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Introduction: resilient states versus resilient societies? Whose security does the EU protect through the Eastern Partnership in times of geopolitical crises?

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) is making strong inroads into areas of security traditionally reserved to states. Security concerns are increasingly triggered by fundamental challenges, such as terrorism, climate change, migration, and many other 'soft security issues'. Resilience has become a term of reference in the EU's official foreign policy discourse, triggering an associated 'resilience. Our contribution aims to analyse the 'many faces of resilience' in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) in relation to how the EU understands and seeks to enhance European security, mapping the different meanings the terms assume in the EU's discourses and policy practices, and how they are related to one another. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has largely been viewed as an extraordinary resilience test for the EU and has brought back fundamental concerns on European security, including 'hard' military security issues. This has in turn raised questions not only on how the EU can ensure the resilience of its eastern partners and of itself, but also on the EU's role in a rapidly changing global context of polarisation and fragmentation. In light of these challenges, the contributions to this special issue have only increased in relevance, pointing to pathways and opportunities for how the EU may reconcile the contradictory demands of fostering security and resilience for states and societies alike.

KEYWORDS

Eastern Partnership; European neighbourhood policy; security; resilience; Ukraine; Russia

The European Union (EU) is making strong inroads into areas of security traditionally reserved to states. Most scholars who analyse the EU's role in the security field tend to focus on military-related problems. However, given the characteristics of today's security problems, military capabilities are not able to address the entire range of issues in security policies. Security concerns are increasingly triggered by fundamental challenges, such as terrorism, climate change, migration, and many other 'soft security issues'. The EU itself fully expressed this range of threats in the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003. In its 2015 Global Security Strategy, the EU has broadened its understanding of security to include state and societal resilience, which it aims to achieve by tackling governmental, economic, societal, climate and energy fragility (Global Europe Strategy: 9). Subsequently, resilience has become a term of reference in the EU's official foreign policy discourse, triggering an associated 'resilience turn' in the dynamically evolving academic literature on EU international relations (e.g. Joseph and Juncos 2019; Juncos 2017; Paul and Roos 2019; Wagner and Anholt 2016). Yet, while the link between 'resilience' and 'security' now features prominently in the EU's foreign policy discourses, the scholarly debates on resilience in EU foreign policy rarely connect to the parallel debates on

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'security' and 'securitisation' of EU foreign policy (e.g. Simão and Dias, Baltag and Bosse 2016), and *vice versa*.

This special issue seeks to connect the scholarly discussions on 'security' and 'resilience', by examining the various definitions and meanings of the terms in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy, and in what ways the EU has attempted to define the relationship between security and resilience in its official rhetoric and in policy practice.

The special issues connects with arguments made by other scholars analysing the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EaP. For example, Bosse (2019) argues that, in the course of its development, the ENP and the EaP have been increasingly dominated by security concerns such as regime stability or state resilience, at the expense of the promotion of the 'shared values', such as democracy, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights. Other scholars develop similar arguments in their studies of the ENP, including Dannreuther (2006), Kahraman (2005) and Joffé (2008), or Cianciara (2017) and Miskimmon (2018) Thus, it is evident that this 'values vs. security' debate occupies a prominent place in the existing scholarship on the ENP. What is particularly interesting to note in that respect is that such a debate is reminiscent of discussions taking place in another strand of the academic literature, namely that relating to the contentious relationship between 'soft security' on the one hand, and 'hard' security' on the other hand. Actually, this should come as no surprise, since the ENP and EaP are to a considerable extent underpinned by soft and human security principles. Yet, to date virtually no connection has been made between both scholarly debates, which have developed in isolation.

Several scholarly contributions have addressed the origins of the term resilience and its application by the EU (e.g. Tocci 2020, Bressan and Bergmaier 2021). However, there is little comparative research to date into the different ways the EU defines 'security' and 'resilience' in its policies towards different countries, in different policy areas and at different times, and how security and resilience intersect.

This matters for three main reasons: First, the EU has not only been inconsistent it its conceptualisation of resilience in its Global Strategy and other strategic vision declarations (Joseph and Juncos 2020), but it has also used different and conflicting conceptualisations in different contexts at different times. Often, the EU does neither acknowledge nor explain why the definitions of the terms 'resilience' and 'security' differ in its relations from one country to another. Secondly, the EU has also used the same conceptualisations of the terms across different context without much attention to the specific context or country that is addressed. For example, in its 2015 Global Strategy, the EU states that it aims to 'support different paths to resilience, targeting the most acute cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility, as well as develop more effective migration policies for Europe and its partners'. The statement suggests that the EU aims to foster both state and societal resilience. While fostering state and societal resilience may not necessarily be problematic in the context of democratic countries, it certainly raises questions in EU policy towards autocratic countries or hybrid regimes, considering that fostering state 'resilience' here would imply fostering the resilience of an autocratic regime, or highly centralised forms of government respectively. In a similar vein, the EU often uses the terms 'security', 'human security', 'soft security' and 'hard' geopolitical notions of security interchangeably, despite potential contradictions between 'human' and 'state' security. And third, while implying a linkage between 'security' and 'resilience', the EU sometimes depicts security as pre-requisites of resilience, and at other times as an outcome of resilience, or indeed as separate goals to be achieved. Yet, the direction and type of relationship between security and resilience, and especially the securitization of resilience (c.f. Bourbeau 2011) can have significant impacts on the practice of foreign policy (Coaffee and Fussey 2015).

Our contribution aims to analyse the 'many faces of resilience' in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP), mapping the different meanings the term assumes in the EU's discourses and policy practices. In a loose comparative analysis across a variety of countries and policy areas, the contributions of this special issue investigate *what* types and forms of resilience and security the EU aims to promote in

the different contexts, *how* resilience is to be achieved, *when and where* resilience is to be fostered, *whose* security and resilience is to be increased and how the EU defines and enacts the relationship between security and resilience. Aside from analysing the EU's understandings and definitions of security and resilience in different EaP policy areas and countries, the special issue also examines how the EU came to designate certain paths or issues as conditions for, or threats against, security and resilience in the EaP countries, and what implications these understandings have for concrete EU policies and practices in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the EaP:

(1) What is the EU's understanding and definition of, and relationship between, security and resilience in the context of the EaP?
(2) Through which processes did the EU come to designate certain paths or issues as conditions for, or threats against, security and resilience in the EaP countries, and what is the role/impact of political contexts in these processes?
(3) What implications do these understandings have for concrete EU policies and practices in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the EaP?

This special issue also outlines and reflects on the tensions/contradictions between security and other policy goals pertaining to resilience, such as mobility or democracy promotion. We aim to bring together scholars with a research interest in EU foreign policy and security and resilience issues in their broadest sense. It analyses and evaluates the EU's 'resilience turn' in its foreign policy, which is itself becoming increasingly important for the process of European integration in general, but which is now under challenge considering the EU's renewed focus on geopolitics and 'hard' security' following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In this way, the special issue establishes a connection with various established streams on the European Union foreign policy, including the longstanding debate on coherence and consistency of the EU foreign policy (e.g. Börzel Tanja and van Hüllen 2014), challenges of democracy promotion (Babayan 2015; Solonenko 2009), the issue of EU actorness and EU's normative power (Larsen 2014; Manners 2010) as well as EU conditionality (Cremona and Nic Shuibhne 2022; Kelley 2006; Sasse 2008; Tulmets and Ferreira-Pereira 2018). It also contributes to the debate on the established concepts, which coined our understanding of the EU's foreign policy in more general terms, such as the capability-expectation gap (Nielsen 2013), while testing them in EU relations with the EaP countries in a new, post-Brexit, post- COVID-2019 and Ukraine War context.

The contributions in this special issue draw on a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies, thereby providing different angles on the 'many faces of resilience' in the EaP and on how security and resilience intersect in the various EU policy discourses and practices.

Contributions of the special issue: themes, approaches, and findings

The collection of articles in this special issue aims to connect and advance the debates on EU security and resilience, by casting light on different dimensions and manifestations of, and the relationship between, resilience and security, and taking a critical approach towards both concepts. In doing so, the articles draw on a diversity of original conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are combined with an empirical analysis of often overlooked dimensions of EU's policy towards the EaP countries, drawing on the original data collected by the authors, including the semi-structured interviews (as for instance in Corman and Schumacher, or Valenza). These contributions establish productive dialogue with both the literature on the EU foreign policy and external governance (Delcour 2018; Lucarelli 2014; Nitoiu and Sus 2019; Smith 2013; Zielonka 2013), ENP/EaP studies (Bechev and Nikolaidis 2010; Ghazaryan 2014), and on the EU-Russia relations and the management of its common neighbourhood (Bosse et al. 2021; Busygina 2018; Casier 2020; Giusti and Penkova 2012; Schmidt-Felzmann 2016; Wilson and Popescu 2009; Vieira 2016, 2018). They also allow to reflect upon the questions guiding the present special issue outlined in the first section.

Thus, several of the contributions address the question on the EU's understanding and definition of security/ resilience in the context of the EaP (corresponding to the first question), and the associated processes through which the EU came to designate certain paths or issues as conditions for, or threats against, security and resilience in the EaP countries, and with what role/impact of political contexts in these processes (corresponding to the second question). As already mentioned, the contributions of the issue confirm the War in Ukraine as an crucially important turning point in the shifting EU approach. Thus, the contribution of Kaunert and de Deus Pereira, adopting an ontological security perspective, examines the interaction between the EU and Russia throughout Russia's war against Ukraine (2014 and 2022 onwards), and how these new elements constitute a constant threat to the maintenance of the stability and resilience in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Resilience, which is once again acknowledged to be the heart of the EU's Eastern Partnership substituting the initial emphasis on prosperity and stability, features here as an underlying key concept in the exploration of how EU portrays itself towards Russia and, on the other hand, how Russia behaves towards the EU when analysing this relationship through the lens of the Ukraine as an ontological battlefield. In a similar vein, Valenza´s contribution investigates the EU's cultural relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership by applying a poststructuralist approach and highlighting the centrality of the EU's identity reproduction (as a 'norm-maker' and 'truth-teller'), while demonstrating a move away from temporal to geographical othering of Russia and eventually securitising EU's foreign policy including its cultural relations. And similarly, Nitoiu and Pasatoiu's analysis of the public diplomacy directed towards Russia and in particular the social media (Twitter) communication in the COVID-19 context, confirms Russia's positioning as the other and EU's reconstructing its normative power identity and the identity of a moral actor.

The Russian war against Ukraine has drastically intensified the already ongoing changes in the EU foreign policy, with the resilience and now ascribed a meaning that is markedly different from its previous association, predominantly with threats stemming from the democratic transition processes in EaP countries. Corman' and Schumacher's analysis demonstrate this on the rarely explored case of Moldova, which draws upon the conceptual framework comprised by persuasion, enablement/empowerment, and partnership/ownership. In what regards the EU definition of security and resilience, Corman and Schumacher arrive at an important conclusion, namely that the domestic scope conditions in Moldova impacted on the EU's conception and implementation of resilience-building. As the EU has neglected the bottom-up empowerment of local, non-governmental actors who are key to making Moldova more resilient and free of corruption and oligarchic interests, Moldovan society's vulnerability towards grand corruption was not only largely ignored but also perpetuated.

These findings on the failure of the EU to empower non-governmental actors resonate with the conclusions of Bosse and Vieira, who examine the employment of the resilience discourse in EU relations towards Belarus. The contribution argues that it is specifically in the context of the EU's relations with autocratic regimes, that references to 'resilience', and especially 'state resilience' become highly problematic and contradictory to fostering 'societal resilience', and EU democracy promotion efforts in more general terms. Against the background of the analysis of the EaP resilience discourse, the contribution explores the EU's diverging narratives on 'resilience' towards Belarus, both in its purpose and referent objects of 'resilience', as well as in the means to achieve 'resilience'. The contribution finally offers a reflection on the political and ethical implications of the EU's discourse on 'resilience' in the specific context of autocratic countries.

Turning to the third question guiding the analysis of the present special issue, namely the implications of these understandings for concrete EU policies and practices in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the EaP, the articles of the special issue highlight the need for the EU to both improve its resilience strategic thinking and its implementation, including in relation to the EU's capacity to empower empower societal as well as local actors and missing reflection upon the relations between resilience and other key priorities of the EU's policy towards the EaP region. According to Kaunert and Deus Pereira, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine constituted 'a warning that

prior EU's policies on Russia were inconsistent and lacked a pre-emptive vision regarding Putin's aspirations, especially after the feeble sanction measures applied to Russia in 2014' (p. 11), something that calls for a revision of the EU strategy towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Looking into the case of Moldova, Corman' and Schumacher conclude that the EU pursued a course, in which resilience-building efforts have been a function of "who is in power and of the perceived credibility of governing elites' reform rhetoric" (p. 11), displaying a minimalistic understandings of resilience-building focused exclusively on anti-corruption measures and the de-politicization of the judiciary, resulting in a resilience-approach has not just been incoherent, but also void of true substance and, therefore, irrelevant.

Attending to the problematic issue of resilience and other EU foreign policy priorities, Raik's contribution delves into the issue of connectivity, by focusing upon the energy and transport infrastructure and the growing contestation between liberal and illiberal approaches to connectivity in the Eastern Partnership region. Subsequent analysis of Ukraine's security and geopolitical position allows Raik to conclude that, in order to improve Ukraine's resilience and reduce vulnerability, it is crucial to connect the country better to European infrastructure and strengthen physical links such as roads, energy connections, and flows of trade. Weil's article in its turn places emphasis on the reduction of vulnerability and its connection with resilience, by investigating the underlying meaning of Chinese political ideas as represented in the Belt and Road discourse and how this connects to the Eastern Neighbourhood. While delivering insights on new perspectives in the 'political threat versus desecuritization' discussion, the empirical analysis shows that Chinese actors have built up a threat narrative idea which is hidden behind words such as 'trust, harmony, pluralism, community of a shared destiny', something that challenges the argument of China as a desecuritization actor and urges for a more systematic reflection of its implication for EU resilience approach towards the EaP region.

Finally, the contribution of Natorski, while highlighting the dissonance between 'obvious inspiration of resilience conceptualization in complexity thinking' and the lacuna in the current state of the art on EU resilience approach, offers an original analysis of the EU engagement in Ukraine between 2014 and 2021, corresponding to an important phase in terms of policy deliberations on the renewed ENP and EU Global Strategy. Elaborating upon the distinction between resilience-as-quality of a complex system and resilience-as-thinking about a complex system, Natorski focuses on non-linearity as well as localisation and self-governance that inform the analysis of EU interventions in the framework of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. The contribution identifies the existence of complexity features in the emerging system of EU interventions, but argues that the EU response in Ukraine follows the linear and top-down logic, and that the emergence of resilience-as-quality in the peacebuilding landscape does not originate from, nor is translated into, resilience-as-thinking about the interventions.

Kaunert and de Deus Pereira draw on securitisation theory to (i) analyse and contextualise the EU's understanding and definition of 'security' and 'resilience' and the relationship between both terms and to (2) examine the processes through which the EU came to designate certain paths or issues as conditions for, or threats against, security and resilience. Indeed, the process of securitization of resilience needs to be explored though the concepts of ontological security, indeed, it even should be, as the securitization framework on its own does not provide a clear answer to the 'why' of the securitization, nor does it analyse the dynamics of securitization to any significant extent. Securitisation theory has become a reference point in academic theorising on security since it was first developed by the so-called 'Copenhagen School' (Leonard and Kaunert 2019). According to the Copenhagen School, 'securitisation studies aims to gain a precise understanding of who securitises, what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e. what explains when securitisation is successful)'. The Copenhagen school argues that securitisation involves the construction of a discourse which presents a particular issue as a 'security' threat, i.e. it poses an immediate and existential danger to the referent group(s) in question, which must be dealt with as a matter of urgency and priority using 'emergency measures'. Identity is the

crucial concept of societal security, which is also sometimes referred to as 'identity security' (Wæver et al. 1993). Scholars working with the theoretical concept of societal security have made the greatest advances into the perceived (in-) security of groups (Bourbeau 2011). Ontological security scholars make explicit reference to societal security – the crucial link to resilience. Without resilience, there is no societal security, no identity security in the long run.

In People, States and Fear, Buzan claimed that '[t]he security of human collectivities is affected by factors in five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental' (Buzan 1991, 19–20). Buzan defined societal security as '[t]he sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom' (Buzan 1991, 19–20). The concept of societal security emerged with greater clarity through its pivotal role in a book later published by Buzan, Wæver, Kelstrup, and Lemaitre, Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe (1993). In this version, 'societal security' came to be defined as '*the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats. More specifically, it is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom*' (Wæver et al. 1993, 23). In this treatment, the status of 'societal security' changed and it became an object of security in its own right, distinct from the state. For the Copenhagen School, there was thus 'a duality of state security and societal security, the former having sovereignty as its ultimate criterion, and the latter being held together by concerns about identity' (Wæver et al. 1993, 25). 'Society' similarly was defined as 'being about identity, about the self conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community' (Wæver et al. 1993, 24). It was also described as a large-scale social unit, which differs from other social groups, mainly because of its high degree of social inertia, its continuity across generations, and its grounding in structures, institutions, practices, norms and values (Wæver et al. 1993, 21).

When analysing how the EU came to designate certain paths or issues as conditions for, or threats against, security and resilience in the EaP countries, our contributions place a special emphasis on the role of political contexts, such as political systems and constitutional orders, the rule of law, and the role played by outside powers, such as Russia and China. One main purpose of this collection of articles is therefore to examine the role played by political contexts in securitization processes. More specifically, we are interested in investigating how political contexts matter, in securitization processes at the regional level. In fact, we place a special focus on the (tensions between) state and societal security/resilience.

Russia's war against Ukraine: a resilience test for the EU

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has largely been viewed as an extraordinary resilience test for the EU. The war has unleashed multiple crises ranging from security and asylum to energy and the economy, in turn raising questions not only on how the EU can ensure the resilience of its eastern partners, but also questions existential to the EU, such as institutional and policy reform, further EU enlargement and the EU's role in a rapidly changing global context of polarisation and fragmentation. In light of these challenges, the contributions to this special issue have only increased in relevance, pointing to pathways and opportunities for the EU to strengthen the resilience of its eastern partners and its own resilience in the future, and inviting policy-makers and scholars to reflect on potential pitfalls, contradictions and limitations of EU resilience-building.

First, the EU and its institutions and member states have tended to use resilience as a buzz-word, and, as shown in Michal Natorski's and in Mihai-Razvan Corman and Tobias Schumacher's contributions, the focus on resilience has often not been reflected in policy practice, or if so, it lacked conceptual grounding and consistency. Resilience has again featured very prominently in the EU's discourses since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with calls for a more geopolitical EU going hand in hand with a greater emphasis on EU strategic autonomy and resilience to protect and strengthen security on the European continent. And beyond doubt, the EU has taken unprecedented measures in response to the war against Ukraine, ranging from far-reaching and heavy sanctions against Moscow, to sending military aid to Ukraine, welcoming Ukrainian refugees to live and work in the EU,

and approving the EU candidate statues of Ukraine and Moldova. In its initial reaction to the invasion, the EU has thus demonstrated an impressive capacity to act and adjust to increase the resilience of its eastern partners and bolster its own resilience, including the strong willingness to drive European integration forward in times of crisis. However, after one year of successful crisis management, the question becomes in how far the EU and its member states can move from short-term crisis response to long-term strategy, including resilience-building in eastern Europe through enlargement and Eastern Partnership policies. Divisions between member states have already started to come to the fore again, such as demonstrated by the recent disagreement over the basic definitions of EU strategic autonomy (e.g. Scazzieri 2022), for example, which pertains directly to the issue of consistency and theoretical grounding of the EU's resilience approach and how it should be implemented in practice. And on a related point, an issue also touched upon in Cristian Nitoiu and Loredana Simionov's contribution, the EU's response to the Russian invasion once again shifted the EU's approach to resilience towards the 'outsourcing' of resilience, placing the responsibility for resilience-building and defending European security on eastern partners such as Ukraine, rather than directly getting involved. While such a move may have its merits given the EU's lack of military capabilities, there should nevertheless still be some critical reflection on such an approach.

Secondly, it remains of critical importance to carefully consider whose resilience the EU promises to foster and at what costs, especially as the EU is revising its economic outlook and strategies to diversify trade and especially its energy dependence. The EU's 'resilience turn' around a decade ago already exposed contradictions between the EU's ambitions as a normative power and the more pragmatist focus on fostering resilience and protect EU interests vis-a-vis increasingly protectionist powers such as China or the US. The contributions by Kristi Raik, Stephanie Weil and by Christian Kaunert and Joana de Deus Pereira draw attention to the normative dilemmas facing the EU, and how it has struggled to embrace geopolitics in its internal and external policies; a process that gained considerable urgency and momentum following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Bosse and Vieira's contribution also highlights the 'dark side' of the EU's resilience discourse, pointing to the detrimental effects of fostering resilience of and through the state and state institutions in the context of authoritarian regimes, making the EU indirectly complicit in maintaining the stability of authoritarian regimes. Such tendencies deserve more attention than ever before, not only in the context of the increasing autocratisation of countries such as Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan. But also considering that the EU, in its quest to diversify trade routes and energy supplies, will increasingly also have to rely on intensifying its relations with autocratic regimes such as Azerbaijan or Qatar. Fostering the resilience of autocratic regimes might deliver quick geopolitical returns, but it stands diametrically opposed to the EU's declared ambition of fostering resilience in the long term through supporting human rights and democratic reforms.

And third, the contributions of the special issue highlight the important link between EU identity and resilience-building in EU foreign policy, placing the focus on a critical reflection on the EU's discourse and to 'what' or 'whom' it aims to develop resilience. The question here goes beyond the EU's definitions of geopolitical, security or environmental 'risks'. As shown in Domenico Valenza's contribution, the EU has, over the past decade, developed a tendency towards geographical othering of Russia, whereby cultural antagonism started to play an increasingly central role in its identity production. Antagonism, however, stands in contrast to the EU's 'cosmopolitan' ambition to define its identity by virtue of its unique or different qualities as an international actor vis-à-vis other international actors, rather than in relation to cultural or civilisational 'others'. This reflection matters. The Russian invasion of Ukraine clearly prompted a consolidation but also further opening of European identity, solidarity and unity with Europeans in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, who had long been defined as outsiders to 'EU-Europe' (Bosse 2022). Yet, the events have also been used by populist groups across Europe to, for example, propagate antagonistic and xenophobic notions of European solidary with 'white' and 'therefore different' refugees from Ukraine.

Even though presenting a variety of different conceptual and empirical reflections on the EU resilience approach towards the EaP countries, and the relationship between 'security' and 'resilience' in EU discourses and policy practices, the present special issue has only opened up

the debate on this issue (Korosteleva and Petrova 2021; Petrova and Delcour 2020; Van Gils 2019), which remains largely under-explored especially in the context of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine. Further academic attention is therefore urgently necessary to analyse the EU changing resilience approach and its various ramifications, which are at the core of the changing European order.

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