation of *China's Energy Transition* White Paper is a typical case of the internationalized translation of China's policy texts. It realizes creative transformation and innovative expression for specific target audiences. Research on such translations and their communication effects helps deepen the understanding of how China's policy texts go global and enhances China's international discourse power.

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