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**The Legal Dimensions of International Media Campaigns:
A Case Analysis on Broadcasting Policies**

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Abstract. *In today's digital communication environment, international media campaigns have come to play an increasingly important role in shaping global public opinion and guiding the flow of information. The rapid growth of social media platforms and digital communication technologies has made it possible for media content to move beyond national borders and operate across different legal systems. Against this backdrop, this article examines the legal aspects of international media campaigns and distribution policies through two specific cases - the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the restrictions imposed on Russia Today broadcasting. The study aims to identify the legal frameworks that influence the activities of international media campaigns, while also exploring how platform policies interact with state regulation in this area. It shows that the data policies of digital platforms, along with the mechanisms of algorithmic governance, have a significant impact on how media campaigns are distributed and whether they reach their intended audiences. At the same time, regulatory actions taken by governments - aimed at ensuring national and information security and countering disinformation - are giving rise to new legal and political debates around the freedom of international media. As a result, it can be concluded that the legal framework for international media campaigns is shaped through the interaction between platform regulation and state intervention. In this context, there is a clear need to develop policies that are balanced, transparent, and grounded in democratic principles.*

Keywords: *international media campaigns, media law, platform policies, state regulation, disinformation*

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Beynəlxalq media kampaniyalarının hüquqi ölçüləri: yayım siyasətləri üzrə təhlil əsasında bir nümunə analizi

Allahverdi Məmmədli 

Xülasə. Müasir rəqəmsal kommunikasiya mühitində beynəlxalq media kampaniyaları global ictimai rəyin formalaşmasında və informasiya axınının istiqamətləndirilməsində mühüm rol oynamağa başlamışdır. Sosial media platformalarının və rəqəmsal kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının sürətli inkişafı media məzmununun milli sərhədləri aşaraq müxtəlif hüquqi sistemlər daxilində yayılmasına şərait yaratmışdır. Bu məqalədə beynəlxalq media kampaniyalarının hüquqi aspektləri və yayım siyasətləri iki konkret nümunə - Cambridge Analytica hadisəsi və Russia Today (RT) yayım qadağaları əsasında təhlil edilmişdir. Tədqiqatın əsas məqsədi beynəlxalq media kampaniyalarının fəaliyyətinə təsir edən hüquqi çərçivələri müəyyənləşdirmək və bu sahədə platforma siyasətləri ilə dövlət tənzimləmələri arasındakı qarşılıqlı əlaqəni araşdırmaqdır. Araşdırma göstərir ki, rəqəmsal platformaların məlumat siyasətləri və alqoritmik idarəetmə mexanizmləri media kampaniyalarının yayılmasına və hədəf auditoriyalara çatdırılmasına əhəmiyyətli təsir göstərir. Eyni zamanda dövlətlərin milli təhlükəsizlik, informasiya təhlükəsizliyi və dezinformasiya ilə mübarizə məqsədilə tətbiq etdiyi tənzimləyici müdaxilələr beynəlxalq media azadlığı ilə bağlı yeni hüquqi və siyasi müzakirələrə səbəb olur. Nəticə olaraq müəyyən edilir ki, beynəlxalq media kampaniyalarının hüquqi çərçivəsi platforma tənzimləmələri ilə dövlət müdaxilələrinin qarşılıqlı təsiri nəticəsində formalaşır və bu sahədə balanslı, şəffaf və demokratik prinsiplərə əsaslanan siyasətlərin inkişafı zəruri hesab olunur.

Açar sözlər: beynəlxalq media kampaniyaları, media hüququ, platforma siyasətləri, dövlət tənzimləməsi, dezinformasiya

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Introduction

The development of digital communication technologies and the rise of global media platforms have pushed information flows beyond national borders, giving them an international scope. Under the influence of the internet and social networks, media campaigns have become powerful communication tools capable of shaping public opinion and influencing the political agenda not only at the national level but also globally (Castells, 2013; McQuail, 2010). This transformation has made the legal dimension of media activity more complex, as media content now circulates within a variety of legal systems and regulatory frameworks. Against this backdrop, the main challenge of this study lies in understanding how international media campaigns are regulated across different legal systems and distribution policies and how these regulations relate to the principle of freedom of expression. When operating under the legal norms of multiple countries, international media campaigns may face various restrictions and regulatory interventions. This situation, in particular, creates tension between the principle of freedom of expression and the authority of states to regulate the media sphere (Napoli, 2019).

This study highlights the following main research questions:

- How do international media campaigns affect broadcasting policies in different countries?
- What legal restrictions exist for media campaigns?
- To what extent can international law regulate the activities of media campaigns?

Accordingly, the aim of the research is to analyze the legal dimension of international media campaigns and to identify how various legal systems influence media activity. Building on this, the study also examines how broadcasting policies shape these campaigns and assesses the legal framework through the analysis of a specific case. In this way, it investigates how media campaigns interact with regulatory systems in different countries and the legal issues that arise as a result.

This study aims to contribute to the academic literature on global media regulation and international media law. Examining the legal dimensions of international media campaigns helps to provide a clearer understanding of the interaction between media freedom and regulatory frameworks. In addition, the research seeks to offer new analytical perspectives in the field of international media management and communication law. Unlike existing studies, this article considers international media campaigns not only in the context of legal restrictions but also through the lens of multi-layered regulatory structures and algorithmic governance mechanisms. This approach allows for moving beyond the traditional state-centered model of media law and provides insight into a more complex and interactive regulatory environment.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study approach to examine the legal dimensions of international media campaigns. The research combines doctrinal legal analysis and policy analysis methods. Two cases—the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the restrictions imposed on Russia Today (RT) broadcasting—were selected due to their significance in illustrating the interaction between platform governance and state regulation. The study analyzes international legal instruments, regulatory documents, and academic literature to assess how different regulatory frameworks shape international media campaigns. Through comparative analysis, the research identifies similarities and differences between platform-based governance mechanisms and state-centered regulatory interventions.

Results

This section presents the findings derived from the comparative analysis of two significant cases: the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the restrictions imposed on Russia Today (RT). These cases illustrate two distinct yet interconnected dimensions of international media regulation, namely platform governance and state intervention. The findings reveal how legal frameworks shape the operation and impact of international media campaigns in the contemporary digital environment.

2.1. *Cambridge Analytica Case*

The central role of digital media platforms in global communication has significantly changed the way international media campaigns are conducted. In particular, social networks have made it easier to distribute content targeted at specific audiences through the collection and analysis of user data, transforming strategies in political communication. In this context, the Cambridge Analytica case stands out as a key example of the interaction between digital platforms' data management policies and international media campaigns. The scandal that erupted in 2018 sparked a wide international debate after the data of millions of Facebook users were collected without consent and used in political campaigns (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

The Cambridge Analytica incident marked an important milestone, illustrating how the data collection mechanisms of digital platforms can be used in political communication processes. The company gained access to users' personal data through a Facebook application and employed this information using psychographic analysis methods to create targeted media campaigns capable of influencing voter behavior (Isaak & Hanna, 2018). Not only the data of the users themselves but also the data of their friends' networks were collected, which meant that the information of millions of users was used to target political campaigns. To gain a deeper understanding of this case, the concept of algorithmic governance provides a useful analytical framework. Digital platforms not only have the ability to passively track user behavior but also to actively shape it through algorithmic decisions. In this context, the flow of information is no longer a neutral technological process; rather, it is the result of structured and optimized decision-making mechanisms. Algorithmic systems determine which content is visible, which audiences it reaches, and which messages are prioritized, thereby exerting an indirect but powerful influence on political communication processes. This demonstrates that the legal responsibility of platforms is not limited to data protection alone but also extends to shaping the information environment.

The Cambridge Analytica situation raised serious questions about data handling policies and Facebook's platform governance. For many years, Facebook operated on a platform model that granted third-party application developers access to user data. While this model helped expand the platform's ecosystem, it also opened the door to the uncontrolled use of user information (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Following the incident, Facebook was compelled to implement stricter policies regarding data access and user permissions. The case also sparked broader discussions about the legal responsibility of digital platforms. In traditional media systems, content producers and distributors were regarded as the actors bearing legal accountability, whereas digital platforms were long seen merely as technical intermediaries.

However, the significant influence of social media companies on content distribution, data analysis, and algorithmic governance has prompted a reassessment of this view (Napoli, 2019), demonstrating that platforms are not just passive infrastructural actors in communication, but also active regulatory agents within the media ecosystem. In response, many countries and international organizations have begun developing new regulations to strengthen the legal accountability of digital platforms (Gradoselskaya, 2026), with rules such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) providing an important legal foundation for protecting user data and ensuring transparency in its processing (Kuner et al., 2020). These regulations aim to ensure stricter oversight by platforms over the collection and handling of user information.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal also revealed significant shortcomings in compliance with the principles established by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Although the incident became public shortly before the GDPR entered into force, the case highlighted the importance of core GDPR principles such as lawfulness, fairness and transparency in data processing (Article 5), lawful bases for processing personal data (Article 6), and the requirement of freely given and informed consent (Article 7). Furthermore, Article 22 of the GDPR introduced safeguards against decisions based solely on automated processing and profiling, which is particularly relevant in the context of data-driven political communication and micro-targeted campaigning. The case therefore demonstrated how large-scale political influence operations can create legal risks not only for privacy rights but also for democratic participation and electoral integrity.

The Cambridge Analytica case clearly illustrated the connection between data protection laws and media campaigns, showing how the effectiveness of digital media campaigns largely depends on the analysis of user data and the identification of target audiences. This situation has created a new area of legal debate, situated between the principles of data protection and political communication: on one hand, the protection of individual data is considered a key aspect of privacy, while on the other,

political communication remains an important component of democratic processes (Bennett & Lyon, 2019). In this context, the case also demonstrates how international media campaigns are closely intertwined with digital platform policies and data governance systems, with platform data policies playing a key role not only in terms of user privacy but also in shaping the reach and influence of media campaigns.

Consequently, analyzing the legal aspects of international media campaigns requires a comprehensive examination of digital platforms' data governance policies and their legal responsibilities. The incident prompted a reassessment of the role of digital media platforms within the global communication system, clearly highlighting the connection between data protection laws and media regulations in the context of international law and media policy. Furthermore, it underscores the legal implications of the "data-driven political communication" model, in which communication is no longer conducted on a mass scale but in a micro-targeted and personalized format, capable of influencing voter behavior through more subtle and difficult-to-measure mechanisms.

2.2. Bans on Russia Today Transmission

The development of the international media system has sparked new debates regarding the limits of state authority in regulating the media. In particular, the global operations of digital media platforms and international broadcasting organizations have created a need to assess media content within the frameworks of various legal systems. In this context, the bans on Russia Today (RT) serve as a significant example of how state regulatory interventions in the media sector are evaluated in light of international broadcasting policy and freedom of expression.

Russia Today is an international media organization funded by the Russian government, founded in 2005. RT broadcasts in multiple languages, including English, with the aim of reaching a global audience. While the organization's official mission is stated as presenting Russia's perspective to the world, numerous academic studies indicate that RT functions as part of state-supported media strategies, particularly in the context of international political processes (Oates, 2021). In addition to television broadcasting, RT conducts international media campaigns through digital platforms and social networks, which has helped establish it as a significant actor in the global media landscape.

RT's international activities have been particularly scrutinized in Western countries due to concerns about propaganda and disinformation. Research indicates that state-supported media structures engage in strategic communication aimed at influencing international public opinion, and such activities can exert a significant impact on political communication processes (Pomerantsev, 2015). In this context, RT's broadcasting policies are analyzed within the framework of information warfare and debates on strategic communication in the international media environment.

In 2022, following the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the European Union and several Western countries imposed various restrictions on RT's operations. Citing the spread of disinformation about the war by Russian state media, the Council of the European Union decided to ban the broadcasting of RT and Sputnik within EU member states. As part of this decision, the distribution of RT content on television, websites, and digital platforms was restricted. European officials described these measures as steps aimed at countering propaganda and disinformation (Helberger et al, 2018).

However, the bans on RT's broadcasting have sparked considerable debate in the context of international media law and freedom of expression. Many scholars and legal experts emphasize the need for a careful assessment of state-imposed restrictions on media organizations based on claims of propaganda or disinformation, with regard to freedom of speech. Freedom of expression is one of the core principles of democratic societies and plays a crucial role in protecting the work of the media (Barendt, 2005). Accordingly, the importance of limiting state intervention in the media sphere within democratic standards is often highlighted.

From the perspective of European human rights law, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to receive and impart information without interference by public authorities. However, Article 10(2) also permits restrictions that are prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society for the protection of national security, territorial integrity, public safety, or the prevention of disorder and crime. Consequently, the legal assessment of restrictions imposed on RT requires careful examination of whether such measures satisfy the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality established under the Convention.

A similar approach can be found in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which recognizes freedom of expression as a fundamental human right while allowing certain restrictions for the protection of national security, public order, public health, public morals, and the rights of others. Within the context of international broadcasting and digital communication, Article 19 provides an important normative framework for balancing media freedom against legitimate state interests. Therefore, debates surrounding the RT restrictions illustrate the continuing challenge of reconciling international human rights standards with contemporary concerns about disinformation and information security.

Moreover, the RT case has prompted broader discussions about how the concepts of propaganda and disinformation should be defined within the international media environment. The acceleration of information flows in the digital media landscape facilitates the global spread of content containing disinformation and propaganda (Qu & Lu, 2026), which has in turn led states to strengthen their policies aimed at countering disinformation. At the same time, the effects of these measures on media freedom in the course of combating disinformation are actively debated in the academic literature (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

For an alternative analysis of the RT case, the concept of “information sovereignty” becomes particularly relevant. According to this approach, states have the right to protect not only their physical borders but also their informational space. In the digital environment, the influence of foreign media actors has prompted governments to reassess their information security strategies. In this context, restrictions on RT’s activities are linked not only to issues of media freedom but also to states’ attempts to safeguard their informational environment. At the same time, this approach remains controversial from the perspective of international law, as the principle of information sovereignty can potentially conflict with the right to freedom of expression.

Discussion

The findings obtained from the Cambridge Analytica and RT cases demonstrate that international media campaigns operate within a complex legal environment shaped by both platform governance and state regulation. To interpret these findings more comprehensively, it is necessary to discuss the broader legal, regulatory, and theoretical frameworks that influence contemporary media governance. The following discussion examines these findings through the perspectives of regulatory pluralism, algorithmic governance, information sovereignty, and hybrid governance.

3.1 Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Globalization and the development of digital communication technologies have greatly expanded the reach and influence of media campaigns. Today, media campaigns are not limited to communication within national borders; they also take the form of international strategies aimed at audiences in different countries, with the goal of shaping global public opinion. International media campaigns can be understood as communication activities carried out by states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, or private sector actors with the purpose of disseminating information on a global scale, influencing public opinion, or affecting political discourse (Castells, 2013; Thysius,

2018). These campaigns spread particularly rapidly through digital platforms and play a significant role in shaping international information flows.

The spread of international media campaigns has prompted a reassessment of global media regulation and broadcasting policies. In traditional media systems, broadcasting activities were primarily governed by national legal frameworks; however, in the digital environment, the cross-border circulation of content can limit the effectiveness of these rules (Galante, 2023). As a result, media regulation now takes place not only within national legislation but also in the context of international law and platform policies (Flew, 2021). In particular, the management of digital platform content, data handling policies, and algorithmic regulatory mechanisms have introduced a new dimension to media governance processes, highlighting the need for regulation that balances media freedom with public interests.

In democratic societies, freedom of expression is considered a fundamental right and plays a key role in protecting the work of the media (Galante et al., 2023). Nevertheless, media content may still be subject to certain legal restrictions aimed at safeguarding public order, national security, preventing hate speech, or combating disinformation (McQuail, 2010). In this context, media law functions as a regulatory field seeking to maintain a delicate balance between protecting freedom of expression and ensuring public safety, reflecting the complex challenges posed by the global and digital nature of contemporary media campaigns.

Media law provides an important foundation for understanding the legal dimensions of international media campaigns. It encompasses the legal rules and regulatory mechanisms that shape the activities of media organizations, as well as issues related to freedom of expression, content regulation, media ownership, and editorial responsibility (Barendt, 2005). The rise of digital media platforms has made this field even more complex. Unlike traditional media systems, social media and digital communication networks operate on a global scale, which means that different legal systems can affect the same content simultaneously. In this context, platform rules extend beyond the policies of private companies, as many countries are now developing new legislative frameworks to regulate digital media platforms. Notable examples include the European Union's Digital Services Act, data protection legislation, and platform accountability policies (Napoli, 2019), which are designed to make the role of platforms in managing content and information flows more transparent and accountable.

The adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA) by the European Union has further strengthened the regulatory framework governing digital platforms. The DSA imposes extensive obligations on very large online platforms regarding transparency, risk assessment, content moderation, and accountability mechanisms. In particular, the regulation requires platforms to assess and mitigate systemic risks associated with the dissemination of illegal content, disinformation, and manipulation of information environments. As a result, digital platforms are increasingly expected to operate not merely as private communication infrastructures but as actors bearing public responsibilities within the digital information ecosystem.

In today's digital media environment, regulation cannot be explained solely through a state-centered approach. In this context, the concept of *regulatory pluralism* provides a more adequate framework for analyzing the legal dimensions of international media campaigns. According to this approach, the rules governing the media environment are shaped not only by states, but also by platforms, international organizations, and non-state actors. As a result, legal regulation takes on a multi-level, multi-actor structure. This means that the activities of international media campaigns are influenced not by a single legal system, but by parallel and sometimes conflicting sets of rules. Consequently, media law should be understood not as a fixed normative framework, but as a dynamic regulatory ecosystem open to mutual influence.

3.2. Platform Governance and State Regulation

To understand the legal aspects of international media campaigns, it is essential to consider the relationship between digital platform policies and state regulation together. The digitization of the global communication system has meant that not only states but also private technology companies have become significant regulatory actors in the production and distribution of media content, transforming the traditional state-centered model of media regulation into a more complex, multi-layered governance system (Flew, 2021).

Social media platforms play a central role in the global dissemination of media campaigns, and their content management and data handling policies can directly shape the legal boundaries within which these campaigns operate. This influence is especially evident through the development of data-driven communication strategies, where social media companies analyze user information to identify target audiences, thereby supporting more effective execution of media campaigns. Such practices have increased the reliance on data in political communication processes and sparked new debates about the regulatory responsibilities of digital platforms (Zuboff, 2019). Platform content distribution algorithms can direct the flow of information, ensuring that certain content reaches a wider audience, positioning digital platforms not merely as technical components of communication infrastructure but as actors actively shaping the structure of the media environment (Van Dijck et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, media regulation extends beyond platform policies. States develop various mechanisms to maintain public order, protect national security, and combat disinformation. The cross-border nature of international media campaigns complicates the exercise of state authority, as digital media content accessible in multiple countries may be lawful in one jurisdiction but restricted in another (Napoli, 2019). Consequently, the international media environment now features a diversified legal framework, emphasizing the necessity to evaluate media activities in the context of multiple overlapping legal systems.

The regulation of international media campaigns must be considered within the context of normative conflicts, where different legal principles - freedom of speech, data protection, national security, and information security - often clash. These conflicts are not merely legal disputes; they also reflect underlying differences in values. Media activity that is deemed legitimate under one legal system may be perceived as a threat under another, making it difficult to establish a unified international regulatory model and highlighting the inevitability of legal pluralism. Consequently, international media law should be understood not as a fixed set of rules but as a dynamic field shaped by the interaction of diverse normative approaches.

State interventions in the media sphere typically occur in response to concerns over propaganda, disinformation, and national security (DuBosar et al., 2026). In the digital media environment, the rapid spread of manipulative content has prompted many countries to reconsider their media regulations, developing new rules for media organizations and digital platforms and implementing policies to control the flow of information (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). At the same time, such interventions require careful evaluation in terms of freedom of expression, one of the fundamental principles of international human rights law. Freedom of expression plays a crucial role in protecting the work of the media, and instruments like the European Convention on Human Rights set out key principles for safeguarding media freedom (Barendt, 2005). Nevertheless, freedom of expression is not absolute and may be restricted for reasons such as national security, public order, or the prevention of incitement to hatred.

The rise of digital media and new regulatory approaches has further reshaped the concept of media governance. Whereas traditional media systems relied primarily on state authorities for regulation, today digital platforms, international organizations, and non-governmental actors all play central roles in shaping media policy. This multi-actor regulatory structure allows a variety of interests and values to influence media governance (Tambini, 2021). As a result, the legal framework for

international media campaigns is shaped not only by national laws but also by platform policies and global governance processes. This multi-layered model, often referred to as “hybrid governance,” sees states, platforms, and international institutions exerting parallel normative influence, so that the media environment does not form a single legal space but rather a network of interconnected regulatory domains.

Conclusion

The development of digital communication technologies and the expansion of global media platforms have significantly increased the international reach of media campaigns, making it necessary to reconsider their legal frameworks. The cases examined in this study - Cambridge Analytica and the bans on Russia Today (RT) - illustrate how international media campaigns are shaped by different regulatory mechanisms. Together, these cases provide complementary insights into the role of digital platform policies and state regulation in the global media environment.

The Cambridge Analytica case clearly demonstrated the influence of digital platforms’ data governance policies on the management of media campaigns. Large-scale collection and analysis of user data enabled the development of targeted communication strategies and more precise audience targeting, showing that digital platforms are not merely technical tools of communication but are increasingly important regulatory actors within the media ecosystem. Policies governing data access, algorithmic content distribution, and moderation practices directly shape the reach and impact of media campaigns.

Conversely, the ban on RT’s broadcasting illustrates how state regulatory intervention in the media sphere can shape international broadcasting policy. States may intervene in media activities and restrict the output of specific media organizations for reasons such as national security or countering propaganda and disinformation. Such measures highlight the delicate balance between media freedom and national security and demonstrate how states exercise their regulatory powers within the international media environment.

In this context, developing policy recommendations for international media campaigns becomes increasingly important. Digital platforms’ policies on data governance and content management should be transparent and accountable. Platforms that implement robust mechanisms for protecting user data and adopt clear rules for its use are likely to enhance trust in the digital media environment. Additionally, transparency in content moderation processes and the ability to audit them can support the ethical and legal implementation of international media campaigns.

At the same time, state media regulation policies should align with the principle of freedom of expression. Measures aimed at countering disinformation and propaganda must not unduly restrict media freedom. Consequently, media regulation should adhere to democratic standards and the principles of international human rights, while also encouraging international cooperation to address the cross-border nature of the digital media landscape.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the legal analysis of international media campaigns cannot be confined solely to institutional regulation. Technological and normative transformations - including the algorithmic power of digital platforms, state claims to information sovereignty, and the limited applicability of international law - create a complex and multidimensional regulatory environment. Future research should therefore focus on platform governance, AI-driven content regulation, and issues of global legal harmonization to better understand and guide international media practices.

Theoretically, the study advances media law scholarship by demonstrating that contemporary international media regulation operates through overlapping layers of governance rather than through

a single state-centered legal system. This finding supports emerging theories of regulatory pluralism and contributes to ongoing debates on digital platform accountability.

The findings of this study indicate that contemporary international media regulation is increasingly shaped by the interaction between platform governance mechanisms established under instruments such as the GDPR and Digital Services Act, and international human rights standards embodied in Article 10 of the ECHR and Article 19 of the ICCPR.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in integrating platform governance, algorithmic governance, information sovereignty, and regulatory pluralism into a unified analytical framework for examining international media campaigns. Unlike traditional media law studies that primarily focus on state regulation, this research demonstrates how legal authority is increasingly distributed among states, digital platforms, and international institutions. The study contributes to the literature by proposing a hybrid governance perspective for understanding the legal regulation of global media campaigns.

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