# Resilience as a New Turn in EU governance: examining the implications

Elena Korosteleva, Professor of International Politics and Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics, PI GCRF RCUK (ES PO/10849/1) *School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent*

## Abstract

Rising from the margins of EU aid documents resilience became a *centrepiece* of the 2016 EU Global Security Strategy, especially in relation to the neighbourhood. While the new thinking may signify another paradigmatic shift in EU *modus operandi*, the question is whether this is *critical* enough to render *EU governance a new turn* to make it sustainable? This article argues that in order for resilience-framed governance to gain more traction, the EU needs not just engage with ‘the local’ on the outside. More crucially, it needs to accept ‘*the othe*r’ for *what it is*, and instead of shifting responsibility, give the latter an opportunity to grow its own critical infrastructure capacities to become effectively self-governable. Is the EU ready for this – not just rhetorically or even methodologically when creating new instruments and subjectivities? The bigger question is whether the EU is prepared to *critically turn the corner towards post-neoliberal governance?*

Grant references: H2020 UPTAKE 691818; GCRF RCUK ES PO/10849/1

Key words: European Union, resilience-thinking, governance, governmentality, *othering,* eastern neighbourhood

## From governance through conditionality to governance through resilience?

In June 2016 Federica Mogherini, the Higher Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Vice-President of the European Commission, announced a new vision for the EU’s Global Security Strategy, in which **resilienc**e is cited no less than 41 times especially in application to the neighbourhood.

Although ‘resilience’ as a concept is not new; in practical terms, it still constitutes a relatively unchartered terrain for the EU, especially when it comes to ‘self-governance’. The overarching problem is that very few studies to date, when involving ‘resilience’, have a full comprehension of what state or societal resilience is all about, and how we can and should work with it, including this author. If resilience is truly about empowering ‘the local’, and growing their existing and yet *critical* capacities (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2011), to enable change rather than strengthen a perceived undesirability, then it would require a far more radical de-centring conceptually, from those who govern to those who are subjectivised by it, and not by way of creating compliant subjects (Joseph 2016), but rather by way of empowering ‘peoplehoods’ (Sadiki 2016). Furthermore, ontological learning about resilience (Chandler 2015) suggests that it is not at all about devising new methodologies of careful and more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation. Neither is it entirely about responsibilising and devolving the reigns of governance to new subjectivities, within and outside the EU, who are still anchored to the EU scripts of management arrangements and assessment (Kurki 2011). It may not even be about ‘*governing* *through*’ instead of ‘*governing over*’ the predisposed and enabled new circuits of power, as Chandler argues (2014), for it would still be heavily reliant on the initial, though now distant centres of power to shape and direction the outside. This is where the true puzzle of resilience comes into stark contrast to our own external governance thinking, which even at a distance, in the form of governmentality, still involves EU norms-sharing and transference.

Taking resilience seriously, as this paper contends, implicates a number of rational possibilities. *Conceptually*, in line with Chandler’s argument (2015), it requires a radical ontological rather than epistemological rethink, especially of the meanings of ‘the everyday’, and ‘the local’. It should involve reconceptualization of ‘self-governance’ – perhaps not as a ‘conduct of conducts’ (Foucault 2007), but rather, going beyond governmentality, to conceive of a gently guided self-organisation predicated on a deep sense of ‘the peoplehood’ (Sadiki 2017), and ‘agachiro’ – the meaning of good life (Rutazibwa 2014), which are distinctly different in their thinking, and critical capabilities.

*Methodologically*, it does not simply imply a shift of ‘responsibility on to individuals and communities’ (Joseph 2016:389), as newly created subjectivities. Rather, it should be about accepting ‘the other’ for what they are – often perceived as rogue, authoritarian, defiant, and maverick – and work with them, seeking to turn their existing capacities into critical infrastructures to necessitate change, from within, and make it sustainable. This, however, is different from identifying solutions from a list of prescriptive measures, or only investing in ‘like-minded countries’ and ‘cooperative regional orders’ as the EUGSS suggests (2016: 8;10). True resilience-thinking would go beyond a liberal internationalist approach of ready-made solutions, and even beyond a new-liberal working with responsibilised subjects, from a distance (Joseph 2013; 2016). As Schmidt (2015) contends, it really needs a leap to imagine a post-neo-liberal world, of coordinated self-governance, premised on ‘the home-grown local’ and ‘the everyday’. Is the EU ready to undertake this leap into the unknown and less governable tomorrow, even if its intuitive discourse points in that direction?

This paper sets to explore these and many other questions, aiming to establish whether resilience is likely to render a *new critical turn* in EU governance thinking, both conceptually and methodologically. First, it will examine the meanings of resilience in EU discourse, and what new it seeks to contribute to the EU *strategic* governance, especially in the context of the previous paradigmatic shifts, and now, a highly unsettled and volatile neighbourhood. In the second section, resilience will be explored as to how it has been theorised in IR to date and what is there still ‘unsaid’ about the term, to make one’s governance more effective and sustainable. Finally, the paper will seek to explore the role and the place for ‘the local’ and ‘the peoplehood’ in the context of positive *othering* as part of a new resilience-thinking, to see if EU governance could critically rather than just paradigmatically turn the corner, towards more sustainable and responsive *modus operandi.*