Introduction: Strategy in EU foreign policy[i]

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The multiple crises that the EU is currently facing internally, in its neighbourhood and beyond have challenged its ability to project power both in the region at its borders and also more globally. At the same time, the EU's identity as a sui generis (normative) power has been questioned by the increasing geopolitical tensions and forces that are shaping the neighbourhood. As a consequence, the EU has been constrained, if not forced to rethink its strategy in international relations. The realization that not all states in the international arena share the EU's norm-infused behaviour in world politics has also prompted the EU to acknowledge the need for an arguably more pragmatic and realist security strategy. The complexity of the crises in the neighbourhood and the internal ones faced by the Union (e.g. Brexit, Grexit, illiberal tendencies in Central Eastern Europe or the rise of nationalism) provides a sense of urgency to any type of strategic thinking that the EU might embrace.

After the European Council commissioned the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) with the task of developing a new strategic vision for the EU´s external action, the debate about both the need for a new sense of direction for European foreign and security policy and the substance of the strategic document has started. The EEAS June 2015 strategic review has provided the opportunity for achieving enhanced dialogue and coordination among the member states and EU institutions (European External Action Service 2015). The need for a coherent strategy that effectively integrates and draws on the strengths of EU actors seemed to be as pressing as ever. Moreover, institutional and

diplomatic developments in the EU since the adoption of the Lisbon treaty – particularly the increasing role of the HR and EEAS – have opened the way for member states to work towards forging a strategy, which at least in theory an increased potential to be to some extent implemented. Diplomats in Brussels, Berlin or London seem to have embraced the idea that the EU must have a more strategic approach to the politics of the neighbourhood, but also world politics. The European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) that was published by the HR in June 2016 and welcomed by the European Council reflected the idea and set in train the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (European External Action Service 2017, 2016).

To a great deal of academics and analysts this shift should have occurred much sooner. Scholars taking this stance have particularly focused on the EU's grand strategy, its strategic partnerships, the role of public diplomacy, (soft) geopolitics, the development of CSDP missions or the relationships between values, interests and strategic thinking (Hill 2003; Biscop and Andersson 2007; Hardacre and Smith 2009; Rogers 2009; Biscop 2010; Howorth 2010; Youngs 2010; M. E. Smith 2011; Kreutz 2015; Cross 2016; Howorth 2016; M. E. Smith 2016; Tocci 2016). At the same time, the election of Trump seems to affect the EU's engagement with the US, and the strength of the transatlantic partnership. Various voices in the EU have been claimed that the EU cannot rely on the US anymore. On the one hand, the US has recently withdrawn from the Paris climate change agreement and stopped negotiation for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). On the other hand, however, through operation Atlantic Resolve the US has continued its military build-up on the so-called 'Eastern flank' in a number of EU member states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania). All of these recent developments in transatlantic relations emphasise the increasing uncertainty within which the EU operates, and the need to constantly update its

strategy. The EU's response to increasing strategic uncertainty seems to be concept of resilience, which has captured the discourse of the European Commission or the EEAS. Recent documents point to the fact that the EU's own resilience is very much linked to increasing the resilience of its partners (be its neighbours, or other states around the globe facing various challenges), as the EU is not insulated from pressure that affect them.

The special issue aims to discuss and contextualize the recent shift towards geopolitics and strategic thinking in EU foreign policy. It evaluates how recent events in the international arena (such as the Ukraine crisis, the Arab spring, the rise of Daesh and the war in Syria or the contestation of the transatlantic order by President Trump) have emphasized the need for the EU to engage with geopolitics and strategic thinking in foreign policy (Sus 2017). In this sense, the special issue focuses on developing theories of EU foreign policy that can capture and explain the role of strategic thinking as well as discuss empirically grounded accounts of the way a concern for developing strategies shapes EU foreign policy.

BACKGROUND

The issue of strategic thinking became a salient research topic in the EU foreign policy literature following the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS). Since then the strategy has been widely criticized for its rather vague and idealistic language which underscored the EU's potential to act as a major player in the international arena by developing its soft (normative) power. A key perquisite for a strong EU in world politics was thought to be securing an enhanced presence in its neighbourhood. This in practice meant stabilizing the region and exporting some of the EU's menu of rules, norms and regulations to the countries on its eastern and southern borders. The neighbourhood was at the time seen as a ring of friends which would welcome wholeheartedly the implementation of the EU's security

strategy. Needless to say that the deeply idealistic character of the strategy meant that in most respects it remained to a large extent on the level of discourse. However, throughout the decade that followed the strategy influenced the normative identity that the EU seemed to embrace in its foreign policy.

The key argument in the special issue is **that the recent transformations towards more disorder in the regional and global arenas have made the EU more conscious about the salience of the need to develop a coherent foreign policy strategy**. We look particularly at the way the turn towards geopolitics has translated in official discourse, policies initiatives (material, ideational and symbolic) – nevertheless, we also question whether these changes in EU foreign policy can be understood as strategic in essence. The most obvious change appeared at the level of rhetoric, where the EU has increasingly started thinking about power and competition and in increasingly realist terms. At the same time, the crises in the neighbourhood have prompted the EU to review its security strategy, which now highlights the fact that world politics are increasingly ruled by geopolitical considerations. Moreover, the revision of the ENP in the autumn of 2015, for the first time in EU official documents, argued that the neighbourhood is a geopolitical space and pointed to the need for the EU to engage in conflict resolution in the region. At a more symbolic level, in the post-Soviet space the EU has started debating about potential cooperation with the EEU as a way of mitigating the increasing rivalry with Russia.

More specifically, the special issue seeks to analyse the role that strategic thinking is playing in EU foreign policy. We are interested in three themes: 1. understanding the key aspects of the EU's strategic thinking and the ways in which this translates into strategies 2. the impact and contribution of various EU actors to strategic thinking at the EU level; 3. the way in which strategic thinking guides the EU's practices in foreign policy with a focus on for

example diplomacy, trade, regionalism or the environment. Consequently contributions to the special issue focus on questions such as:

- How can strategic thinking be defined in the case of the EU (with a primary focus on its resources, actors and processes)?

- To what extent does the presence of strategic planning translate into concrete foreign policy decisions which can then be implemented?

- What role does strategic diplomacy play in the EU's external relations?

- Can the EU develop a grand strategy and does the EUGS fit into the concept of the grand strategy? Moreover, is it possible for international actors to construct coherent and pragmatic grand strategies in the 21th century?

- Do the EU's strategic partnerships underline its strategic thinking?

- To what extent is attention to geopolitics a key component of the EU's strategic thinking in foreign policy?

- Given the multiple interests of the nation states, is thinking strategically at EU level a realistic or useful goal?

Contributors to the special issue explore these topics through a myriad of theoretical frameworks. For example, some take a more realist approach and focus on the salience of material power capabilities and geopolitics in creating foreign policy strategies. To that end, the EU's lack of hard power coupled with the increasingly disordered regional and global settings can be seen to have a deeply constraining effect on the EU's ability to build and implement a coherent foreign policy strategy. Other contributions employ institutionalist approaches by focusing on the range of processes and actors that are involved in developing EU strategies in foreign policy; at the same time, more liberal versions place multilateralism, trade or soft power at the centre of the EU's strategic thinking. Finally, authors applying constructivist approaches emphasize the influence of the EU's norms values or identity in

devising its foreign policy strategy. More broadly, contributors focus on several key phases in the development of foreign policy strategies: the need for strategic innovation, debate, strategic planning, formulation, implementation, and reflection.

STRATEGY AND EU POWER IN WORLD POLITICS

We define strategy as the broad, structured and systematic outcome of processes meant to identify various policy problems, challenges or opportunities, provide solutions for them and set targets and expectations (Rochefort 1994; Birkland 1997). They key aspect that defines a strategy here is the fact that it presents a broader framework that can consistently and systematically guide policymaking at various levels. Creating a strategy implies going beyond constructing various policies and plans. It entails the existence of a coherent set of goals and ideas that can guide policymakers in dealing with political reality (Eising, Rasch, and Rozbicka 2015). In foreign policy, strategies usually set out the broad parameters under which policymakers operate (Barrinha 2016; Alaranta 2016). They are to a large extent the blueprints which policymakers have to follow, but also when revise they realise that there is significant misalignment between strategies, political reality, foreign policy resources, or policy outcomes. In various areas strategies can prescribe very detailed guidelines, but more effective are those that prescribe broad benchmarks (Beland 2009). At the same time, strategies tend to embody the range of values, norms and interests held by their initiating actors . For example, part and parcel of the EU or the US's strategies has been the promotion of human rights and democracy, values which at the core of their political systems. That being said, the most objective yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness or level of success of foreign policy is the extent to which they manage to reflect and promote an actor's interests, values and norms (Goddard and Krebs 2015). Effectiveness is also dependent on the extent to which strategies take into account a wide range of internal and more structural factors

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pertaining to world politics. Some internal aspects include resources, expertise, political willingness, while structural ones focus on the distribution of power in the international system, the prevailing global and regional norms, as well as attention to key events and trends. Moreover, successful strategies acknowledge the importance of such factors, and include ways of taking advantages or mitigating the various challenges caused by them, and more importantly how to employ the resources available in order to pursue various goals. Grand strategies focus on a limited numbers of goals, but prescribe the way in which actors should mobilize their whole range of resources, institutions, or expertise in order to pursue such aims (M. E. Smith 2011; Rogers 2009). They also imply a much higher level of coordination between and within actors, but can work towards limiting future internal debates regarding the foreign policy. In turn 'normal' strategies leave more room for maneuverer, in terms of allowing for broader debates and interpretation.

One of the biggest criticisms directed towards the EU's foreign policy has been its scattered and uncoordinated nature (Allen 1998). Even though the 2003 Security Strategy was aimed to solve this issue, the lack of coherence and coordination persisted (Smith 2003). Member states and various EU institutions still acted in seemingly independent ways in foreign policy, sometimes even pushing for conflicting policies or pursuing opposing goals. For example, in terms of the EU's policy towards Russia, for many years a whole range of member states favourite dealing bilaterally with Moscow, while discursively professing allegiance to a united approach spearheaded by the Commission (Nitoiu 2014). Some have argued that the lack of effectiveness is down to the fact that the EU has also been missing a coherent strategic culture (Matlary 2006). More specifically, the EU's institutions and the member states have not agreed on a certain working culture that would guide EU's foreign policy, and all the actors involved in it. The argument is that in the absence of such a working culture (i.e. strategic culture) it has been difficult to devise a strategy that would be widely accepted

by EU actors and would their external actions (Biava, Drent, and Herd 2011). To that extent, the strategic review carried out by the EEAS had a double aim, of strengthening the strategic culture, and creating more coordination among EU actors, as well as coming up an effective strategy that deals with the current challenges of regional and world politics. Consequently, in the special issue we are interesting in success the effectiveness of the recent strategic review in terms of creating both an effective strategy as well as strategic culture. We particularly pay attention to the way in which institutional developments within the EU feed into its foreign policy strategy. A key question here is whether the EU's institutional complexity a driver or stumbling block for creating an effective strategy and then implementing it. Moreover, we focus on the way the EU's foreign policy priorities and goals underlined in its new strategy have shifted in order to account for changes in world politics. We ask whether the EU's strategy takes into account the current challenges present in world politics, and prescribe the most effectives ways to of using its resources in order to deal with them.

The recent strategic review ultimately highlights the fact that in comparison to the ESS the international context has changed significantly. Not only has the so-called ring of friends transformed in a ring of fire in the EU's neighbourhood, but geopolitics and Realpolitik's play a more prominent role in world politics (Cross 2016). Events such as the Ukraine, the Arab Spring, trumps election in the US seem to have brought home within the mindset of EU policymakers the fact that even though the EU professes a liberal (or even normative agenda) in world politics, a large number of other states do not share such views. The challenge comes particularly from states like Russia, China and more recently the US. The latter have a long tradition of not really being seduced by the EU's pedagogical, and somewhat condescending approach in telling in preaching to other actors the need to adopt the EU's 'universal' norms and values (Headley 2012; Hall 2013). An undelaying criticism that the

EU's approach has attracted is that it is hypocritical because even though it is aimed to enhance European interests, it disguises this behind the discourse of norm promotion (Manners 2011). The challenge has also come from inside the EU, as its institutions and member states, have often acted in opposition to the values that it preaches: e.g. the member states' approach to the refugee crisis, the EU's tendency to put economic pressure on developing states, or its unwillingness at times to abide by the very model of global governments is ardently promotes to other international actors. It is also fair to argue that for much of the post-Cold War period, the EU operated on the assumption that geopolitics was a negative remnant of the past. Nevertheless, for many states in the non-Western world, including the US, power politics and geopolitics were never seem as an outdated instrument or approach to world politics. To be fair the EU's ignorance of geopolitics also results from the fact that it lacks the range of material resources that would allow it to come on top of competition set in the tone of power politics (Ginsberg 1999). Rather the EU's approach was to try to come on top, by reframing global discourse, and pushing for the primacy of its own understanding and model of global governance and multilateralism (Jørgensen 2009). Currently, the EU not only has to deal with the prominence of geopolitics, but also with the challenge coming from different models of global governance promoted by states like China or Russia.

Consequently, overlooking the salience of geopolitics has meant that the EU had read the structural aspects of politics in a flawed manner. Moreover, in line with our understanding of strategy, this means that the EU's strategy based on reframing global discourse in order to match its global governance model has had failure virtually inbuilt in it. Firstly, it overlooked key structural constraints and developments in world politics. Secondly, it overestimated the member states' own commitment to the EU's global governance model, and operated on the assumption that interests would not get in the way of normative concerns. Moreover, this has

now led to confusion regarding the kind of identity and power the EU should aim to promote in world politics. The old discourse about the EU being a force for good or normative is not tenable anymore as recent years have proved that the EU is not able to act in such a manner when faced with external or internal crises: e.g. the Ukraine crisis, or the refugee crisis. Not much has changed though when it comes to the EU's resources, making a shift towards a more geopolitical approach deemed to fail. The Global Strategy as a document acknowledges these challenges, however, it is not clear how they can be overcome (Tocci 2016). The process of drafting the EUGS has indeed brought more coordination among the member states, but there is no indicated that the EU is ready and able to actually implement the approaches set out in the new strategic document. This in turn raises the broader question of what kind of power should the EU develop in order to best suit internal and external realities. Moreover, does the EUGS do a good job in setting the benchmark for different actors that would allow them to manage the range of internal and external challenges?

The idea of developing a rather narrower grand strategy focused on downsizing and less and better of what the EU does good in external relations, might become a viable option in the current international landscape. The Global Strategy with its focus on resilience goes even further than downsizing and virtually implies withdrawing from a wide range issues on the international agenda and approaches. The onus is now on making the EU resilient in the face of other actors not being able to adapt to the EU's model of global governance, and the whole host of challenges that this might create (European External Action Service 2016). Consequently, the EU's Global Strategy, even though it accounts for the increasing role of geopolitics, is still very much inward, providing benchmarks and guidelines for EU actors to muddle through rather than to have a constructive and effective approach. This raises a final question regarding who in the EU should and is ready to lead in devising a strategy that takes into account the Union's external and internal coordinates. At a technical and bureaucratic

level the EEAS spearheaded a well-coordinated strategic review leading to the Global Strategy, however, in terms of political commitment and willingness to forge and implement an effective strategy there a key driver is lacking. Germany might seem the obvious candidate, but in many areas of foreign policy it has presented a mix of caution, inaction, and reluctance to deviate from the tendency to muddle through.

OUTLINE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS

The special collection is opened by Neil Winn´s paper, in which he asks how far is the EU able to pursue a coherent and resilient transnational Grand Strategy that can respond to a range of transnational threats in Europe and abroad. Inspired by the exploration of various forms of state-based and transnational models of strategy, Winn compares and contrasts the European Security Strategy (2003) with the European Union´s Global Strategy (2016) – a prime example of a grand strategy in his view and finds out that the EU is moving beyond normative power towards pragmatic strategies in its external policies. At the same time, however, he points out to the growing internal contestation of the European project which downsizes external power projection by the EU by undermining its credibility. To that extent the EUSG is built upon a pragmatic logic that seeks to accommodate both internal debates within the EU as well as the changing nature of the context of world politics – geopolitics playing an increasingly important role. Nevertheless, the article claims that the EU's preservation and survival play a more important role in the EUSG, even though the promotion of a norms-informed agenda is not abandoned. The article also highlights that what the drafting process of the EUSG managed to achieve was increased coordination among the national interests of the member states and their commitment to some form of supranational coordination.

The article by Michael Smith focuses on the concept on partnership diplomacy and evaluates its relevance for EU external action. In the context of the EU the concept refers to the range of diplomatic practices associate with the partnership that the Union has developed with various countries around the world: these include both established partners like the US or Japan, as well as emerging powers such as Brazil or India, or various times of agreements with associate countries. Smith provides an extensive account of how the EU employs diplomatic tools in order to create and sustain this range of partnership. Moreover, the argument question whether partnership diplomacy can help the weather the various geopolitical challenges which have come to be dominate the international agenda in recent years. Such challenges are evaluated on their dimensions: internal, external and identity. The article finds that the EU's partnership diplomacy in practice tends to be rather chaotic and pragmatic even though on paper it strives to be strategic. Partnership diplomacy is indeed well suited for dealing with various issues in in the international arena. More importantly, it draws on the capabilities and strengths of the EU. However, given the current pre-eminence of geopolitics in world politics, the EU's partnership diplomacy is somewhat powerless, even though it plays on the Union's strengths.

In her paper, Elena Korosteleva puts the EUGS to test and advocates for the need to overcome the quest for dominance and subsequent competition between the EU and Russia in the post-soviet space. Rather than producing two mutually exclusive political spaces of integration, a more cooperative pan-European grand vision is to be preferred. The paper zooms on the dichotomy between the self and the other, arguing that both the EU and the EEU engage in engage in mutual othering processes. Analysing the revised ENP documents as well as the EU's global strategy Korosteleva concludes that the EU's approach towards its neighbours is based on a rationale on extending the self through the promotion of the model of governance which underpins it. On the surface the process of drafting these two documents

included a process of consultations with various partners in the neighbourhood states, which points to the fact the EU's perception of the self is acquiring a sense of inclusivity (and provides ownership to its partners). Conversely, Russia's view of Eurasian integration to promote an open-door policy, and invites all interested parties, but does not really make any allowance for the integration of other actor's interests or views.

The next paper of Tomas Kucera takes stock of the debate about the European army which is by some perceived as an unrealistic and unwanted project and by others as a way of putting forward the EU´s strategic autonomy. By applying the concepts of alliance and security community as heuristic tools, he analyses narratives that dominate the discourse on the European military and defence integration. Kucera examines the narratives and identifies the mutual incompatibility of the concepts of alliance and security community. He proposes to incorporate in the debate the notion of postnational federation that could be helpful to bridge the narratives. The Habermas's concept sees the possibility of supranational defence integration and at the same time it addresses concerns about the democratic sovereignty at the national level. Thus, Kucera concludes, the debate on the European military and defence integration would benefit from incorporating a narrative inspired by Habermasian idea of postnational federation.

The EU´s environmental policy constitutes a focus of the paper delivered by Simon Schunz. He examines whether, to what extent and for what reasons the European Union, with its highly developed internal environmental regime and its ambition to lead global environmental politics, possesses a strategy guiding its action in this policy. In his analyses, Schunz differentiates between planning and strategy and argues that the Union´s

environmental policy has been rather characterized by attributes of planning rather than a full-fledged strategy. However, he points out to recent changes in EU´s approach to climate foreign policy where strategic thinking becomes more visible than previously. In Schunz´s view for the further advancement of EU´s strategic capacities in the environmental domain, a sufficient number of well-trained, strongly networked and collaborating diplomats at both the EU level and in the member states is needed.

Katharina Meissner, in turn, pays attention to yet another aspect of EU foreign policy. She examines interregionalism as a foreign policy strategy in trade negotiations with regional organizations: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). By analyzing the EU's strategic interest in interregional relation, she unpacks drivers behind negotiations with these organisations and argues that the geo-economics was the driver motivated talks with ASEAN and CAN whereas the motive of negotiating with GCC was mainly political – to counterbalance Chine and US. In the first two cases, the EU sacrificed interregionalism for a trade agreement. In the case of the GCC, it maintained interregionalism although this prevented the conclusion of a final agreement. Meissner argues that in the case of GCC the EU decided to stick to pure interregionalism because these negotiations were a tool to balance American and Chinese activities and the closed trade deal was not the main goal.

Daniel Schade´s paper zooms in on the EU's practice of establishing and maintaining strategic partnership. The emphasises is the various differences in the way the EU approaches its strategic partnership with two Latin American countries (Brazil and Mexico). The EU's decision to develop strategic partnership with these countries elevated them to the position of leading actors in the region. This move, in turn, created tensions with other countries in Latin America, who in some cases have even closer ties with the EU than Brazil (e.g. Argentina or Chile). The article shows that the practice of the two partnerships highlights the absence of an

overarching strategy or guidelines for establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships. The EU's practice does contributes to creating various group or proffered strategic partners and isolates other countries in the region who are seen as having less importance for the EU. To that extent the chaotic and ad-hoc nature of the EU's strategy behind the creation of strategic partnership means that it arbitrarily feeds the regional leadership and status ambitions of actor of various actors. At the same time, it can alienate other actors who feel ignored by the EU.

The strategic partnerships remain a subject of Benjamin Tallis´s interest however from a different perspective. He examines how do the Member States' bilateral strategic partnerships affect EU strategy and strategic capacity. By doing so, he zooms in the Czech case and analyses Czech strategis partnership with EU and non-EU countries. His point of departure is constituted by the observation that strategic partnerships became a popular framework for organizing bilateral relations and hence a 'EU-National Strategic Constellation' should be explored. The mapping of Czech strategic partnerships allows Tallis to argue that deficiencies of Czech partnering with e.g. China and Azerbaijan have negative implications for EU strategy since they undermine the coherence of strategic positioning in relations with these countries. However, he also points out that there is a potential for Member States´s strategic partnerships to be transformed into EU-strategic multipliers once there is a strategic coordination between the EU strategy and the strategic partnerships of the Member States.

In the article which concludes the special issue, Monika Sus investigates the question to what extent the EU has evolved towards a strategic actor in the last decade. She examines the EU strategic actorness by looking at three elements: the capacity to extract resources from various EU´s foreign and security stakeholders, the ability to relate these resources to EU´s objectives and to express them within a general strategic narrative and the implementation of its strategy in light of changes in the global arena. The aim of her paper is to examine to what

extent the EU meets these benchmarks and has managed to overcome some of the hinders in the way for its evolvement into a strategic actor. Sus concludes, that the EU has made significant progress towards advancing its strategic actorness. However, the commitment of the Member States to throw their weight behind the EU strategic actorness remains the crucial element and it is still not to be taken for granted.

Conclusions

The multiple crisis at the EU´s doorstep and beyond as well as the growing awareness that not all actors in the international arena share the norm-infused approach that has characterized the EU foreign policy since its inception, have forced the Union to rethink its strategy towards the outside world. Against this backdrop, the special issue attempted to scrutinize the recent shift towards more geopolitical approach and strategic thinking in EU foreign policy. More specifically, the presented papers advanced the understanding of the key aspects of EU´s strategic thinking and the ways in which they translate into strategies as well as they discussed empirically grounded accounts of the impact of strategic thinking on various dimensions of Union´s foreign policy.

If one ventures to draw general conclusions from the variety of papers, one might make three observations. First, the collection shows how multifaceted the concept of EU strategic thinking in foreign policy is and identifies areas that are worth to be further explored i.e. the interplay between strategic partnerships of the Member States and the overall EU strategy as well as the EU´s partnership diplomacy. Secondly, the papers demonstrate that indeed the EU strategic thinking and actorness advanced in the recent decade and that the Union is moving beyond applying the normative approach towards more pragmatic strategies. The EU Global Strategy is still not a fully-fledged grand strategy but it is the most strategic document the EU

has ever have, the turn towards more strategy than planning in the EU environmental policies is an illustrative evidence of this observation. Thirdly, the special issue acknowledges that the ability of the EU to think and act strategically is to a great extent depended from the inclination of the member states to invest resources and harmonize their foreign policy strategies at the EU level. This deduction is not groundbreaking but it makes it not less important.

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