The Concept of 'Resilience' in EU External Relations: A Critical Assessment

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The 2016 Global Strategy (GS) made resilience central to the European Union's (EU's) external activities. However, many aspects of resilience were ambiguous. Three of these aspects are identified in this article: whether resilience is about risks or resources, whether resilience means stability or change, and what is the role of values. These ambiguities created a space for the policy work of EU bureaucracy. This work is examined in development and neighbourhood fields, and in relations with Russia. Documents' analysis and semi-structured interviews reveal a difference in how three ambiguities were interpreted. Differences were identified among policy fields but not between EU institutions. These differences reflect the efforts of EU officials to preserve consistency in 'their' fields. This policy work undermines one important goal for introducing resilience in the GS, the enhanced coherence of EU external activities. Finally, the study revealed that some interpretations moved closer to the theoretical writings on resilience compared with the GS.

1 INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long examined various bureaucracies of the European Union (EU), focusing the work of the Commission,[1] Council Secretariat,[2] European Parliament,[3] and external relations' institutions.[4] These studies examined civil

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[1] H. Kassim, J. Peterson, M. Baue, S. Connolly, R. Dehousse, L. Hooghe & A. Thompson, *The European Commission of the 21st Century* (Oxford 2012); N. Nugent & M. Rhihard, *The European Commission* (2nd ed., Palgrave 2015).

[2] F. Hayes-Renshaw & H. Wallace *The Council of Ministers* (Palgrave 2006); M. Westlake & D. Galloway, *The Council of the European Union* (3d ed., John Harper Press 2004).

[3] R. Corbett, *The European Parliament's Role in Closer Integration* (Palgrave 1998); R. Corbett & M. Shackleton, *The European Parliament* (8th ed., John Harper 2011); A. Kreppel, *The European Parliament and Supranational Party System: A Study in Institutional Development* (Cambridge University Press 2002).

[4] H. Dijkstra, *Commission Versus Council Secretariat: An Analysis of Bureaucratic Rivalry in European Foreign Policy*, 14(3) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 431 (2009); S. Duke, *The European External Action Service: Antidote against Incoherence*, 17(1) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 45 (2012); S. Duke & S. Vanhoonacker, *Administrative Governance of the CFSP: Theory and Practice*, 11(2) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 163 (2006); J. Howorth,

servants through the principle-agent approach and the composition and culture of various institutions and career paths of EU officials. However, little research has been conducted on how EU bureaucracy assists in introducing new concepts (or how they perform policy work). This article investigates this subject by examining the resilience concept of the 2016 Global Strategy (GS).

The GS was prepared in a narrow circle of individuals in close cooperation with top national and supranational officials. The GS lavishly applies the term 'resilience' to the EU and its partners; to politics, economics, and environment; and to states, societies, and individuals. According to Nathalie Tocci,[5] special adviser to High Representative Federica Mogherini and the GS' key author, the term served two purposes. First, the term was used to tone down the EU's normative rhetoric in favour of a more pragmatic type of cooperation. Second, the term had to enhance the EU's coherence in external relations. The preparation process took nearly two years and the GS was presented in June 2016 for officials to preside over its implementation. However, some aspects of resilience were ambiguous, for example, the GS stated that 'the EU will support different paths to resilience'.[6] As a result, a space for policy work of EU officials emerged.

This article uses studies of bureaucracy and its policy work[7] to investigate how the concept of resilience was implemented. At least three aspects of resilience are open to contestation: whether the resilience is about risks or resources (capacities, capabilities); whether stability or change must be promoted; and what is the place of values (democracy, human rights). These aspects are explained in the section 'material and methods'. The policy work on resilience has involved general clarifications of the concept and its application in various fields. The EU's policies for neighbourhood countries, development states, and Russia are used to illustrate this policy work. This article relies on the analysis of EU documents and on twenty-five semi-structured interviews, conducted in November 2017 and October 2018. The document analysis and interviews allowed tracing how three contentious aspects of resilience concept were addressed. The study revealed that

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Discourse, Ideas, and Epistemic Communities in European Security and Defence Policy, 27(2) West Eur. Pol. 211 (2004); J. Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan 2015); S. Vanhoonacker, H. Dijkstra & H. Maurer, *Understanding the Role of Bureaucracy in the European Security and Defence Policy*, 14(1) Eur. Integ. Online Papers (2010), http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2010-004a.htm (accessed 12 Aug. 2018); M. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (Cambridge University Press 2003).

5   N. Tocci, *Framing the EU Global Strategy. A Stronger Europe in a Fragile World* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

6   EU, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (Brussels June 2016), https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_re-view_web.pd (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

7   E. C. Page & B. Jenkins, *Policy Bureaucracy: Government with a Cast of Thousands* (Oxford University Press 2005); E. C. Page, *Policy Without Politicians. Bureaucratic Influence in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford University Press 2012).

in each field, the bureaucracy interpreted 'resilience' differently. Bureaucracies were bound by programmes in place (a form of path dependence) and by the need to maintain policy consistency. 'Resilience', as a result, has been used as an umbrella term to gloss the differences in various policy fields rather than to overcome them.

2   THEORIZING THE ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY

EU institutions are most frequently approached through the lenses of neoinstitutional approaches. In particular, the principle-agent model is applied[8] and presupposes a conflict between a principle and agent (which is not necessarily the case). Additionally, this approach does not always capture complex relations among various institutions and within them. The importance of social culture in the institution in question and the background of EU officials[9] are analysed. These features reveal why institutions react in a certain manner but do not always explain the similarities among various institutions and differences within them. Moreover, focus on socialization sometimes diverts attention from the policy process. More recently, scholars from the EU focused on the importance of administrative policy, which concentrates on daily management and bureaucratic capacities.[10]

Although these approaches remain important, this study examines the role of middle-range officials when they 'shape a policy into a form that can be put to ministers and a wider audience and turned into a set of policy instruments'.[11] This policy work is one reason (on a par with the influence on the nomination and political views of bureaucrats) to increasingly stress the politicization of bureaucracy.[12]

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[8]   H. Kassim & A. Menon, *The Principal Agent Approach and the Study of the European Union: Promise Unfulfilled*, 10(1) J. Eur. Pub. Pol'y 121 (2011); G. J. Miller, *The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models*, 8 Am. Rev. Pol. Sci. 203 (2005); M. A. Pollack, *Delegation, Agency and Agenda Setting in the European Community*, 51(1) Int'l Org. 99 (1997).

[9]   Corbett & Shackleton, *supra* n. 3; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, *supra* n. 2; Nugent & Rhinard, *supra* n. 3; D. Hodson & J. Peterson, *Institutions of the European Union* (4th ed., Oxford University Press 2017); Vanhoonacker, Dijkstra & Maurer, *supra* n. 4.

[10]   M. Egeberg, *Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice: The Case of Administrative Policy*, 7(1) Governance 83 (1994); T. Henökl & J. Trondal, *Bureaucratic Structure, Geographical Location and the Autonomy of Administrative Systems. Evidence from the European External Action Service*, ISL Working Paper 7 (2013), http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/134936/1/ISLWP2013-7.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018); H. C. H. Hoffmann & A. H. Türk, *EU Administrative Governance* (Edgar Elger 2006).

[11]   Page & Jenkins, *supra* n. 7, at 2; *see also* J. P. Olsen, *Maybe It Is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy?*, 5(10) Arena Working Paper (Mar. 2005), https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2005/05_10.html (accessed 12 Aug. 2018); B. G. Peters, *Still the Century of Bureaucracy? The Roles of Public Servants*, 30(1) Viešoji Politika ir Administravimas 7 (2009).

[12]   B. G. Peters & J. Pierre, *Politicisation of the Civil Service*, in *Politicisation of the Civil Service in Comparative Perspective* 1–13 (B. G. Peters & J. Pierre eds, Routledge 2004); L. Rouban, *Politicization of the Civil Service*, in *Politicization of the Civil Service* 380–91 (G. Peters & J. Pierre eds, Sage 2012).

Several reasons explain the significance of middle-level bureaucrats. First (following one of Weber's ten points),[13] officials carry expertise and the most detailed knowledge about their policy field and top officials or politicians see a more general picture. Second, the nature of a new concept (and instructions from top officials and politicians) might be unclear. Following the publication of the GS, many EU officials expressed their uncertainty about resilience and means for its implementation. Moreover, compared with the theory of resilience, the way it was articulated in the EU raises at least three questions, explained in the next section. Clarifying the concept does not mean that bureaucracies shape it 'according to their own, or even a 'civil service's set of values'.[14] By contrast, the work is meant to genuinely understand and interpret priorities set by politicians or top officials. Third, defining new concepts and putting them into practice might actually 'involve designing the whole shape of the policy'.[15] Thus, the European External Action Service (EEAS) cooperated with the European Commission and decided to prepare a communication on resilience.[16] Fourth, while embarking on the interpretation, officials are also constrained by their parallel work, by policy instruments and programmes already in place, and by the need to maintain the overall coherence and consistency of the policy field for the sake of 'their' policy and professional reputation. This work is sometimes classified into routinization, regularization, and policy adjustment.[17] Finally, middle-level officials are involved in the '*maintenance* policy job', that is, 'making or recommending day-to-day decisions about how a particular scheme or set of institutions should be handled'.[18] This is particularly relevant for the GS, developed by a group of experts, some of whom were not EU officials.

The following analysis identifies a trend to preserve consistency in each field rather than introduce radical innovations for the sake of overall coherence. This phenomenon can also be described with the help of path dependence.[19] Path

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[13]   Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (G. Roth & C. Wittich eds, University of California Press 1978).

[14]   Page & Jenkins, *supra* n. 7, at 105.

[15]   *Ibid.*, at 81; *see also* Page, *supra* n. 7.

[16]   European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action*, JOIN(2017)21final (Brussels 7 June 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/joint_communication_-a_strategic_approach_to_resilience_in_the_eus_external_action-2017.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

[17]   Page, *supra* n. 7.

[18]   Page & Jenkins, *supra* n. 7, at 60.

[19]   P. A. David, *Clio and the Economics of QWERTY*, 75(2) Am. Econ. Rev. 332 (1985); S. Liebowitz & S. E. Margolis, *Path Dependence, Lock-in, and History*, 11(1) J.L. Econ. & Org. 205 (1995); S. E. Page, *Path Dependence*, 1 Q. J. Pol. Sci. 87(2006); P. Pierson, *Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics*, 94 Am. Pol. Sci. Rev. 251 (2000).

dependence of the resilience concept has recently been discussed.[20] This article, however, concentrates on the policy work of EU officials as reflected in interviews and official documents.

3   MATERIAL AND METHOD. IDENTIFYING LINES OF CONTESTATION

The GS[21] mentioned 'resilience' over 40 times when discussing the resilience of states and societies, the EU's resilience but also that of its neighbours and partners. The GS defined resilience as 'the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises'.[22] The document also specified that a 'resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development lies at the heart of a resilient state'.[23]

Three aspects of the resilience concept (as the GS presents it) may be controversial when compared against theoretical writings on resilience and Natalie Tocci, describing the original intentions of the GS's authors.

The first aspect is the concept of resilience, which is 'much more about relations and contexts than about fixed essences and linear causal chains'.[24] In Brad Evans' and Julian Reid's words, resilience is 'the art of living dangerously',[25] that is, the art of considering not so much threats but resources that allow coping with the threats.[26] In other words, the emphasis is on the resources of a system and their ability to anticipate the risks rather than on the threats to be eliminated (because the latter is frequently impossible).

Natalie Tocci described resilience in the GS as 'the ability to absorb, react and respond to shocks and crises'.[27] This definition and prolific discussions about the 'EU's internal ills', 'a dramatically deteriorating geostrategic environment',[28] and the EU 'living through its deepest and darkest existential crisis'[29] signal the prioritization of risks above capacity-building. Similarly, the GS defined resilience through crises but also mentioned 'ability of states and societies to reform';

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[20]   J. Joseph & A. Juncos, *Resilience as an Emergent European Project? The EU's Place in the Resilience Turn*, paper presented at the UACES annual conference (Krakow 4–7 Sept. 2017).

[21]   EU, *supra* n. 6.

[22]   *Ibid.*, at 23.

[23]   *Ibid.*

[24]   D. Chandler & J. Coaffee, *Introduction. Contested Paradigms of International Resilience*, in *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience* 4–5 (D. Chandler & J. Coaffee eds, Routledge 2017).

[25]   B. Evans & J. Reid, *Resilient Life. The Art of Living Dangerously* (Polity 2014).

[26]   P. Rogers, *The Etymology and Genealogy of a Contested Concept*, in Chandler & Coaffee (eds), *supra* n. 24, at 13–25.

[27]   Tocci, *supra* n. 5, at 71.

[28]   *Ibid.*, at 11.

[29]   *Ibid.*, at 97.

capacities, abilities, and capabilities were mentioned in various policy fields, in the EU and its partners, but risks and threats clearly dominated. Hence, the GS in line with the original intention of its authors emphasized risks and threats rather than resources or capacities to prevent crises and to manage unpredictable situations.

The second controversial aspect in the resilience theory is linked to stability versus change. The original (engineering) understanding of resilience is about 'bouncing back', whereas more recent discussions in environmental and particularly social sciences have associated resilience with the ability 'to grow and develop … independently of whether there is a disaster, crisis or unexpected development'.[30] Some authors have tended to classify approaches to resilience into engineering, environmental, and social science, with the latter focusing 'not only on being robust to disturbances but also on the opportunities that emerge, in terms of self-reorganization, recombination, and the emergence of new trajectories'.[31]

Natalie Tocci, in her book, quotes Wagner and Anholt, that is, resilience was understood in pragmatic terms as 'a middle ground between over-ambitious liberal peace-building and under-ambitious stability'.[32] Juncos[33] also astutely noted that 'stability was associated with a policy of tacit support for authoritarian powers'. Tocci continues that a 'resilient state is … able to survive change by changing itself', adding, however, 'just like a resilient metal it bends but does not break'.[34] This quote curiously combines the social science understanding of resilience with change and the engineering idea of bouncing back and being stable. The ambiguity between stability and change is maintained throughout the GS, which, defines resilience as 'the ability … to reform'[35] yet mentions that the EU 'will pursue a multifaceted approach to resilience' and that the EU 'will foster the resilience of its democracies', which reads like preserving the status quo, which is stability.

Finally, a long-standing debate continues in resilience theory about whether resilience is normative, and whether it is '"good" or "bad", or neither?'[36] Many studies have also ignored that 'resilience has a dark side … Being resilient might, in fact, mean being an obstacle to positive change'.[37] Hence, being resilient is not

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[30]   Coaffee & Chandler, *supra* n. 24, at 5; *see also* Rogers, *supra* n. 26.
[31]   P. Bourbeau, *Resilience, Security and World Politics*, in *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience* 26–37, 27 (D. Chandler & J. Coaffee eds, London: 2017).
[32]   Wolfgang Wagner & Rosanne Anholt, *Resilience as the EU Global Strategy's New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?*, 37(3) Contemp. Sec. Pol'y 414 (2016).
[33]   Ana Juncos, *Resilience as the New EU Foreign Policy Paradigm: A Pragmatist Turn?*, 26(1) Eur. Sec. 1, 12 (2017).
[34]   Tocci, *supra* n. 5, at 71.
[35]   EU, *supra* n. 6 at 23.
[36]   L. Olsson, A. Jerneck, H. Thorén, J. Persson & D. O'Byrne, *A Social Science Perspective on Resilience*, in Chandler & Coaffee (eds), *supra* n. 24, at 49–62, 49.
[37]   Bourbeau, *supra* n. 31, at 28.

necessarily positive. Furthermore, resilience – as understood by other international organizations – is about societal diversity, active community, access to various resources, and the ability to work with unpredictability,[38] but not about democracy and human rights.

The EU clearly adopts a values-based approach to resilience. One of the reasons for using the concept of resilience, as explained by Natalie Tocci,[39] was to reflect 'the notion of principled pragmatism', that is, the EU removing 'its rose-tinted lenses that depicted the world that simply wanted to look like the EU' while not neglecting 'the transformation agenda' and keeping the EU responsible. The GS thus states that a 'resilient state is a secure state, and security is key for prosperity and democracy. But the reverse holds true as well … A resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development lies at the heart of a resilient state'.[40] Hence, the ultimate goal of promoting EU values remains unchanged, preserving liberal characteristics of the EU. The 'EU's self-understanding as a liberal/normative power has shaped the way it understands (and implements) resilience'.[41] That quote certainly ignores varying understandings of resilience across the world,[42] limits the acceptance of other models,[43] and ultimately contradicts the GS's assertion regarding varying paths to resilience.

In summary, a close reading of the GS and of its authors' intentions against the theory of resilience reveals three ambiguities: whether resilience is about risks or resources, whether resilience is about stability or change, and whether resilience is about values or not. The remainder of the article investigates how EU bureaucracies have treated these ambiguities. General developments of the concept are analysed on the basis of the EU's resilience communication,[44] progress reports on the implementation of the GS, and semi-structure interviews in 'horizontal' units of the EEAS. The three selected policy fields are development, neighbourhood, and Russia. Interpretation of resilience in these areas is analysed through key documents published before and after the GS, and through semi-structured interviews.

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[38]   A. V. Bahadur, M. Ibrahim & T. Tanner, *The Resilience Renaissance? Unpacking of Resilience for Tackling Climate Change and Disasters*, Strengthening Climate Resilience Discussion Paper 1 (2010), https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/the-resilience-renaissance-unpacking-of-resilience-for-tackling-climate-change-and-disasters-scr-discussion-paper-1 (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

[39]   Tocci, *supra* n. 5, at 70–71.

[40]   EU, *supra* n. 6, at 23.

[41]   Joseph & Juncos, *supra* n. 20; *see also* Juncos, *supra* n. 32; J. Schmidt, *Intuitively Neoliberal? Towards a Critical Understanding of Resilience Governance*, 21(2) Eur. J. Int'l Rel. 402 (2015).

[42]   C. W.J. de Milliano & J. Jurriens, *Realities of Resilience in Practice: Lessons Learnt Through a Pilot EU Aid Volunteer Initiative*, 4(2) Resilience: Int'l Policies, Prac. & Discourses 79 (2016).

[43]   E. Korosteleva, *Paradigmatic or Critical? Resilience as a New Turn in EU Governance for the Neighbourhood*, J. Int'l Rel. & Dev. 1 (2018, online, in press).

[44]   European Commission and High Representative, *supra* n. 16.

Several reasons explain this choice of the policy fields. First, resilience emerged and was extensively applied in these policy areas. Second, although development policy is mostly in the hands of the Commission, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is 'shared' between the EEAS and Commission, whereas policy on Russia is mostly shaped by the EEAS. Thus, the choice of the policy fields allows for the identification of whether there is a difference in institutional interpretations of resilience. Third, all three policy areas experienced profound changes before the GS and during its approval, which theoretically opened a space for their deep transformation in line with one reading of resilience.

4   RESULTS: POLICY WORK DIGESTS INNOVATIONS

4.1   RISKS VERSUS RESOURCES DILEMMA

The 2017 communication[45] and progress reports on the implementation of the GS[46] witnessed a departure from the GS in how resilience was interpreted through risks versus resources. The Communication mentioned risks over fifty times, stressing that 'resilience requires risk-informed programming',[47] and it enumerated potential threats ranging from protracted crisis and violent conflict through hybrid threats to environmental degradation. The document emphasized 'the need to move away from crisis containment to a more structural, long-term, non-linear approach to vulnerabilities, with an emphasis on anticipation, prevention and preparedness'.[48] Moreover, the document added three new points, of which two dealt with capacities (that of a state 'to build, maintain and restore its core functions' and of 'societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks'.[49] The Communication also stressed that 'identifying and building upon existing positive sources of resilience is as important as tracking and responding to vulnerabilities'.[50] The two progress reports stress risk prevention and 'risk-informed analysis' but also explore 'state, societal and communal strengths and vulnerabilities'[51] and capacities in the form of 'inclusive state institutions'.[52]

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[45]   *Ibid.*
[46]   EU, *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy. Year 1* (Brussels June 2017), https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/full_brochure_year_1.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018); EU, *From Shared Vision to Common Action: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy Implementation Report Year* (Brussels 2 June 2018), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_annual_report_year_2.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).
[47]   European Commission and High Representative, *supra* n. 16, at 24.
[48]   *Ibid.*, at 2.
[49]   *Ibid.*, at 3.
[50]   *Ibid.*, at 23.
[51]   EU (2017), *supra* n. 46, at 15–16.
[52]   EU (2018), *supra* n. 46, at 9.

That shift from risks to resources was due to wider consultations across various EU institutions in the process of the preparation of the 2017 Communication and reporting in 2017 and 2018 (i.e. active participation of officials performing policy work on development and neighbourhood). Interviewee 1 from a 'horizontal' unit of the EEAS noticed that securing long-term foreign policy objectives of the EU required 'supporting the capacities of states, societies, communities and individuals'. Additionally, risks were not abandoned; interviewee 2 from a horizontal service of the EEAS still stressed the combination of risks and resources in resilience (and said that the latter 'implies the ability to anticipate or at least to identify risks'; but also 'to adjust to them'). In summary, general EU documents clearly increased attention to resources although risks remained on the radar. Officials also differed in their interpretations of the link between risks and resources.

Resilience was understood in development policy as 'alleviating the underlying causes conducive to crises, and enhancing capacities to better manage future uncertainty and change',[53] and the latter phrase identifies risks and resources to be developed. The GS did not change that understanding much. A 2016 document that outlined EU actions in support of development goals argued that the Union will invest in various capacities to help 'people to cope with future crisis'.[54] Interviewee 3 from Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) of the Commission stressed the primacy of resources in the context of the unknown. Interviewees 11 and 13 from DG DEVCO said that risks and resources are critical. However, interviewee 11 emphasized that understanding risks makes resilience more specific. Additionally, interviewees 11 and 13 agreed that resilience is first and foremost regarding preventing (rather than reacting) and that a goal requires the development of relevant resources.

Similarly, the EU's neighbourhood policy, revised in 2015, stated the following as its goal: promote 'capacity-building and new opportunities' to ensure 'effective

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[53] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises*, COM(2012)586final 5 (Brussels 3 Oct. 2012), http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2012_586_resilience_en.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018); *see also* European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020* (Brussels 19 June 2013), http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2013_227_ap_crisis_prone_countries_en.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

[54] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Key European Action Supporting the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals*, SWD(2016)390final (Strasbourg 22 Nov. 2016), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/swd-key-european-actions-2030-agenda-sdgs-390-20161122_en.pdf (accessed 13 Aug. 2018); *see also* European Parliament, Council, European Commission, *Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting Within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission. The New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'*, 2017/C210/01 (Brussels 30 June 2017), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A42017Y0630%2801%29 (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

and inclusive economic management and sustainable social outcomes'.[55] 'Capacity-building' to increase resilience to 'hybrid threats, including cyber security' was maintained following the publication of the GS.[56] This emphasis on resources is also characteristic of EU officials managing eastern and southern neighbourhoods in the Commission and EEAS. Interviewee 7 from the Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the Commission stressed the necessity to 'build capacities to cope with internal and external crisis' and added that determining risks would be a waste of time. He also saw the function of the DG NEAR as long-term capacity-building (by contrast with Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) mitigating short-term risks). However, interviewee 4 from the EEAS preferred considering risks in the context of resilience, stressing that minimizing risks is always helpful to improve resilience. Interviewee 6 from the EEAS suggested mitigating risks in the context of project management while developing resources in the context of resilience building. Similarly, interviewee 12 argued that resources are more important than risks. Interviewee 17 emphasized that resilience is about reacting to crises and preventing them, with resources being essential for the two. However, he agreed with interviewee 11, that is, 'an idea about the risks' is essential to build resilience (interviewee 16 supported this line).

In summary, there is convergence among EU officials performing policy work regarding development and neighbourhood in understanding resilience in terms of resources (abilities, capacities and capabilities) or a combination of resources and risks – rather than risks.

Policy work on Russia diverged from the trends, as aforementioned. Resilience was first mentioned in the five principles of the relations with Russia. One of the principles was 'strengthening internal European Union' resilience; in particular, in view of energy security, hybrid threats, and strategic communication

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[55] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, European Economic and Social Committee. Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, SWD(2015)500final, 7 (Brussels 18 Nov. 2015), http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf (accessed 13 Aug. 2018).

[56] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Report on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Review*, JOIN (2017)18final, 15 (18 May 2017), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2_en_act_part1_v9_3.pdf> (accessed 12 Aug. 2018). *See also* European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Staff Working Document. Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on Key Priorities and Tangible Results*, SWD(2017)300final (Brussels 7 June 2017), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/swd_2017_300_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v5_p1_940530.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

but not only.[57] Two aspects make this application of resilience different from neighbourhood and development cases. First, the goal is not to enhance resilience in Russia but to strengthen it in the EU. Second, the focus is on threats (with Russia being its source) and not on resources. This approach has been reconfirmed in a recent speech on behalf of Federica Mogherini about the need 'to strengthen resilience to chemical-, biological-, radiological- and nuclear-related risks, and to bolster capabilities to address hybrid threats, including in the areas of cyber-based strategic communication and counter-intelligence'.[58] The EEAS officials managing Russia also stressed the 'imperfect' but inevitable risk-based approach to resilience in EU–Russian relations, particularly given the propaganda, cyber threats, and chemical weapon threats (interviewees 20–24).

Hence, in the development and neighbourhood policy fields, a trend is to think about resilience in terms of resources/abilities/capabilities rather than risks in the EU. This trend emerged in both fields before the GS was approved and was preserved after 2016. The search for consistency in the policy work in these two areas meant that EU officials in the Commission and EEAS promoted this reading of resilience (by contrast to predominantly risk-based approach of the GS). This emphasis on resources also influenced the general EU thinking on resilience. However, the deeply securitized agenda of EU–Russian relations led to the risk-based approach to resilience. The reading adopted in the development and neighbourhood policies is closer to theoretical writings on resilience than the reading, adopted in the GS or in relations with Russia. No significant difference was identified in the positions of the Commission and the EEAS. The difference in the interpretations of resilience in terms of risks and resources in various policy fields meant that the goal of enhanced coherence in EU external activities across various policy fields was undermined.

4.2   Stability/stabilization versus change dilemma

General documents on resilience have maintained ambiguity about stability versus change. The 2017 communication stressed that '[r]esilience is about transformation

[57]   Federica Mogherini, *Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Press Conference Following the Foreign Affairs Council*, ID: 160314_02 (Bruxelles, 14 Mar. 2016), https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5490/remarks-by-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-at-the-press-conference-following-the-foreign-affairs-council_en (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

[58]   Federica Mogherini, *Speech on Behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the Situation in Russia*, ID: 180418_14 (Bruxelles, 17 Apr. 2018), https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_es/43152/Speech%20on%20behalf%20of%20High%20Representative/Vice-President%20Federica%20Mogherini%20at%20the%20European%20Parliament%20plenary%20session%20on%20the%20situation%20in%20Russia (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

not preserving the status quo. If resilience is about sustaining the core identity and capabilities of states, societies, and communities in the face of disruptive pressures, it is also about ensuring their ability to adapt and reform to meet new needs.'[59] The first progress report of the GS stressed 'a transformation approach to resilience', which allows for withstanding, adapting, recovering, and responding to shocks.[60] These words mean stability and bouncing back rather than leaping forward. Moreover, examples of resilience work have emphasized 'sustainable stability'.[61] Similarly, the second progress report stressed 'rebuilding countries and societies' and 'addressing the root causes of instability'.[62] In interviews among EEAS officials, managing general issues also reflected ambiguity in managing a stability versus change dilemma. For example, interviewee 1 stressed that it is 'more about change', that is, the EU is 'not interested in preserving power, state for its own stake'. Additionally, interviewee 2 argued that resilience is 'the ability to adapt while retaining a core identity and values', adding that 'the EU is not promoting revolutions'. Similarly, interviewee 8 argued that 'resilience is the ability to be stable … regardless of what external circumstances bring'.

This ambiguity can be identified in the policy work of EU officials in the areas of development, neighbourhood, and EU–Russian relations'. The 2012 communication on food crises argued that resilience 'has two dimensions: the inherent strength of an entity … to better resist stress and shock and the capacity of this entity to bounce back rapidly from the impact',[63] which clearly emphasizes a return to the original state. Similarly, a 2011 communication that marked the start of the current stage in the EU's development policy emphasized the aim 'to secure stability … while at the same time strengthening governance, capacity and economic growth'.[64] Similar to this attitude, interviewee 3 from DG DEVCO argued that 'the concept of resilience is something that should help any country … to be faced with any type of fragility, to address and to be able to resist and to bounce back to a balance point', again emphasizing stability. Interviewee 13 from DG DEVCO adopted a more relativistic approach and stressed that the EU might be looking for stability and change, depending on the country; then, she further argued that the goal is 'preserving stability where it exists' and 'stabilizing'

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[59]   European Commission and High Representative, *supra* n. 16, at 23.
[60]   EU (2017), *supra* n. 46, at 14.
[61]   *Ibid.*, at 15.
[62]   EU (2018), *supra* n. 46, at 8.
[63]   European Commission (2012), *supra* n. 53, at 5.
[64]   European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change*, COM(2011)637final, 10 (Brussels 13 Oct. 2011), https://ec. europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/publication-agenda-for-change-2011_en.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

where there is a need for it. Hence, the policy work of interpretation ensured that stability, which either exists or must be achieved, remained central.

The 2015 ENP proclaimed 'stabilization as [the] main priority' and the main challenge in many partner countries.[65] Similar to this vision, the ENP progress report also maintained that 'the EU and its partners in the East and the South are working to promote stabilization and resilience'.[66] Stability and stabilization were emphasized again at the Brussels 2017 summit[67] and in the revised deliverables for the ENP for the period to 2020.[68] This understanding of resilience as stabilization is also well rooted among EU officials. Interviewee 7 from the DG NEAR stressed that stabilization was the central element of EU activities (while agreeing that some reforms are to be promoted for the sake of long-term stabilization). Interviewee 16 from the EEAS repeated the same argument. Interviewees 4 and 6 from the EEAS also strongly argued that resilience is 'about stability', because this is a prerequisite for stable relations. Interviewee 17 from the EEAS stressed that stability is critical because it is essential to avoid a 'default' of the country, economically and politically. Hence, a search for policy consistency and realities on the ground meant that resilience was interpreted as stability in the neighbourhood.

In EU–Russian relations resilience was interpreted as the need to maintain the EU and its values intact, irrespective of challenges from Russia. This vision is clear in Mogherini's five principles and well established in the minds of EU officials performing policy work on Russia. Interviewee 21 stressed that the governments of the EU and its peoples praise stability, whereas interviewee 20 admitted the benefits of some transformations but emphasized that the EU prefers to preserve the core of its values and international system. Additionally, when asked about Russia, EEAS officials remained sceptical about stability and stressed that although 'the EU is not promoting revolutions' … it is 'certainly keen on having an open free civil society' and that 'the value added of resilience' is its potential to 'handle change' (interviewee 2). Interviewees 21 and 22 manifested similar readiness to demand changes from

[65] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *supra* n. 55, at 2–4.

[66] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Report on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Review*, JOIN (2017)18final, 3 (18 May 2017), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2_en_act_part1_v9_3.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

[67] Eastern Partnership Summit, *Joint declaration* (Brussels 24 Nov. 2017), http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/24/eastern-partnership-summit-joint-declaration/ (accessed 13 Aug. 2018).

[68] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Staff Working Document. Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on Key Priorities and Tangible Results*, SWD(2017)300final (Brussels 7 June 2017), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/swd_2017_300_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v5_p1_940530.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2018).

Russia, and interviewee 24 conceptualized certain EU policies towards Russia as encouraging changes in the context of resilience. Hence, a curious mix is observed regarding how officials managing Russia understand resilience: the stability in the EU and tacit encouragement of changes in Russia again reflect consistency with the policies established before the GS.

In summary, the stability versus change dilemma within the concept of resilience again reveals continuity in the policy work of EU officials managing development, neighbourhood, and Russia. By contrast with the social sciences' interpretation of resilience and the EU's GS, EU officials tend to emphasize stability and stabilization, which was introduced before the GS. This interpretation affected the general documents on resilience. In many cases the discussion is about stabilization (which can be achieved through some reforms) rather than about stability, which is sometimes associated with authoritarian regimes. For this reason, when discussing Russia, officials tend to challenge stability and argue for changes in Russia. Again, no significant difference was identified in the positions of the Commission and the EEAS. Again, policy consistency in specific areas challenged cross-policy coherence pursued through the introduction of resilience in the GS.

4.3   VALUES AND RESILIENCE

Although the positive vision of resilience was maintained, the 2017 communica-tion already toned down the discussion on values as a component of resilience. The document mentions the importance of ensuring 'respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights'[69] but also recognizes the non-linear character of the 'progress towards democracy'.[70] Moreover, the document focused on various resources of democracy, for example, a participatory society or the econ-omy. The word 'values' is curiously missing from this document. The first progress report of the GS stressed that the EU's 'approach to resilience [is] aimed at protecting rights, building political participation'[71] but mostly provided examples of fostering resilience through economic and social projects.

Interviews regarding the 'horizontal' parts of the EEAS confirmed a more modest approach to values as a component of resilience. For example, interviewee 1 stressed that already the GS was 'a step back from a strictly normative approach to our relationships with third countries … and resilience is sort of how different parts of a social system work together and … a normative dimension is not so present in the way we approach it'. He continued, 'we cannot rely on a normative

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[69]   *Ibid.*, at 3.
[70]   *Ibid.*, at 23.
[71]   EU (2017), *supra* n. 46, at 14.

approximation as being key driver of our relationships'. Another interviewee from a 'horizontal' unit of the EEAS reiterated this point in a slightly different manner: 'resilience is not values-neutral from our perspective' and means 'that we cannot expect everyone to subscribe to European idea in the same way as we mean it'. Finally, interviewee 8 argued that it is up to a third country how much they want 'to take from the resilience as a pool', including the EU's experience with values. Hence, general interpretations of resilience signify a drift towards a less normative vision of resilience.

Development and neighbourhood documents have already proclaimed the importance of values before the GS. For example, the 2011 development communication stressed the interconnection between development, human rights, and democracy.[72] The EU also reserved the right to talk to governments and non-state actors, especially if states loosen their commitment to values.[73] Additionally, the focus gradually moved from human rights to human dignity, with an emphasis on poverty reduction and economic and social rights.

A similar ambiguous attitude can be witnessed in the interviews. Interviewee 3 stressed that 'the EU will never abandon their discussions on human rights, on democracy', and that the EU 'tend to respect the existence of a state and a government'. This conflict between resilience of societies and resilience of states was further clarified by interviewee 13, who argued that strengthening the resilience of the state might actually be a challenge to democracy and human rights but remains on the EU's priority list and guarantees stability. Although all interviewees agree on the importance of values in EU-promoted resilience, they also conceptualize human rights and democracy as a means to achieve resilience rather than the end goal of resilience (interviewees 11,13).

Similar trends can be observed in the neighbourhood policy. A 2015 communication says '[t]he EU's own stability is built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law and economic openness' but adds that the 'new ENP' is meant to 'take stabilization as its main political priority'.[74] Hence, a clear link is observed between values and stability, but stability seems to gain the upper hand. The communication further specifies that 'economic and social development should be at the heart of the EU's contribution to stabilizing the neighbourhood'.[75] However, 'targeted actions' on 'good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights' are also mentioned.[76] Interviews with EU officials confirm this

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[72] European Commission, *supra* n. 64, at 3.
[73] European Parliament, Council, European Commission, *supra* n. 54.
[74] European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *supra* n. 55, at 22.
[75] *Ibid.*, at 7.
[76] *Ibid.*, at 11.

gradual shift in the focus from values as the central component and the goal to values as a point, which characterizes the EU's approach to resilience and a means to achieve resilience.

Interviewee 6 from the EEAS argued that the EU 'pragmatically assists' failing countries in the neighbourhood (using values as a reference point for its actions). Interviewee 4 from the EEAS discussed eastern neighbours and stressed that 'while not leaving our principles aside … we are trying to promote in the neighbour-hood' 'pragmatism', which is about 'differentiation'. Interviewee 7 from the Commission agreed with this assertion and stressed that values are not neglected but the EU has to ensure continuation and 'adapt to … [the] instability and crises around'.

Additionally, interviewees 12, 16, and 17 (from EEAS) clearly argued that they believe that a democratic system is more stable and resilient (and hence promoted as such by the EU in the neighbourhood), and interviewee 12 added that democracy and human rights must be weighed against stability. Hence, as in the case of development policy, in the neighbourhood policy values become a means to achieve resilience, but it is double-checked against the goal of stability.

Finally, the case of EU–Russian relations again is different. The 2016 five principles neither mentioned values (with the exception of promotion of the dialogue between civil societies) nor linked values and the EU's resilience. However, the GS discusses the resilience of EU democracies. The 2017 communication underlines the goal to 'remain free to make their own political, diplomatic and economic choices' central for resilience.[77] EU officials managing Russia also maintain a normative approach when discussing resilience. For example, interviewee 5 from the EEAS said that resilience is about 'strong institutions, vibrant civil society, democracy, rule of law, separation of powers, civil-military power separation, respect for minorities, rules-based international system'. He viewed pragmatism not so much as moderation of values but as the incremental movement towards them. A similar approach characterizes the vision of interviewee 24.

In summary, the policy work of EU officials revealed decreases in the importance of values as a component of resilience. Officials tended to understand values as a departure point to engage in a more mundane and down-to-earth manner. In the neighbourhood and development policies, human rights and democracy were also conceptualized as factors enhancing resilience but had to be checked against stability. EU officials – in the Commission and EEAS – again privileged policy consistency in their work, continuing ideas established before the GS and

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[77]   European Commission and High Representative, *supra* n. 16, at 5.

challenging the goal of enhancing overall coherence in the EU's external activities. Once again, the EU's practice of resilience is closer to the theory of resilience compared to the GS and intentions of its authors. The only visible exception is the EU's policy on Russia where talking about itself and Russia EU officials conceptualized values as the core and the end goal of resilience.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrated that 2.5 years after the introduction in the GS, the resilience concept underwent important transformations. At least three aspects of the concept were ambiguous when the GS was approved, and they required policy work on the part of EU officials in their interpretation and integration in existing programmes. Transformations differed, depending on the policy field in question. In the risks versus resources dilemma development and neighbourhood officials emphasized resources, while those involved in EU–Russian relations prioritized risks. The stability versus change dilemma has been solved in the policy work in favour of stability (and stabilization). Finally, although values were preserved as the core of EU activities, in development and neighbourhood policies, they were treated as a means to achieve resilience rather than as the end goal. In EU–Russian relations, values were presented as the end goal of resilience, particularly for the EU.

This study demonstrates the importance of the policy work of middle-level officials who are responsible for the incorporation of various innovations in EU policies. Short of instructions, they tended to interpret ambiguities in accordance with what ensures better consistency with their previous work. As a result, they departed from the GS in all three ambiguous aspects in the neighbourhood and development policy fields. The GS stressed risks, change, and the importance of norms. The policy work in neighbourhood and development emphasized resources, stabilization, and values being a means to resilience rather than its end goal. This transformation was also reflected in general documents.

Path dependence rather than a radical innovation became a natural outcome of this policy work. In the words of an EEAS official (interviewee 17) 'everything we do and have previously done is about resilience', and the introduction of resilience resulted in a new classification obligation. Similarly, Commission interviewee 11 argued that they had always performed resilience in development, even if they were not aware of the term. The 2017 communication resulted from collective efforts of the EEAS and Commission officials from DGs DEVCO and NEAR. Thus, unsurprisingly, the general discussion evolved to guarantee coherence with development and neighbourhood policies.

The article reviewed three policy fields (development, neighbourhood, and Russia): one dominated by the Commission, one co-owned by the EEAS and the Commission, and one determined by the EEAS. No major difference was detected in institutional terms. In interpreting resilience constraints of the policy, the field was observed to be more important than distinctions between the EEAS or Commission.

Divergence in the interpretation of resilience also means that the initial idea of improving coherence in EU external relations was not achieved. The differences between development and neighbourhood policies were glossed over through a joint work on the 2017 resilience communication. However, the concept of resilience clearly does not stand up to the expectation of ensuring greater coher–ence of EU external activities if we investigate beyond these two fields.

The case of Russia is notable. Several issues explain that specificity. First, in EU–Russian relations, the EU discusses its resilience (and not that of its partners) and conceptualizes Russia as the origin of threats. Second, although the EU is actively engaged in development and neighbourhood in other countries with the intention to assist them in their reforms or stabilization, EU–Russian relations is characterized by mutual disengagement and the absence of any shared vision of the future. As a result, values have become more acute and important compared with more mundane interactions in the two other policy fields.

Finally, the emphasis on resources and approach to values adopted in neigh–bourhood and development policies brought this policy implementation closer to the theoretical writings on resilience (compared to the GS). The reasons for this intuitive convergence of two policy fields with theoretical writings on resilience deserve further research.