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Community Policies with a Security Agenda:  
The Worldview of Benita Ferrero-Waldner

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## **Abstract**

How does the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner view international relations, and especially the role that the European Union (EU) takes in them? This paper argues that in Commissioner Ferrero's worldview, the international system is a hierarchical order in which the importance of third countries is determined by their economic weight, geographical vicinity, and their willingness to co-operate with the EU. While this worldview hardly differs from traditional conceptions of power politics, what is peculiar about Ferrero's worldview is that the EU is ready to co-operate with every single state, and she spells out the conditions that the EU expects each third-country to fulfil. Her broad concept of security coincides with that of Human Security. Threats emanate from phenomena rather than from states or human volition, and her conception of mankind is positive. At the same time, power is defined in terms of economic wealth. The EU's international role is best described as a soft-power which exerts its leverage in a non-coercive manner, partly through a strategic use of its panoply of means, partly by virtue of its magnetism. Still, Ferrero is conscious of the EU's limitations, and her optimism is tempered by her modest estimation of EU leverage when it comes to 'hard security'—the Middle East or nuclear proliferation.

## **Keywords**

Civilian power, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Union, External relations, Human security, Multilateralism, Power, Security, Soft power, Worldviews



## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner took office as a Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy in October 2004 in the immediate aftermath of two major events in EU foreign policy. Firstly, the High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana had presented in December 2003 a European Security Strategy (ESS) setting out the strategic orientation of EU, which allowed top decision-makers to start defining the Union's foreign policies upon a common 'grand strategy' (High Representative 2003). Its emphasis on security permitted individual Commissioners, notably the External Relations Commissioner, to become more outspoken on the security rationale of their policies. The second novelty was the inclusion in the External Relations Commissioner's mandate of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), a framework for co-operation with Eastern European and Mediterranean countries created following the last enlargement (European Commission 2003). The incorporation of the ENP into the job title reveals the significance that the EU's surroundings have acquired for the Commission. Both the security importance of the EU external relations and the new centrality of the European neighbourhood permeate Commissioner Ferrero's discourse. They are interlinked, since the ENP is largely justified by a security rationale: 'borders matter...because they are key to...our citizens' urgent concerns—security, migration, economic growth' (31/10/05).

The aim of the following essay is to identify the worldview of Dr Benita Ferrero-Waldner as the Commissioner in charge of External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy. In order to do this, a series of speeches and interviews given by Mrs Ferrero will be analysed to define her worldview and to get a better sense of the 'operational code' that she puts to task (on the framework, Vennesson, 2007). The first section looks at Ferrero's philosophical beliefs. This encompasses her vision of the nature of international relations and of its actors, her understanding of the EU's role in the world, and her assessment of the threats Europe faces. The second section is concerned with Ferrero's 'instrumental beliefs', i.e. her views on the utility of certain instruments of foreign policy to respond to these threats. I analyze the references she made to academic conceptualizations of Europe's international role, especially the notions of 'civilian' and 'soft' power, exploring the way in which these concepts defining the EU's 'power' are utilised in Ferrero's discourse. The present article shows that Ferrero's conceives of the EU as a benign, non-coercive power which advances a concept of Human Security in a hierarchical world-order. Significantly, Ferrero views the panoply of EU external actions as instruments to accomplish policy goals, often of security relevance.

Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, a lawyer by training, occupied the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria before being appointed Commissioner. She has had a diversified career, having worked in the private sector in the US and Germany, and as a counsellor to the Austrian Embassies in France, Spain and Senegal. Ferrero subsequently became a Chief of Protocol at the Austrian Foreign Ministry, and then occupied the homologous position at the United Nations.

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1 This paper is one of a collection of six related RSCAS working papers (EUI-WP RSCAS 2007/07 to EUI-WP RSCAS 2007/12, inclusive). Earlier versions of these papers were presented at the workshop 'European Worldviews: Ideas and the European Union in World Politics', European University Institute-Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, 6 June 2006. For an overall presentation of the research project, see Pascal Vennesson, *Introduction to 'European Worldviews: Ideas and the EU in World Politics'*, EUI Working Papers RSCAS 07\_07. I thank Prof. Vennesson, Prof. Cremona, Kjell Engelbrekt and Elsa Tulmets from the RSCAS for their insightful comments.

## **International Relations: The World Order is Hierarchical, but Not Black and White**

### ***Ranking International Actors***

Commissioner Ferrero's ideas do not explicitly convey a picture of the international system. Most frequently, her speeches centre on specific EU policies and on its relations with particular countries and regions. Still, it is possible to ascertain Ferrero's views on international relations by looking at the way she positions the EU with regard to different third-countries. At first sight, Ferrero's vision of non-EU countries looks homogeneous and free of pre-existing labels. She never refers to third-countries as 'allies' or 'enemies'. She uses categories that have transcended this dichotomy, and she refers to all third countries with the universal label of 'partners'. Some of them are also referred to as 'friends', but never as 'foes'. However, upon close observation of the specific portrayal of relations between the EU and different countries, some fine distinctions among this seemingly uniform group become apparent. In Ferrero's worldview, there are five categories of countries. These categories can be identified by analysing two features: first, the label that Ferrero attaches to each country, and second her portrayal of the interaction between the EU and that state. The more assertive Ferrero's tone, and the more outspoken she is about the conditions the third-country needs to fulfil in order to collaborate with the EU, the further down it is on Ferrero's scale. The following ranking reflects the hierarchy implicitly embedded in Ferrero's world order, with states classified in accordance to the importance she attaches to them.

### **Transatlantic Partnership**

The US enjoys a privileged place in Ferrero's worldview. The distinctive label 'transatlantic partnership' symbolises what she perceives as the unique and 'irreplaceable nature' of EU-US collaboration (13/01/05). This relation is distinct from the 'strategic partnerships' that the EU maintains with China, Russia or India. The centrality of the US is rhetorically omnipresent in the Commissioner's speeches. Ferrero asserts that 'it is hard to overstate the importance of relations between the EU and the US' (05/10/04). Transatlantic collaboration is powerful: 'when we...act together, there are few things we cannot achieve' (13/01/05); 'working in parallel...the EU and US will have a greater degree of persuasion and political influence in the [Mediterranean] region than we would separately' (24/02/05). This collaboration is also benign for third parties: 'the US and the EU...work together as a *force for good* in the world' (13/01/05). However, Ferrero admits that 'the war in Iraq has caused tensions' (05/10/04). The statement that 'the tone of our relations is definitely improving' (25/01/05) entails a recognition of their suboptimal state. She points to the need to search for 'ways of narrowing our political differences' (05/10/04).

There are signs of a growing assertiveness on the part of the EU towards the US. This self-assuredness is visible in the expression of requirements towards the US, even if they are made mildly. Ferrero spells out the EU's preferences on US international behaviour: 'the transatlantic partnership can only work efficiently if it is based on two stable pillars' (24/01/05). The conditional clause expresses that some requisites exist for the health of transatlantic relations. In the domain of counter-terrorism, Ferrero complains that 'we cannot limit ourselves to bilateral solutions'; 'We would now like to work together with the US to see global standards adopted in international organisations' (13/01/05). The ultimately multilateralist purpose of EU anti-terrorist action effectively places some requirements on the US: help in promoting bilaterally agreed measures in international forums is *expected* from the transatlantic partner.

### **Strategic Partners**

The expression 'strategic partnerships' designates a number of 'key international players' (24/01/05) whose importance lies somewhere between that of the US and all the rest. This category has evolved since its first appearance in the ESS in 2003, where it originally listed Russia, Japan, China, Canada

and India (ESS:15). In a later speech, Ferrero added Brazil, leaving out Canada and Japan (24/01/05). Lately, the use of this codeword has been expanded to cover other relationships, such as the EU-Latin American partnership. As the expression strategic partners has become commonplace, the Commissioner started adding new adjectives to it in order to distinguish particular states. She calls Japan a ‘natural strategic partner’ for Europe (06/04/06). The EU and Russia, particularly important due to its status as geographically close regional power, maintain a ‘*special* strategic partnership’ (*Ger. besondere strategische Partnerschaft*) (24/01/05).<sup>2</sup> Ferrero sets a framework of reciprocity with Russia far more assertively than with the US: ‘Russia must move on in our direction too’ (05/10/04). Its policies are openly criticised: ‘the European Union views certain tendencies to roll back reforms in Russia with concern’ (24/01/05). Criticism of Russia is explicitly justified: ‘constructive criticism must be possible among partners’ (24/01/05). As for the rest, their inclusion into the list of strategic partners appears to be warranted by their increasing economic weight: ‘power relations may look different in the future... India is currently producing a quarter of a million engineering graduates a year’ and ‘China’s GDP is predicted to be half that to the total G7 minus Canada by 2050’ (02/02/06). ‘Like-minded countries’

In Human Rights forums, the Commissioner drops the idea of a ‘strategic partnership’ and calls the EU’s collaborators ‘like-minded countries’ (23/02/05a). This group is left undefined, as its membership is never listed. By default, the term enlightens the meaning of the term ‘strategic partners’: ‘like-minded countries’ are culturally closer to the EU than the ‘strategic partners’. The term ‘strategic partnership’ denotes a strong interest in co-operation, but indicates potential psychological or cultural distance. Qualifying the term ‘partner’ with the adjective ‘strategic’ conveys the idea that co-operation with these countries is beneficial; however, they are not presented as necessarily sharing the same values as the EU. In fact, countries such as China and Russia, and even the US, are the objects, rather than the co-sponsors, of some of the resolutions on human rights tabled by the EU. Nevertheless, both code words are not mutually exclusive: Japan and Canada appear to form part of both groups.

## Neighbours

‘Neighbours’ are countries located in what the EU calls the ‘neighbourhood’, a term evoking an everyday life degree of familiarity. The ENP countries, including Eastern European and Mediterranean states, constitute the only group which Ferrero calls ‘friends’ apart from the US: ‘you are our closest partners and friends’ (06/06/06). The aim of the ENP is that of creating ‘a ring of friends around the borders of the new enlarged EU’ (09/12/04). The Commissioner acknowledges the strategic significance of the neighbours stating that ‘borders matter’ (31/10/05). Cultural links are also used to justify the ENP; however, they never appear in isolation from other aspects: ‘we share common bonds of geography, history, trade, migration, and culture. *This is why* we have launched the European Neighbourhood Policy’ (23/02/05b).

Ferrero emphasises reciprocity. Progress by neighbours ‘is rewarded with greater incentives and benefits’ (07/03/06). The rationale of the ENP is presented as an exchange: ‘*in return for* their...steps to strengthen the rule of law...*we offer* our neighbours new opportunities’ (13/01/05). She looks upon the ENP as ‘a deal in the interests of both sides’ (09/12/04). Anticipating any criticism that the ENP’s purpose might be to expand the EU’s sphere of influence, Ferrero states that ‘nothing is imposed in this policy’ (09/12/04). Indeed, she claims to have accommodated the interests of the neighbours: ‘we have been guided to a large extent by the wishes of the countries themselves’ (09/12/04). The EU’s conditionality with third countries finds its strongest expression with the neighbours: ‘the ENP...is based on a clear conditionality’ (29/11/04). Results are expected on the partners’ side: ‘we expect in return that Ukraine declares its beliefs in European values’ (29/11/04); ‘the quality of our relations

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2 Translations and emphases in the citations are the author’s.

depends of the quality of democracy in Ukraine' (29/11/04). Ferrero formulates her expectations on neighbours' policies particularly boldly: 'Moldova must make more clear progress in its approximation to Europe' (29/11/04).

#### Other 'Partners'

Countries not included in the former types belong to a more general, catch-all category: these are predominantly developing countries lacking the geostrategic importance of the US, big regional powers, and the countries adjacent to the Union. This encompasses Asian and Latin American states along with the traditional recipients of Community aid: African, Pacific and Caribbean countries. Latin America is still higher up in the Commissioner's hierarchy than Africa, which is only referred to as the object of 'development, conflict prevention and peacekeeping' (05/10/04). This is partly because Latin America is included in Ferrero's remit as a Commissioner for External Relations, while African countries are covered by the Commissioner for Development.

#### 'Non-co-operative' and 'Failed' States

For this last category, there is no consistent label in EU terminology. Ferrero claims that 'the assumption that any 'enemy' is a clearly identifiable state is gone' (08/12/05). Countries unwilling to co-operate appear anomalous. The lack of a generic term for these countries might indicate some reluctance to create a conceptual group, reflecting the uniqueness of each case. Ferrero mentions the existence of 'non-co-operative states' (*Ger. nicht kooperierende Staaten*) only occasionally and without naming them (24/01/05). The expression 'non-co-operative' avoids any value judgement, isolating a single characteristic of their behaviour: unwillingness to collaborate with the EU. In general terms, her discourse on relations with third countries is characterised by its utterly 'positive' and 'friendly' nature. The EU does not only have 'partners' rather than 'allies', but it also lacks 'enemies'. Every single state can be a partner if it wants to be. Even with countries with which relations are difficult, the EU endeavours to maintain channels of communication open: 'we will [maintain] contacts with middle-range officials to reduce Belarus' self-isolation' (05/04/06). When Ferrero names third-countries with which relations are problematic, she is careful to frame mutual relations in a positive light, presenting both sides as equal. In the case of Iran, the EU has secured a nuclear 'deal' (13/01/05). As for Iraq, Ferrero has stated the EU's intention to 'develop a partnership' as relations 'normalise' (13/01/05).

The EU's friendly hand, in form of assistance and co-operation, is offered to everyone: 'we are working on an order...which gives a share of the globalised world-system to *all countries that accept the principles of this order*' (24/01/05). While this formulation presumes that some countries do not accept the rules, it also allows for benefiting from EU help should they eventually change course: 'we hope to expand full participation in ENP to Belarus, Libya and Syria' (07/03/06). Countries subject to Ferrero's condemnation, such as Belarus, retain the possibility of accommodation: 'we must show Belarus and its people that an alternative—a democratic, open future—is possible' (05/04/06). The suspension of aid to the Palestinian Authority following the election of Hamas serves as a perfect illustration: Ferrero wishes to 'see an evolution of the position taken by the Palestinian Authority government, not its failure' (26/04/06). The EU does not hope for the removal of the current government; it disapproves of the position of 'some' of its 'members'. With North Korea, the EU shows the highest degree of restraint: 'the position of the EU is that we should not overreact to harsh statements from Pyongyang. [T]he nuclear issue must be solved' (08/03/05). Central Asian countries are condemned indirectly through impersonal formulations which avoid naming the concerned leaderships: 'abuse of power and corruption seems endemic'; 'controls on foreign-funding make implementing our assistance impossible', and the 'difficult situation...in Uzbekistan became even more repressive after Andijan' (20/01/06).

This implicit categorisation in Ferrero's discourse reveals the criteria according to which the EU allocates importance to each group of countries: economic weight, security importance, willingness to co-operate, and to some extent, cultural proximity. The two first categories comprise economically powerful countries, some of which are at the same time regional powers. The 'neighbours' owe their relevance to the security implications that their vicinity carries. The existence of the category 'like-minded countries' shows that cultural proximity matters. The 'neighbours' rank relatively high in the list despite their weak economic performance, mainly due to their security relevance to the EU, but arguably also because of their cultural proximity. All the rest are countries deprived from economic power and security importance to Europe, while the deviant category of non-co-operative states comprises states which have proved impossible to engage, regardless of their economic or security relevance.

This said, the degree of importance allocated to a group of states is not identical with the level of attention it attracts. Ferrero's discourse insists more on the importance of 'strategic partners' than that of 'like-minded countries'. However, this does not indicate a lower importance in the Commissioner's eyes. On the contrary, the relationships with the 'strategic' partners deserve increased attention because they are in the process of being developed. Audiences both in these countries and in the EU need to be convinced of the necessity of upgrading relations far more than in the case of Canada and Japan, with which co-operation is already intense. The differentiated approach shown in the five categories reflects the type of relationship that the EU maintains with each of them. With her requirements, Ferrero presents the EU's vision of how it would like each country to behave. Some 'conditions' for collaborating with the EU are always present in Ferrero's discourse. However, the specificity with which they are formulated increases with the amenability of the third-country to EU influence. EU requests to the US are more discreet than towards the 'strategic partners'. With the ENP 'neighbours', often keen in close links to the EU, Ferrero's tone turns more resolute and her requirements become more concrete. Developing countries receive a similar treatment to that of the neighbours. However, they are less central in Ferrero's discourse, probably due to their well-established relations with the EU and the lesser security weight they bear by virtue of their geographic distance from Europe. This is consistent with the ESS, which states that 'even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important' (ESS:7). As far as 'non co-operative' countries are concerned, Ferrero's discourse is cautious and hardly condemnatory. This category of countries is scarcely dealt with, appearing as a 'black hole' in Ferrero's construction of the world.

### *A Middle-Power Worldview with Historical Loopholes*

Beyond the picture of the world system made up by the set of relationships that the EU entertains with individual states, Ferrero hardly expresses any views on international politics. She merely points out that today's is 'possibly the most complicated international security environment that the world has ever known' (08/12/05). Some hints at her overall image of world politics can be found in her discourse on globalisation, which she views as a positive phenomenon with 'overwhelmingly positive effects for society' (30/05/06). She regards it as inevitable: there is 'no way stopping the clock of globalisation' (10/02/06). Some basic ideas about the international system emerge from this. There is an opportunity to influence, or 'manage', events: Europe should 'mitigate its negative effects and maximise the positive'. To this aim, EU members must act together: 'individually, no member state could do so' (10/02/06). The unstoppable nature of globalisation serves to legitimise the EU: 'action at the EU level is the only effective approach' (30/05/06). In sum, Ferrero's general view of international life corresponds to that of a middle-rank power: it believes to have some capacity to influence events; however, only to a limited extent. It needs to enlist support by other members of the international community. This perception of the limitations of the own power might derive not only from her current position, but also from her background as a Foreign Minister of Austria, a country bound to neutrality. The need for co-operation, here at the EU-internal level, is later translated into the drive towards multilateralism.

Ferrero's conception of world politics is characterised by the absence of historical references. In his original formulation of the operational code, George set to ascertain policy-makers' beliefs regarding the fundamental nature of politics and history (George, 1969:199). However, the Commissioner tends to avoid references to past experience; she never refers to 'lessons' of history. The only event of history that appears in her discourse is European integration, which is conceived of as an enormously successful project (*Ger. enormes Erfolgsprojekt*) accounting for peace, freedom, prosperity and security in today's Europe (26/01/06). European integration is also presented as a model to third countries, either on its economic merits for Mercosur (12/07/05), or as a means to solve political tensions in East Asia (06/07/05). The absence of historical references in the Commissioner's discourse can be due to an intention to preserve the neutrality of the image that corresponds to her function. Interpreting history could position her politically, or associate her to her national origins, in open contradiction to the European vocation of the Commission. At the same time, the principle of 'no historical referencing' is respected to such an extent that even common European experiences are omitted. For example, when Ferrero states that 'vulnerability to energy crises are not a new phenomenon', she does not mention the oil crisis of 1973, an experience that affected all EC members alike. This suggests that the lack of historical referencing might also seek to avoid alienating those members that had not yet joined the Community at the time.

### ***Security is Human, but Power is Economic***

Ferrero defines security broadly: 'we need a wide security concept' (24/01/05). The Commissioner does not distinguish between traditional and so-called new threats. Man-made and non-man-made security threats are part of the same continuum, featuring energy procurement, transnational crime, and climate change (24/01/05), 'terrorism, proliferation, poverty and disease, and failed or failing states' (25/01/05), or 'hunger, deadly diseases, environmental degradation and physical insecurity' (05/10/04). In the Commissioner's eyes, what matters about these challenges is their threatening impact on populations, while she disregards their very diverse nature: 'economic crises, structural poverty...the internationally organised crime, massive migration, diseases and pandemics...have a direct impact on our security' (24/01/05). The conflation of all these phenomena is justified on the basis of the centrality of the individual. Ferrero highlights her 'personal commitment to the concept of human security', defined as 'putting people and their human rights, as well as the threats they face, at the centre of our policies' (08/12/04). Even the fight against terrorism is 'part of a broader agenda of Human Security' (05/10/04).

Indeed, the portrayal of threats corresponds with the concept of Human Security. The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe*, defines the term as 'freedom for individuals from basic insecurities caused by gross human rights violations' (Study Group 2004). The list of threats to human security presented in the report bears little resemblance to the military-centred definition of security: 'genocide, wide-spread or systematic torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, disappearances, slavery, and crimes against humanity and grave violations of the laws of war...breach human security'. This difference is spelt out: 'human security...means that it should contribute to the protection of every individual human being and not focus only on the defence of the Union's borders' (Study Group 2004). Ferrero's adoption of the concept of Human Security shows a linkage to her previous position as a Foreign Minister of Austria, which has officially embraced this notion, and is a member of the Human Security Network.

The term threat is rarely used in Ferrero's discourse, as is its milder synonym 'challenge'. Rhetorically, Ferrero has gone a step further referring to the EU's security threats as 'concerns' (31/10/05) or 'main phenomena' (*Ger. Grundphänomene*) (24/01/05). The portrayal of threats as *phenomena* fundamentally changes their character. Unlike 'threat' and 'challenge', 'phenomenon' is a neutral term devoid of aggressive connotation, as phenomena often result from natural processes. Yet, Ferrero labels as 'phenomena' terrorism, failed states, the proliferation of WMD, and what her predecessor Chris Patten termed 'the dark side of globalisation', i.e. structural poverty; conflicts over

resources; mass migration; epidemics and economic crises. Ferrero's portrayal of threats reflects a positive conception of mankind: the human being is innocent; threats result from misperception or deprivation, not from human will. She views terrorism as a 'radical movement reacting to rapid modernisation...wrongly perceived as 'western-imperialist'. Radical cultural changes, the lack of democracy and economic crises have led people to...seek refuge in the ideologies of hate' (24/01/05). Ferrero asserts that 'failed states produce...insecurity' (24/01/05). This portrayal presents security threats as unintentional developments—the verbs 'produce' and 'lead' are reminiscent of the natural sciences, and often refer to actions which do not originate from human will. Similarly, Ferrero claims that both parties to the Palestinian conflict are 'trying to end the cycle of violence' (23/02/05b). The formulation 'cycle of violence' conveys an idea of conflict as a non-manmade development, locating its origins beyond the control of the parties. The human element is looked upon positively, almost benevolently: terrorism emerges from 'misperception'; people 'seek refuge in ideologies'.

The Human Security concept as presented by the Commissioner features an interconnection of threats, and consequently of their remedies: 'Humanity will not enjoy security without development, and it will not enjoy development without security' (02/06/06). Due to the interlinked nature of threats, action taken against one of them reverberates in the others: 'by promoting human rights and democracy, fighting poverty, confronting the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons and encouraging economic development we are tackling inequalities and potential environmental, migration and conflict threats' (30/05/06). EU actions to tackle specific threats help to address other problems: 'judicial, police and border co-operation not only helps combat organised criminal groups, suppliers of illegal weapons, but also terrorists...health and security mechanisms are equally effective against natural pandemics and bio-terrorism' (30/05/06).

However, the Commissioner's security concept does not end in the notion of Human Security. Economics constitute a central element in her security calculations: She regards developments susceptible of imperilling the economic standing of the EU as threats. This departs from the idea that security is about protecting human populations from physical dangers. Ferrero unequivocally acknowledges that economic might can constitute a security threat: 'with the technological rise of China the [Asian] economies may [move] to more intense competition and thereby heat the political environment' (06/07/05). Here, power is about economic might. What economic threats have in common with Human Security threats is that they also emerge in the absence of a human will of aggression. She makes the economic sources of political tensions in Asia explicit: 'The economic rise of China and its assertive foreign policy have fanned concerns in some neighbouring countries that a more prosperous China could use its economic gains to pursue its national interest more forcefully and dominate the region both politically and economically'. (06/07/05).

Asia is central to Ferrero's security views on the basis of its demographic and economic growth: it is 'not only the continent with the largest population but also with the highest economic growth rates and the highest rates of spending for Research and Development'; it will be 'at the centre stage of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' (06/07/05). Ferrero's security equation concentrates on economic factors such as demographic potential, while leaving out military capabilities, notably the worrying concentration of nuclear arsenals in the region. Economic considerations are invariably part of the overall political picture. Ferrero sees evidence for the good health of transatlantic relations in the 'intimately intertwined economic systems' (*Ger. Wirtschaftssysteme aufs Engste miteinander verflochten*) of the partners (01/06/06). The rare instances in which Ferrero names states which could challenge the EU are telling: the prediction that China's research expenditure will equal the EU's by 2010 qualifies as a threat (01/06/06). Positing that power relations may be affected by India's production of engineering graduates and China's steadily growing GDP (02/02/06) reveals an economic concept of power.

Ferrero's adoption of the Human Security bears some institutional consequences. With its broad definition of threats, Ferrero 'securitises' a number of issues which make up a large portion of long-established Community external action, such as environmental dangers, pandemics, human rights or

migration. Anti-money laundering measures or research and innovation are all the more necessary since they do not only serve to combat organised crime, but also terrorism. By emphasising the interrelations between a range of threats and the multifaceted actions the EU takes to address them, she revalorises policies under the Commission remit.

### Europe's Self-Image: A Deficient Power, but a Shaping Actor

Ferrero's image of the EU's international role is complex. In general terms, she regards the EU as having a significant impact on international affairs: Europe is 'a *shaping subject* of international politics' (24/01/05). At the same time, she acknowledges that the EU's international political role is deficient, i.e. incommensurate with its weight. As her predecessor Chris Patten, Ferrero often resents that the EU, the largest trading block in the world and the largest donor of humanitarian and development aid, lacks 'the corresponding political stance in world affairs' (05/10/04). Ferrero feels that she has a duty to address this mismatch: 'our task is to translate all this into equivalent political weight on the world stage' (10/02/06). She wants the Union to benefit fully from the 'significant leverage it possesses' (02/02/06).

Ferrero is confident about the EU's potential: 'Europe can make a *decisive contribution* by projecting peace, democracy and prosperity and by confronting the threats of our time with the necessary resoluteness' (24/01/05). In conflict prevention and crisis management, promoting human rights and human security, and strengthening effective multilateralism, 'the Union *can lead the way*' (05/10/04). At the same time, the Commissioner considers that EU foreign policy is actually more effective than it is generally believed. There is a problem of public misperception: 'there is a clear gap between these successes and our citizens' perceptions of the EU' (10/02/06). Indeed, she underlines the conflict-resolution relevance of some Community policies in certain conflicts. The EU has used the ENP Action Plans signed with Israel and the Palestinian Authority 'to facilitate practical co-operation on issues such as trade, energy and transport' (31/10/05). She considers that increasing co-operation and economic growth are 'absolutely vital for a sustainable solution to the Middle East conflict' (10/02/06). The Commission has 'an important role to play' in 'boost[ing] the effectiveness of existing international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes' (08/12/05). In the context of the nuclear talks with Iran 'we can make an important contribution' (08/03/05). Still, Ferrero recognises that the EU's responsiveness to crises is the main weakness of its foreign policy: 'there is a need for us to catch-up (*Ger. Aufholbedarf*) in the direct exercise of influence in concrete crisis situations' (24/01/05).

The Commissioner takes for granted the benign impact of the EU's external action. She assumes that the accomplishment of one actor's interests is not detrimental to others, but can benefit all: 'the enlargement of the Union does not only help the Union itself, but it is also clearly of advantage to our neighbours' (29/11/04). Ferrero's portrayal of the benign nature of EU influence is most explicit: she speaks of the 'extraordinary contribution to peace and prosperity made by enlargement' and of a 'momentous impact on the European continent' (10/02/06). ENP is about 'helping our neighbours towards their own prosperity, security and stability' (07/03/06); it '*offers* neighbouring countries the *opportunity* to deepen...political cooperation...with us' (24/01/06).

Ferrero justifies the rationale for the Union's upgrading of its international role through the concept of responsibility: 'Europe is increasingly taking on global responsibility' (24/01/05). Responsibility in world affairs seems to emanate directly from its status as a major power: 'on a global level [the EU and the US] are both major powers, and as such we have global responsibilities' (13/01/05). Out of a sense of obligation, she claims that it is 'our task to continue helping' South Asia after the Tsunami (24/01/05). Significantly, the word 'interest' and 'responsibility' often appear in conjunction: 'our global responsibility and our global interest' (02/02/06). The EU's world-wide engagement rests on a double basis: a sense of moral obligation, on the one hand, and a strategic self-interest on the other. While self-interest never appears as the only motivation for EU action, it is ubiquitous: 'dealing with migration should be high on our agenda, not only for our citizen' concerns..., but also to make poor

and unstable parts of the world more attractive places for people to live' (31/10/05). These two rationales are excellently linked in the ENP: 'when a country is willing to orientate itself towards our main values...it is in the interest of the European Union to help it' (29/11/04); 'by helping our neighbours we help ourselves' (31/10/05). Ferrero describes ENP as a 'policy of enlightened self-interest' (10/02/06).

In sum, the Commissioner does not convey any long-term vision of the EU. She conceptualises what the EU's role is nowadays, identifying deficiencies to address and potentials to exploit in the short run. She focuses on immediate fields of action, but does not envisage an ideal of what the EU could aspire to emerge from her speeches.

### ***Conceptualising the EU's International Role: A Soft, Not a Civilian Power***

#### Europe's Power

While Ferrero sometimes alludes to concepts belonging to the academic debate on EU foreign policy, she refrains from fully entering the discussion. Yet, through her selective references to such concepts as 'soft power', the Commissioner effectively positions herself in the debate. Her perception of EU power is especially relevant in the aftermath of the Union's acquisition of a military dimension, a development that puts into question the continued validity of the EU as a 'civilian power'. Ferrero does not borrow those notions that have won more scholarly prevalence, such as 'civilian power' or 'normative power'. By contrast, she mentions the concept of 'soft power' extensively, although her understanding of the term is not identical to Nye's (Nye, 2005). The fact that the most frequently used term to describe the EU as an international actor was not tailor-made for this organisation denotes a reluctance to frame the Union's international behaviour in the terms of that debate, or an ignorance of it.

In a continuum between Duchêne's 'civilian power' and Bull's 'superpower', Ferrero positions the EU close to—but not quite in—the 'civilian power' end. She rejects the possibility of a European superpower: 'I am not pledging for the build-up of a European superpower. Europe does not have the intention of forming a global empire' (24/01/05). However, the Commissioner's conception of the EU as an international actor differs from the notion of civilian power in that she does not explicitly subscribe to the predominance of civilian means in the Union's foreign policy. Yet, she builds on the idea that the EU's foreign policy tools make up its specificity as an international actor. They make the EU 'particularly suited to actively shape globalisation' (24/01/05).

The Commissioner's understanding of the terms 'soft/hard' and 'power/ security' does not entirely coincide with the academic terminology. For Nye, soft power is an instrument for persuasion, which he defines as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments' (Nye, 2005). By contrast, Ferrero conceives of this notion also as a type of international actor. She both describes Europe as 'soft power' and labels 'soft power' as its foreign policy tool, speaking of 'EU's traditional strengths in the soft end of international relations' (13/01/05). When Ferrero refers to 'soft power' as a foreign policy tool, she underlines that it is the combination of soft and hard power elements that makes up the specific nature of the EU's external role. The EU accomplishes security through 'an intelligent mixture of resolute action and soft influence, of 'hard power' and 'soft power'' (24/01/05). This formulation suggests that hard power is equated with 'resolute action', without making any reference to military means. There is indeed no indication that by hard measures she means military capabilities: 'Our assistance combines a variety of soft measures like intercultural exchanges for young people and hard measures like prohibiting satellite broadcasts inciting terrorism' (30/05/06).

What Ferrero means when she refers to 'soft power' as a type of international actor is close to the traditional notion of 'civilian power'. Ferrero's elaboration of the EU international role as a 'soft power' effectively creates a sort of variant of the 'civilian power' notion. In this sense, she uses a self-

coined term (or rather, the self-coined definition of an existing concept). While the civilian power model emphasises the use of civilian means, Ferrero focuses instead on the predominantly non-coercive nature of the EU's external action. For Ferrero, the distinctive essence of the EU in international affairs does not emanate from the non-military nature of its instruments, but from the reliance on the target's volition in following the Union's precepts. The EU 'encourages' China and 'persuades' emerging powers. It 'helps' to prevent trafficking, 'facilitates' co-operation, 'supports' processes, and 'creates' conditions. The Commissioner recognises the limits of EU influence: 'the impetus for meaningful reform must always come from within. If that desire is not there, no amount of external assistance or pressure will build sustainable reform' (31/10/05). The EU supports rather than imposes changes: 'there is a limit to what we can do. The...steps towards reform must be home-grown'; 'the decision is entirely yours' (06/06/06).

By omission, Ferrero underplays the adoption of a military role by the EU. The Commissioner draws attention to what the Community does. The acquisition of military capabilities by the EU expands its toolbox: ESDP 'should enable the EU to take on a bigger share of our global responsibilities' (13/01/05). However, the new availability of military instruments does not fundamentally change the nature of the Union's external action. She presents the acquisition of this security relevance as part of an evolution, using the opportunity to revalorise the security dimension of the EU's established external policies: 'we started with international trade and...aid, we added the promotion of human rights and good governance and now are defending Europe's interests in fields as diverse as international environmental policy, transport security and migration management. We have slowly been getting our act together on the *hard security* front' (10/02/06). Far from implying that the EU's military tool will enhance its effectiveness, she predicts that 'the capacity to project soft power will be increasingly important' (10/02/06).

#### Europe as a Model

The Commissioner refers to the EU also as a 'transformative power' (10/02/06). Ferrero assumes the Union's attractiveness as a model and is conscious of its usefulness as a foreign policy tool: 'Europe and the political ideas on which it is founded display an enormous force of attraction' (24/01/05). This notion coincides with Rosecrance's reading of the positive image among third-countries that European integration has produced (Rosecrance 1998). Similarly, Ferrero speaks of the *gravitational force* of the EU, once again as a benign influence with ultimately reconfiguring effects on the regional order: 'the gravitational force of the EU has made possible a comprehensive modernisation of the new member states, and *consequently transformed* the European order' (24/01/05). The definition of soft power as put forward by Nye seems to fit better with the attractiveness of the EU as a model than with the usage that Ferrero has made of it. The Commissioner presents the EU as a model to third-countries, encouraging regional integration in Latin-America in her capacity as a 'representative of a regional organisation constituting one of the foundations of the longest period of peace that Europe has ever known' (07/02/06). She hopes to enlist support from the Brazilian business community in the EU-Mercosur negotiations evoking Europe's own integration history: 'just as the European Roundtable of Industrialists helped promote European integration, you can be the force behind Mercosur integration' (12/07/05).

However, Ferrero acknowledges that the projection of the EU model can fail to deliver identical results to that of European integration. In this sense, the Far East serves as a 'reality check'. On the one hand, the EU is ready 'to share our European experience on how to overcome conflicts of the past and to create an environment for reconciliation and co-operation' (06/07/05). On the other, she recognises that the 'already very impressive' degree of economic integration in East Asia 'will not be sufficient to make East Asia more stable or peaceful' (06/07/05). She acknowledges that the consequences of integration have almost been opposed to those experienced in Europe: 'unlike in Europe...economic ties have not resulted in improved political relations. On the contrary, [t]he China-Japan rivalry has surfaced' (06/07/05). However, Ferrero fails to explain why the same mechanism of

economic integration that worked for Europe is not delivering in East Asia. The insistence on the projection of the European model in the face of unsuccessful examples constitutes a contradiction in Ferrero's discourse.

## **Europe's Tools and Strategy: Producing Security through Community Means**

### ***Principles and Means: External Actions as Instruments***

While Ferrero's discourse presupposes the existence of EU interests and values, they are left unspecified. She mentions them most commonly in the context of conditionality towards third countries, whereby a trade-off is foreseen between the receipt of EU aid and the adoption of 'European values', equated with 'democratic principles' and 'respect for human rights' (29/11/04). The Commissioner's discourse on the tools of EU foreign policy reflects two wider developments. One of them refers to the fact that actions taken under External Relations have expanded. This is due to the externalisation of first-pillar policies, such as transport, energy, or research: 'over the last years, we have massively strengthened the international dimension of the different internal EU policies' (24/01/05). Further, the Commissioner also mentions some new instruments that have been included into her toolbox as a result of the progressive communitarisation of third-pillar policies, notably migration. Following their inclusion into the competence of the first pillar, they are now incorporated into the discourse.

The second development regards the presentation of Community actions as instruments to accomplish political ends: virtually all areas of Community competence are tools: 'economic, trade, environmental, social, and development policy' (08/12/04). The EU's added value in international relations resides in its extensive toolbox: 'there is hardly any other political actor in possession of such a wide spectrum of instruments, including in the domains of trade, finance, energy and justice' (24/01/05). Ferrero's toolbox includes 'development assistance...our successful programmes on election monitoring, anti-personnel landmines and light weapons' (05/10/04); and 'the broad spectrum of activities that the EU is undertaking within the scope of conflict prevention and civilian crisis management...demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration of former combatants' (08/12/04). She even conceives of humanitarian assistance as a policy instrument (02/02/06). Ferrero also regards the establishment of contractual relations with other regional groupings as tools: the Association Agreement with Mercosur is an 'instrument to support...integration efforts' (12/07/05). Enlargement is explicitly classified as a foreign policy tool: 'enlargement has traditionally been our most effective foreign policy instrument' (13/01/05); and the ENP 'provides an incentive [for Moldova] to persist with political and economic reforms' (09/12/04).

Closely linked with the political 'instrumentalisation' of external policies is their 'securitisation'. This appears as a direct consequence of the release of the ESS, which enabled the Commission to highlight the security relevance of many of its activities. Ferrero's security vision entails the manifest intention to *produce security* by means different from traditional defence. For Ferrero, security is achieved by "'exporting" stability in order not to "import" instability' (24/01/05). She speaks of framing 'a policy with our partners encompassing a multiplicity of policy domains which displays a *long-term stabilising* effect' (24/01/05). Aid is not provided to third-countries exclusively for the sake of development, but also to ensure that it reverberates in the security of the EU. Technical assistance has a strategic rationale: 'the structural modernisation [of the Middle East] is absolutely decisive—also for our own security' (24/01/05). The promotion of democracy is justified with an ultimate security aim: 'the best long-term protection for our security is the democratisation of regions in crisis and the resolution of violent conflicts' (24/01/05). Ferrero holds trade policy to have 'an important security policy dimension' (24/01/05). Contractual relations with third-countries are used as tools for producing security: through its 'global network of detailed contracts', the EU is in the process of 'building a new multilateral system' (24/01/05). Conditionality stands out in this context: 'the EU

gains because our partners sign up to stronger commitments on the fight against terrorism, non-proliferation of WMD, and to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts' (09/12/04).

It is in the ENP where the security rationale is most explicit: Ferrero boldly states that the ENP 'is a security policy' (04/05/06); a '*geostrategically* key project' (24/01/05) through with the EU 'gains improved security' (09/12/04) and 'pursues its geo-strategic interest in expanding the zone of stability, security and prosperity' (10/02/06). The use of the concept *geostrategy*, a term with military connotations, constitutes a novelty in the discourse of an External Relations Commissioner. EU operations in the region are presented as manifest security policy tools. With the EU border mission in Moldova, 'we want to contribute to the political resolution of the conflict. The Themis-Mission in Georgia has a similar...goal' (04/05/06). Ferrero believes that the ENP 'strengthens the role in the resolution of 'frozen conflicts', such as that in Transdnistria and in the South Caucasus' (04/05/06).

Ferrero's presentation of foreign policy tools as a continuum mirrors the EU's broad definition of threats: 'the holistic approach echoes the EU's own commitment to a comprehensive conception of security' (08/12/04). However, both continuums are never connected to each other: the Commissioner refrains from specifying what each instrument is good for, and conversely, how each challenge can be best addressed. Indeed, for all the enthusiasm with which the Commissioner assesses the EU's toolbox, she also acknowledges that the use of coercive instruments needs to be optimised: 'we need to learn...and use our mix of carrots and sticks coherently' (02/02/06). Ferrero rarely mentions the use of coercive instruments, and she does not cite a single case in which their employment has worked. The Commissioner acknowledges that 'sticks' are imperfect instruments. She underlines the benefits of non-coercive measures (carrots) accompanying sticks: for Iran and North Korea, 'new incentives must be found' (08/12/05).

### ***Effective Multilateralism: Not Every Kind of Multilateralism Goes***

'Multilateralism' is Ferrero's central foreign policy theme; it appears both as a principle and a means of EU policy. The ESS presents 'effective multilateralism' as one of its key terms, but it fails to define it. Thus, Ferrero's speeches help to flesh out this concept. The emphasis on multilateralism is nothing new in EU discourse; however, the adjective 'effective' qualifies the notion: 'only an effective multilateral system can adequately address the new and complex challenges the international community faces today' (05/10/04). One key element is the centrality of the UN: 'the UN lies at the heart of the multilateralism we espouse' (08/12/04). However, some adaptation is required: effective multilateralism 'means...reforming and strengthening the United Nations and its subsidiary organisations as the basis of the multilateral system' (24/01/05). The benefit of this approach is legitimacy: 'only multilateral co-operation in the framework of the UN can confer the degree of legitimacy necessary for efficient international action' (24/01/05). For the Commissioner, there is no tension between legitimacy and efficacy, but one is a pre-condition for the other. A second central requirement for an effective multilateral system is co-operation with the US: 'effective multilateralism can only function really if it is based in a strong transatlantic partnership' (24/01/05). The Commissioner criticises unilateralism: 'the answer to the new security policy complexities cannot be a series of political solo-runs' (24/01/05). Whereas Ferrero highlights the EU's potential in conflict prevention through panoply of means, its inability to react quickly and effectively to crises in the hard-core security realm—notably in managing violent conflicts—is omitted from the discourse. Ferrero's reticence to pronounce on this matter can also be due to lacking Community competence in this domain.

### ***Impact of EU Policies: Uneven Expectations, Marred with Black Holes***

Ferrero's discourse reveals uneven expectations of EU influence. EU action ultimately yields results: 'the EU has an impressive record in democracy-building' (23/02/05); 'we have a wealth of experience in helping countries transform themselves, both politically and economically' (13/01/05). However, the expected impact of EU leverage varies strongly depending on the country at the receiving end, on

the type of action, and on the kind of situation on which it is exerted. Ferrero feels confident about well-established EU activities such as humanitarian and development aid or election monitoring: ‘our humanitarian aid programmes are first class’ (25/01/05). Ferrero points out that ‘the EU played a very positive role in assisting [Ukraine] to overcome the crisis late last year’ (25/01/05); ‘the EU presence on the ground [in the Palestinian elections] was highly effective and visible’ (25/01/05). The use of political conditionality yields convincing accomplishments: ‘Morocco and Jordan have committed themselves to far-reaching reforms’ (09/12/04); ‘the PA adopted several important institutional and democratic reforms’ (01/03/05a).

In contrast, Ferrero presumes only a modest impact on conflicts situations. This is illustrated by the contrast between the cases of Moldova and Ukraine. Following the resolution of the 2004 Ukrainian electoral crisis, Ferrero underlines the conditionality framework: ‘no lasting partnership can exist without a corresponding commitment to stable democracy’ (29/11/04). This resolute tone contrasts with the more timid treatment of the Moldovan situation. Here, sentences are introduced by expressive rather than exhortative verbs. The Commissioner, ‘concerned’ about the lack of progress, ‘hope[s] that Moldova will continue to participate in the international [peace] process’ (29/11/04). Her message to Moldova is only as assertive as in the case of Ukraine when she encourages actions by Moldova which are unrelated to the conflict: ‘Moldova *must* make further progress in its approximation to Europe’ (29/11/04). As far as the peace process is concerned, Ferrero is careful not to make any exhortative prescriptions.

In conflict settings, the Commissioner routinely posits that EU action is geared towards the creation of *conditions for peace*: the EU is ‘*building the institutions necessary* for a future Palestinian state’ (01/03/05a), while in Iraq ‘we *create the basis* for a functioning community (*Ger. Gemeinwesen*), notably with the reconstruction of the economy and of the health and education systems’ (24/01/05). The primarily *preventive* character of the Union’s approach is ambitiously announced by Ferrero: ‘we have to gain control of the structural security risks emanating from the violations of human security’ (24/01/05). The Middle East conflict perfectly exemplifies how she retreats rhetorically from the negotiation table to the weaker role of creating conditions for peace: ‘we...need to work with both the new Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority on creating the conditions for a successful Gaza disengagement’ (25/01/05). Ferrero often alludes to the ‘strengthening [of] institutions’ the Middle East (01/03/05a). This limited role still displays a clear political intention: ‘we have been... building the institutions necessary for a future Palestinian state’ (01/03/05a).

Although the EU has a high stake in the resolution of the Middle East conflict, Ferrero’s estimation of EU leverage is lowest here. She recognises that her role is secondary: ‘with the help of the international community and Israel’s indispensable facilitation, we can help the Palestinian Authority to achieve our shared goals’ (01/03/05a). The Commissioner’s discourse achieves a high degree of imprecision in her interviews about this conflict: ‘it is important to do everything possible to create new momentum to avoid that this peace process derails’; ‘I think that it is very important that we all march in the same direction’ (01/03/05b). This can be due to a ‘source material bias’: unprepared remarks capture more substantive insights of the policy-maker than speeches (Schafer and Crichlow 2000:570). When it comes to handling the Middle East conflict, the EU address to the US takes the form of a request for help. Still, the Commissioner expects the EU to be regarded as an equal partner by the US: ‘the EU and US should do more to work in parallel with one another on the region’s priorities’ (13/01/05).

Ferrero’s discourse also suffers from omissions, which evidence some unresolved questions. When a third-country refuses to co-operate, the EU lacks answers. Another ‘black hole’ is the response to WMD proliferation. Ferrero once hailed negotiations with Iran about halting its nuclear activities as a successful exercise of European diplomacy: ‘the EU is currently *re-engaging* Iran’ (08/03/05); ‘the case of Iran clearly shows that our approach linking clear principles with political incentives can be successful’ (24/01/05). Following the failure of negotiations, the Commissioner posits that ‘new incentives must be found’ (08/12/05), and reverts to highlighting co-operation with the US on the

resolution of the nuclear crisis: ‘we are working jointly with the US to get Iran from developing a military nuclear programme’ (01/06/06). In her remarks on non-proliferation, her depiction of the international environment is most bleak—‘there is growing mistrust, unpredictability and uncertainty in the international arena’, while her faith in the EU’s capacity to promote change through multilateralism is weak: ‘the current international environment is not conducive to negotiating new multilateral legally binding instruments’ (08/12/05).

### **Conclusion: Community Policies with a Security Agenda**

In sum, I showed that Commissioner Ferrero’s worldview regards the international system as a hierarchical order in which the importance of third countries is determined by their economic weight, geographical vicinity, and their willingness to co-operate with the EU. While this worldview hardly differs from traditional conceptions of power politics, what is peculiar about Ferrero’s worldview is that the EU is ready to co-operate with every single state, and she spells out the conditions that the EU expects each third-country to fulfil. Her broad concept of security coincides with that of Human Security. Threats emanate from phenomena rather than from states or human volition, and her conception of mankind is positive. At the same time, power is defined in terms of economic wealth. The EU’s international role is best described as a soft-power which exerts its leverage in a non-coercive manner, partly through a strategic use of its panoply of means, partly by virtue of its magnetism. Still, Ferrero is conscious of the EU’s limitations, and her optimism is tempered by her modest estimation of EU leverage when it comes to ‘hard security’—the Middle East or nuclear proliferation.

Ferrero’s understanding of the EU’s external action displays two notable features: a wide-ranging ‘politicisation of instruments’ and a ‘securitisation of policies’. In her worldview, every aspect of external actions is a *policy instrument*, and most of them can be used to enhance *security*. This approach mirrors Ferrero’s conception of security. If all those developments that imperil ‘human security’ are qualified as threats, then the EU’s external action is largely security-relevant. This instrumentalisation and securitisation of Community policies has institutional implications. Ferrero’s worldview projects an image of the EU that departs from the popular belief that it is guided overwhelmingly by economic interests. In contrast, it displays a preoccupation with citizen’s concerns with security and well-being. Most notably, the emphasis on security widens and enhances the External Relations portfolio. By positing their relevance to security, the Commissioner upgrades the profile of the policies under her remit.

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