

# **RESILIENCE AND THE EU'S EXTERNAL ACTION INSTRUMENTS**

## *Towards Multiple, Sustained, and Indirect Actions*

Pol Bargués, David Cadier, Lidia Gibadło, Elżbieta Kaca, Pol Morillas,  
Luigi Narbone, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Marcin Terlikowski



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Bilkent University  
Üniversiteler Mh.,  
06800 Çankaya/Ankara

Phone: +90 312 290 2019

[saime@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:saime@bilkent.edu.tr)

[senemy@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:senemy@bilkent.edu.tr)

[yan.overfield@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:yan.overfield@bilkent.edu.tr)

### EU-LISTCO PROJECT:

Eric Stollenwerk  
Freie Universität Berlin  
EU-LISTCO  
Ihnestr. 22  
14195 Berlin

Phone: + 49 30 83858501

[eric.stollenwerk@fu-berlin.de](mailto:eric.stollenwerk@fu-berlin.de)

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## AUTHORS

**POL BARGUÉS** is a research fellow at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB).

e-mail: [pbargues@cidob.org](mailto:pbargues@cidob.org)

**DAVID CADIER** is a researcher at the Centre for International Studies (CERI) at Sciences Po, Paris. He's also an Adjunct Lecturer at Sciences Po's School of International Affairs (PSIA) and a Research Associate at the London School of Economics (LSE).

email: [david.cadier@sciencespo.fr](mailto:david.cadier@sciencespo.fr)

**LIDIA GIBADŁO** is a senior researcher in the Weimar Triangle Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM).

e-mail: [gibadlo@pism.pl](mailto:gibadlo@pism.pl)

**ELŻBIETA KACA** is a senior research fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM).

e-mail: [kaca@pism.pl](mailto:kaca@pism.pl)

**POL MORILLAS** is general director and senior research fellow of the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB).

e-mail: [pmorillas@cidob.org](mailto:pmorillas@cidob.org)

**LUIGI NARBONE** is director of the Middle East Directions Programme at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies as well as coordinator of the Peace and Security cluster at the School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute (EUI).

email: [Luigi.Narbone@eui.eu](mailto:Luigi.Narbone@eui.eu)

**NICOLETTA PIROZZI** is Head of Programme on EU, politics and institutions and Institutional Relations Manager at Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome. She is also Associate of the European Governance and Politics Programme at the European University Institute (EUI), Florence.

email: [n.pirozzi@iai.it](mailto:n.pirozzi@iai.it)

**MARCIN TERLIKOWSKI** is coordinator of the International Security programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM).

email: [terlikowski@pism.pl](mailto:terlikowski@pism.pl)



## ABSTRACT

The EU is increasingly concerned with the diffusion and uncertainty of risks and threats in the neighbourhood, and resilience appears as a useful and pragmatic policy framework to address risks in areas of limited statehood and contested orders. The working paper draws from extensive report analysis and semi-structured interviews with EU officials to examine the diplomatic, economic, and military instruments that the EU mobilizes in a resilience-informed external action. The main contribution is that these instruments are increasingly facilitating resilience through multiple, long-term, and indirect actions. First, instruments have expanded and diversified to undertake as many different actions as possible. Second, they are sustained over long periods of time, even when there are no risks or threats or after peace and stability have been reached. Third, since resilience emerges “from below”, building on societies’ own resources and tools, EU instruments facilitate resilience indirectly, through constant engagement in the neighbourhood.

## INTRODUCTION: INTEGRATED RESPONSES AND RESILIENCE TO COMPLEX CONFLICTS?<sup>1</sup>

The civil wars in Libya and Syria, the protracted violence in Mali, the environmental and humanitarian crises in the Sahel, the conflict in Ukraine’s Eastern region, as well as various diffused threats such as transnational terrorism, disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, organized crime, and irregular migration flows; all pose serious security challenges to the European Union (EU). As acknowledged by Federica Mogherini, the former High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), the EU’s foreign and security policy needs to be further integrated and use a variety of strategies to adapt and respond to “an ever more connected, contested and complex world” (EEAS 2019a: 8). These trends, if anything, “have deepened and have become more intertwined” in recent years (*ibid.*).

One could argue that this view was already present in 2003, when the “European Security Strategy” was published. Threats were perceived as “dynamic”, different to the military or nuclear “massive visible threats of the Cold War”, and the best

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<sup>1</sup> The overall framework of this working paper was designed by Pol Bargués and Pol Morillas, who also led the writing of the first section 1.1; David Cadier was the lead author of section 1.2, Luigi Narbone of section 2.1, Lidia Gabadlo and Elżbieta Kaca of section 2.2, Nicoletta Pirozzi of section 3.1 and Marcin Terlikowski of section 3.2.

response was one which required “a mixture of instruments” (Council of the EU 2003: 9). However, at the same time, in the early 2000s, the EU understood that threats were usually located in “failed states” and the perception was that the “EU is particularly well equipped to respond to such multi-faceted situations” (ibid.).

Today, the confidence in the EU’s capacities to address conflicts has dimmed, in part, due to both the growing diffusion and complexity of conflicts. That is, on the one hand, risks and threats are fundamentally diffused, non-territorialised, internal and external to the EU, and bring about global consequences (Tocci 2020). Rather than considering “weak” or “failed” states the locus of today’s problems, it is in areas of limited statehood (ALS), in which government authorities and institutions are too weak to set and enforce rules, and contested orders (CO), in which state and non-state actors challenge norms, principles, and rules, where we can best appreciate the porosity and liminality of risks and threats (Börzel and Risse 2018). As a high official working for the European External Action Service (EEAS) put it in an interview, “everything is connected and hybrid threats have global dimensions”, and she listed, all in one breath, the problems of climate change, conflict areas, mafias, migration flows, and radicalized European citizens who send money abroad (Interview #1).<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, the coronavirus pandemic and the socio-economic and humanitarian crises it is generating have become the latest example of the global diffusion and interconnectedness of contemporary risks.

On the other hand, the root causes of risks and threats are difficult to comprehend and correct, and policymakers are forced to focus primarily on the governance of “effects” (Chandler 2015; Chandler 2020). The same EEAS official explained that most actions that destabilize the EU and its neighbourhood can rarely be attributed to specific actors: “There are many symptoms”, from piracy to cyber-attacks to disinformation campaigns, “but the origin is uncertain”: “there is no smoking gun” (Interview #1). The purpose of the actors behind the threats is to erode, irritate, discredit, and destabilize the EU and its member states: “they want the EU to die by a thousand cuts” (Ibid).

In response to such interconnected and complex threats, the EU’s Global Strategy (EUGS) published in 2016 put forward two policy frameworks that are key to articulating its new external action. The first is the “integrated approach to conflict and crisis”, the conclusions of which were released on January 22, 2018. This framework expands the “co-ordination” mechanisms introduced in 2003 and the

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for the list of interviews conducted by the authors. All interviews are anonymized and attributed in the feminine gender, to preserve confidentiality.



“comprehensive approach”, designed in 2013, which promises a more consistent, holistic, and uninterrupted response to conflict and crisis (EEAS 2016b: 28–29). This integrated approach encompasses the local, national, regional, and global levels (multi-level) and is applied throughout all phases of the conflict—prevention, crisis response, stabilization, and longer-term peacebuilding (multi-phased)—in order to contribute to sustainable peace (Council of the EU 2018b: 2). Also, this approach seeks to address the multiple dimensions of conflicts “spanning the diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields” and, in a “multi-lateral” manner, cooperate with “international and regional partners as well as civil society organizations” (Council of the EU 2018b: 2).

Second, the idea of resilience is paramount to the EUGS, understood as “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises” (EEAS 2016b: 23). The EU seeks to foster “state” and “societal” resilience “in and around Europe”, in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods and beyond, acknowledging the diffusion of threats that constantly cross in and out of borders. Although the concept of resilience already figured in the 2012 Commission Communication, in subsequent Council Conclusions, and in the Resilience Action Plan 2013-2020, it has developed more consistently after the EUGS in the 2017 “Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience” (EC and HR/VP 2017). Here, the EU develops a “multi-faceted approach to resilience”, which builds on diverse instruments and local and international partnerships to intervene in an integrated and sustained way and aims to foster long-term societal and state resilience to diverse risks and threats (EEAS 2017). The trend is to emphasize societal rather than state resilience, the three sources to build resilience being: social trust, the legitimacy of governance actors, and the design of governance institutions (Börzel and Risse 2018).

In short, both EU policy frameworks refer to the need to intervene in an integrated manner at home and abroad, in the east and south, through diverse and prolonged actions and partnerships. Replacing previous approaches that targeted states outside the EU and attempted statebuilding operations, these approaches deal with the increasing diffusion and complexity of contemporary conflicts. As Mogherini stated in the foreword of the report assessing the first three years of the EUGS: “The connection between internal and external events has become impossible to deny, and our policies have evolved accordingly” (EEAS 2019a: 5). Yet what policies does the EU have and how have they “evolved accordingly”, so as to foster resilience in the neighbourhood and address today’s risks and threats emanating from ALS and CO?

This working paper seeks to answer this question. We draw from extensive report analysis and semi-structured interviews with officials from the EU and member



states to examine the Union's diplomatic, economic, and military instruments and their evolution over the past years. The main argument is that instruments are increasingly facilitating resilience through multiple, long-term, and indirect actions. That is, first, instruments have expanded and diversified to undertake as many different actions as possible. Second, they are sustained over long periods of time, even when there are no risks or threats or after peace and stability have been reached. Third, since resilience emerges “from below”, building on societies' own resources and tools, EU instruments facilitate resilience indirectly, rather than directly building (let alone exporting or enforcing) it.

These three ways of governing have permeated the EU's instruments and are giving a new direction to the EU's external action in ALS and CO. Of course, these different instruments are evolving at different speeds and have their own specificities and history, sometimes constrained (or enhanced) by member states' preferences. Thus, the purpose of this working paper is to examine these instruments in detail, understanding their particular evolution, and to show how they are collectively advancing toward a resilience-driven external action that is concerned with the worlds' diffusion and uncertainty (Börzel and Risse 2018). The question of whether these advances are successful is key but will be pursued elsewhere, as it falls beyond the scope of the paper.

In order to address this argument, the paper is divided into three parts, each exploring two policy fields. The first examines diplomatic instruments and focuses firstly on the evolution of diplomatic actions and secondly on how these have gradually come to rely on sanctions. The second focuses on trade and aid as two vital economic instruments to foster resilience in ALS and CO. Finally, the third section explores civilian and military operations and missions.

## **1. DIPLOMATIC INSTRUMENTS: SUSTAINED, PLURAL, AND EXPANDING**

Diplomatic instruments are key to enhancing the capacities of the EU to engage in ALS/CO before tipping points are passed. Tipping points define an exact point in time when risks in ALS and CO turn into threats and lead to governance breakdowns and violent conflict (Börzel and Risse 2018). Both building societal resilience and the integrated approach to risks and threats emphasize the need for sustained engagements, where early warning and action are central. Furthermore, “preventing conflicts is more efficient and effective than engaging with crises after they break out” because “once a conflict does erupt, it typically becomes ever more intractable over time” (EEAS 2016b: 29). In this section, we argue that the EU is increasingly mobilizing multi-track diplomatic initiatives that deepen partnerships with other





international organizations and civil society stakeholders. These allow the EU to intervene over prolonged periods of time, perform diverse responsibilities, and facilitate resilience indirectly, thus preventing risks in ALS and CO from turning into threats. The section is divided into two main parts. The first explores how diplomatic actions are expanding and evolving. The second part analyses how coercive measures like sanctions are increasingly prominent to support diplomatic initiatives and respond to order contestations.

## 1.1 Multi-Track, Long-Term, and Creative Diplomatic Initiatives

Far from considering diplomacy an activity dominated by elite or state-level negotiations, occurring behind closed doors and oriented towards reaching agreements (Papagianni 2014), the EU has a much broader understanding. Some have called this “multi-track diplomacy”, to emphasize that negotiation, mediation, and dialogue to facilitate conflict prevention and peacebuilding are pursued in coordination with many actors at different levels (from high-level governmental leaders to grassroots organizations) within partner countries (Göldner-Ebenthal and Dudouet 2017). This approach to diplomacy draws on Jean Paul Lederach’s understanding of peace support activities as long-term and multi-track processes of societal transformation from below (Paffenholz 2014). We argue in this section that the EU has used diplomatic initiatives to (1) sustain action across prolonged periods of time, (2) develop diverse partnerships (with international and local actors), and (3) multiply its presence and influence abroad.

While the focus on conflict prevention and the need to use different instruments for mediation had already been noted in the Gothenburg programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts in 2001, the European Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention in 2001, and the 2003 European Security Strategy, it gained a new dimension with the publication in November 2009 of the “Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities” by the Council of the EU. Emphasis was put on the need to intervene “at all stages of the inter- and intra-state conflicts”, pursue “a host of mediation- and dialogue-related tasks”, build “synergies” between different instruments, policy domains, and bodies of the EU and Member States, as well as consolidate partnerships with other international, regional, and local actors, and engage with “grassroots initiatives” (Council of the EU 2009: 3–11). In other words, it sought to intervene and mediate before, during, and after the outbreak of violent conflict and ensure coherence and coordination between diverse actors and between top-down and bottom-up methods. Mediation thus became a key tool to prevent risks and threats in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, which is less expensive than civilian or military missions (Council of the EU 2009: 6).



Key to the shift towards a more proactive and prolonged engagement which is at the same time inclusive of the grassroots is the gradual emphasis on dialogue and facilitation over mediation. “Mediation” is seen as an interfering process whereby the mediator actively participates both in the process and substance of formal negotiations, usually between high-level politicians or elites representing the parties of a conflict, making recommendations and proposals (Council of the EU 2009: 3). “Facilitation”, on the other hand, is “less directive, and less involved in shaping the substance of the negotiations”, and the emphasis is on enabling or supporting, rather than making suggestions (Ibid). Finally, “dialogue” is the least intrusive of the three strategies, seeking to foster an amicable, empathetic environment; it is long-term, more subtle and indirect, and is often understood as a process of confidence-building.

Although back in 2009 the EU argued that mediation, facilitation and dialogue were equally useful in dealing with risks and threats and had to be combined, over the past decade the tendency has been to prioritize dialogue as a more flexible tool for preventing and de-escalating conflict, which renders burdensome and heavy-footprint practices like mediation secondary options. As the WOSCAP (Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding) research project explains, “the EU global polity agenda is slowly moving closer to a ‘whole of society approach’ to peacebuilding that would not only encompass internal and international coordination but also multi-level interaction within the recipient countries” (Göldner-Ebenthal and Dudouet 2017: 9).

Over the last decade, several diplomatic instruments have been put to use and multi-track diplomatic initiatives undertaken using innovative formats with the aim of bringing different actors together. Notorious are the annual Brussels Conferences on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” organised since 2017 to support the UN Geneva talks on Syria. The conferences seek to strengthen the political, humanitarian, and financial commitment of international donors to the people in Syria and neighbouring countries, as well as promoting dialogue between international, regional, and local organizations, officials, and diverse civil society actors, such as Syrian women participants (Council of the EU 2019a). Similarly, the project “Iraq and its Neighbours: Enhancing Dialogue and Regional Integration in West Asia” seeks to open up new channels of participation for the most marginalized groups, like minorities, women, or youth.

While the tendency is to foster comprehensive dialogues that involve the grassroots level, aiming to be inclusive and consolidate peace and stability from below, the EU also mediates formal, high-level negotiations between governmental officials. For instance, since 2011, the HR/VP has led the talks between the Prime Ministers of



Serbia and Kosovo (from Catherine Ashton to Josep Borrell). Interestingly, the negotiations are referred to as “dialogue”, and such dialogue is focused on addressing technical issues between the countries, as much as building confidence and normalizing relations between the two (Gashi and Novakovic 2017). Also, since 2015, the annual EU-G5 Sahel meetings have taken place between the EU (chaired by the HR/VR and the Commissioner for international Cooperation and Development) and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad, to strengthen their partnership, dialogue, and cooperation in fields of mutual interest such as development, humanitarian situations, governance in ALS, security, and the fight against terrorism, among others.

Even if it is not really involved in the implementation process, the EU also supports initiatives that seek to make advances in the fields of conflict prevention, mediation, and crisis response. The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), which replaced the Instrument for Stability in 2014, has funded over four hundred projects and actions against risks and threats (mostly in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia) that have been implemented by partners such as UN funding bodies and programmes, EU member states’ bodies and agencies, NGOs, and private companies (Bergmann 2018).

The EU presents itself as “an agenda-shaper, a connector, coordinator and facilitator within a networked web of players”, whose underlying purpose is to “develop more creative approaches to diplomacy” (EEAS 2016b: 31, 43). Energy, economic, and cultural diplomacy are singled out as fields where actions can be diversified so that risks of violent conflict and governance breakdown are minimized. Published a couple of weeks before the EUGS, the EU put forward a strategy paper for cultural diplomacy as a key foreign policy instrument to foster international cultural relations (European Commission 2016).

Next to the sponsoring of multiple, diversified, and creative projects, the EU’s ubiquitous presence abroad is considered key to enhancing resilience to risks and threats. Statements and declarations are some of the traditional tools used by the EU to enhance its diplomatic capacities and react to international developments. While the former are issued by the HR/VP on his or her behalf, the latter are issued more formally and consensually on behalf of all member states of the EU. Since the Lisbon Treaty (2009), statements have been used more frequently than declarations, enabling a swifter, bolder, and more independent reaction to events and crises from the EU without previous institutional consultation (Helwig et al. 2013: 21–22). The trend initiated by Ashton was consolidated by Mogherini, who multiplied her appearances, speeches, and statements with the intention of further increasing the visibility of the EU (Interview #2). She travelled on numerous occasions to Africa,



Asia, and Latin America, “not only to communicate the added-value of the EU’s action, but also to open new channels for European and non-European citizens to engage with EU policy-making”, as singled out in the report assessing the first year of implementation of the global strategy (EEAS 2017). Relatedly, during Mogherini’s term, “public diplomacy” and “strategic communication” were vital to bolster resilience against hybrid threats in the style of disinformation campaigns that may cause public harm inside and outside the EU (EEAS 2019a: 26).

The EU also has 144 Delegations that represent the institution in its relationship with the authorities and population in any of the host countries. These acquired a broader role and more political responsibilities after the Lisbon Treaty, when they ceased to only represent the EC. Also, the eight EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) have the task of engaging in preventive diplomacy and mediation and consolidating peace, stability, and the rule of law in specific regions and countries—including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Asia, Georgia, the Horn of Africa, Kosovo, Sahel, South Caucasus, and the Middle East—and enforcing the area of Human Rights. Both the delegations and the EUSR increase the visibility of the EU, aiming to ensure a global presence that helps to “develop a political culture of acting sooner in response to the risk of violent conflict” (EEAS 2016b: 30).

### **1.1.1 Limitations of EU Diplomacy: Too Slow, Narrow, and Incoherent?**

The diplomatic strength of the EU in fostering resilience to conflicts and preventing risks from turning into threats in ALS and CO is increasingly perceived favourably in the literature (Göldner-Ebenthal and Dudouet 2017: 9). Indeed, one of the greatest successes of Mogherini’s term was the sealing of the Iran nuclear deal in mid-2015 (Cronberg 2017). The generally positive mood regarding the EU’s diplomatic instruments, however, does not mean that scholars have not noted limitations. Some authors have criticized the EU’s pre-emptive instruments as too slow and reactive, failing to avoid the violent escalation of risks and threats. For example, the EU failed to prevent the Ukraine-Russia conflict and has seen how France and Germany took the initiative and the leadership of the conflict resolution process, while the EU itself merely assumed a role of financial support and issuing a series of sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian persons and companies (Litra et al. 2017). The notion behind these critical assessments is that often it is not a matter of lack of will or of incapacity, but that diplomacy did not work because it was too slow and arrived a bit too late.

Another important limitation highlighted in the literature is that the EU’s gradual commitment to engaging with bottom-up initiatives and extending dialogue to the grassroots is often not achieved in practice (Ejdus and Juncos 2018). Although there

are certainly some successful dialogues and programmes that are meant to be inclusive of large sectors of the population, including the most marginalized, as seen above, several scholars detect a foreign policy dominated by security concerns (Ejdus 2017; Ejdus 2018; Rayroux and Wilén 2014). They consider that the shift to the local is merely a rhetorical move that fits with the EU's self-presentation as a normative power. In reality, the EU's practices are still selective and exclusionary and are not yet multi-track, favouring elite-level negotiations and agreements, neglecting certain groups and self-determination processes, and often generating local resistance (Juncos 2018).

A third limitation, arguably the most decisive one, is that the interests of member states can diverge and sometimes thwart the coherence of the EU's diplomatic activities abroad. Most member states are either ambivalent about handing over responsibility to the EU or are slow to agree on a common response, and so national diplomatic initiatives run in parallel to the common foreign policy (Lehne 2012). For example, French President Emmanuel Macron, in his famous speech in the Sorbonne University in Paris, in September 2017, appeared steadfast in his commitment to constructing “a sovereign, united and democratic Europe”, endowed with more powers (Macron 2017). Besides proposing economic and fiscal reforms, like establishing a fiscal union and a European Monetary Fund, regarding European defence, he urged fostering an “European Intervention Initiative”, a military project meant to build “a common strategic culture”, and thus “establish a common intervention force, a common defence budget and a common doctrine for action”; he also advocated “a European civil protection force” to respond to disasters (Ibid).

Yet, at the same time, Macron did not seem willing to strengthen European diplomacy. Some commentators have claimed that he boasted about France's “international role” and used the EU mainly “as a forum to promote national initiatives” (Lehne 2017; see also, Zaretsky 2019). A dominant view is that Macron is willing to impose the French perspective on the way the EU addresses risks in the South and East. For instance, his “European Intervention Initiative” has been launched outside EU structures. It includes ten states, for example the United Kingdom and Denmark, while keeping others aside and eclipsing EU-based structures of military cooperation like PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) (Schuette 2018).

Disagreements were also seen in the meeting between Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in January 2019 in Aachen, Germany. Although both representatives declared that they were devoted to working together more closely on foreign policy, economic integration, and border cooperation, France dismissed Germany's request to hand its Security Council seat over to the EU (Chazan 2019).



More than France, Germany has historically put a premium on EU integration, including a more coherent and autonomous foreign policy (although there are exceptions, such as Merkel's negotiations with Turkey over refugee quotas). Merkel has emphasized the need for a stronger European diplomacy in order to respond to China and Russia with one single voice (King 2017). However, some analysts have noted how Berlin has utilized EU structures to exercise leadership and amplify its influence abroad, making Germany a principal driver in international diplomacy (Helwig 2019).

The 2018 Italian government (formed by League and the Five Star Movement, among others) disrupted the coherence of the EU's external projection. Drawing on a pro-sovereignist rhetoric and hyper-leadership style, former Deputy Prime Minister and former Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, closed Italian harbours to NGO ships carrying migrants to protest to EU migration policies that, he claimed, harm countries most exposed to asylum-seekers such as Spain, Italy, and Greece (De Maio 2019). After the European Parliamentary Elections of May 2019, he joined forces with other populist and far-right parties to create the "Identity and Democracy" (ID) group in the Parliament to pursue anti-integrationist reforms and push their anti-immigration agenda. As some analysts have noted, the Five Star-League government has tended, like other populist governments, to over-prioritize domestic politics and instrumentalize EU debates for winning domestic support, resorting in the process to "undiplomatic diplomacy" (Cadier 2019).

In sum, as the first secretary-general of the EEAS, Pierre Vimont, argued, what leads to conflict is the fact that all member states wish to favour a more integrated EU where their particular interests can be protected: "They are interested in a European foreign policy but at the same time they want to retain national powers as much as possible" (Barigazzi 2017). This zero-sum framing—where more to the EU is seen as less to the national capitals—hampers the EU's diplomatic instruments.

To solve these limitations—the too slow, too narrow, or too incoherent—the EU rarely understands foreign policy solely as a diplomatic endeavour. When diplomatic tools fall short of providing solutions or preventing or mediating conflicts and the EU is seen to lack credibility, other instruments surface. An important instrument in foreign policy that deserves particular attention is the application of sanctions—or "restrictive measures" in EU official language—which can include asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, or sectorial trade and investment restrictions. As set out in the EUGS, when combined with diplomacy, sanctions are "key tools to bring about peaceful change": they can "play a pivotal role in deterrence, conflict prevention and resolution" (EEAS 2016b: 32). In practice, however, due to flaws in design and implementation, but also more profoundly due to the very nature of this





policy instrument, this potential has not been always fully realized.

In the second part of the first section, we trace the evolution of the sanctions policy, as it has been formulated and applied by the EU and its member states, and ask whether it has been fit for purpose when it comes to meeting EU foreign policy goals.

## 1.2. The Evolution of the EU Sanctions Policy

As a collective diplomatic actor, the EU has awakened to the use of sanctions rather late. In the decade of the creation of the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and the one following (i.e., the 1990s and 2000s), EU sanctions regimes were limited in both frequency and reach. In addition, the adoption of EU sanctions against a country or regime neither hindered other forms of assistance from the EU, nor necessarily impinged on trade relations. For example, while sanctioned by the EU, Myanmar received financial support from Brussels to develop its health sector; the level of development aid dispensed to Zimbabwe increased; and Belarus and the EU cooperated in the energy sector (Portela 2011).

Since the early 2010s, however, EU restrictive measures became both more numerous and more comprehensive (de Vries et al. 2014: 1–2). Between 2010 and 2011, the number of sanctions-related decisions taken in the CFSP framework more than tripled (Lehne 2012). These decisions concerned, for the most part, newly adopted restrictive measures against Libya, Iran, Ivory Coast, and Syria. With the latter three countries in particular, the EU adopted much more far-reaching measures, demonstrating a willingness both to impose greater harm on the target country and to accept greater costs for itself. For instance, while for previous regimes the EU had, by and large, followed UN recommendations in terms of types and range of sanctions, in the case of Iran it went well beyond the realm defined by UN Security Council resolutions (European Council 2012b). These sanctions notably included an oil embargo and heavy financial restrictions which directly affected European companies (Giumelli and Ivan 2013: 13). Similarly, the restrictive measures adopted after the electoral crisis in Ivory Coast included a ban on cocoa imports and a prohibition on European companies conducting trade through Ivorian ports (Reuters 2011).

In the face of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country and the helplessness of European states, the sanctions against the Syrian regime followed an escalatory pattern and notably included an embargo on Syrian oil and gas (European Council 2012a). The restrictive measures adopted against Russia as of 2014 can be seen as a culmination of the tendency to rely more heavily on sanctions as an instrument of coercive diplomacy. As of today, over forty EU sanctions programs are



in place, targeting 34 countries as well as groups engaged in terrorist activities or cyber-attacks (Council of the EU 2017). This makes the EU the second biggest user of sanctions after the US (Russell 2018: 2).

Several factors account for this evolution. The first has to do with the nature of economic sanctions themselves: since the mid-1990s, notably in reaction to the humanitarian catastrophe provoked by the sanctions against Iraq, the UN and other international organizations, including the EU, have gradually resorted to targeted (or “smart”) sanctions. These measures purport to apply pressure on the individuals or groups responsible for the actions sanctioned, rather than the population as a whole (Tostensen and Bull 2002). They are relatively easy to put in place, but tend to be self-perpetuating and often come with an escalatory dynamic: when the initial, limited measures do not bring about the desired effects, the sending state is forced to implement additional sanctions to demonstrate its commitment to changing the situation.

Second, the financial crisis of the end of the 2000s placed significant constraints on EU resources and eroded its self-confidence, and there followed an increase in the use of sanctions. Indeed, compared to political and military instruments deployed in civilian or military crisis management missions, “sanctions are not major drains on budgets and not very demanding in terms of manpower or political energy” (Lehne 2012). Third, the growing reliance of the EU and its member states on more comprehensive sanctions is also a result of international dynamics. The heavy sanctions regime put in place against Iran, which marked a turn in EU sanctions policy, was largely adopted at the instigation of the US: Washington set the diplomatic process in motion and pressured those EU member states that were reluctant to sign up to these measures (Portela 2016: 39). Fourth and more generally, the new resolve and magnitude in EU sanctions policy is also a reflection of its more assertive self-understanding as an international actor. Indeed, the advent of smart sanctions and the European and international conjuncture contributed to overcoming the initial reluctance of some member states to see the EU engage in coercive policies and bilateral pressure rather than to sticking to positive measures in multilateral regimes (Lehne 2012).

### **1.2.1 Are EU Sanctions Fit for Purpose?**

In the EUGS, sanctions are described—along with diplomacy, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and development aid—as an instrument of “crisis response”; one that is meant to be complemented by “long-term work on pre-emptive peace, resilience and human rights” (EEAS 2016b: 51). Indeed, sanctions bear potential in fostering resilience *indirectly*, by prompting certain policy changes that may





facilitate societal change (Chandler 2020; Tocci 2020). That is, restrictive measures sanctioning human rights violations can be seen as pushing for policy changes towards more inclusive social identities and thereby as contributing to fostering social trust. Similarly, particularly in their signalling function, sanctions might affect the social acceptance of internal and external governance actors and institutions, impacting negatively on the traditional authority of targeted governments and positively on the image of the EU as a defender of human rights. However, the policy goals of sanctions are generally specific and restrictive in nature. Their direct aim is mainly to trigger a change of policy or behaviour, and it is done by sending a signal rather than by directly affecting structural conditions. As such, they can hardly be seen as potentially fostering resilience in themselves but can certainly be conceived of as complementing other instruments—especially in the context of the EU's new emphasis on diversification of instruments and actions—and indirectly facilitating long-term resilience (Bargués-Pedreny 2015b).

A key question is thus: are sanctions able to achieve the concrete and specific policy changes set out in corresponding CFSP Council Decisions? In other words, are sanctions fit for purpose in responding to order contestations or in preventing conflict in ALS? Although sanction regimes surely need to be analysed on a case-by-case basis, scholarly analyses generally find that they have a low success rate, from about 10% to 30% (Rudolf 2007: 7–9). These numbers need to be qualified, however, when adopting the perspective of practitioners and when thinking of sanctions as a complement to resilience fostering endeavours. In imposing sanctions, policy-makers generally pursue objectives beyond those that are officially stated; their target is rarely solely the target state; and the decision to impose sanctions is not only determined by their estimated success but also by the availability of alternative strategies (Drezner 1998). As seen in other diplomatic activities, in resorting to sanctions, European policy-makers aim to influence different levels: first, the target state, often including different groups or stakeholders within it; secondly, the EU member states' own constituencies; and thirdly and more broadly, the international order. Moreover, objectives can be different: from coercing (changing the actions of the target state), as generally explicitly stated in official documents, to constraining (preventing further actions by the target state), and signalling (condemning the actions of the target state even while being unable to change them) (Giumelli 2015). Statistical studies find that the record of sanctions in meeting constraining and signalling objectives has been almost three times higher than in meeting coercing objectives (Hovi et al. 2005).

When it comes to coercing actors in order to change their behaviour, the success of sanctions is contingent on certain contextual conditions, such as the nature of the targeted political regime, the power distribution among elites, and the availability of

alternative trading partners. The chances of success are generally contingent on the following elements in their policy design. First, sanctions must be conceived as part of a comprehensive strategy rather than as a substitute for it: they are most effective when they are combined with other diplomatic instruments and used as a tool in a continuous bargaining process, which implies a certain flexibility in their design in terms of how they can be increased, downgraded, or lifted (Drezner 1998; Rudolf 2007: 15–16). For instance, in the case of Syria, EU member states decided to collectively impose sanctions on the Assad regime but, despite the EU having embraced a “joined up” approach, failed to define a common political strategy that could mobilize some other instruments coherently to further intervene in the conflict. This has explained, in part, why sanctions against Syria seem to have not been successful in constraining or coercing the Assad government. Similarly, as the EU sanctions against Russia are tied to the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements—a peace-plan for Eastern Ukraine that many regard as difficult to implement and whose realization is contingent not only on Russia’s but also Ukraine’s behavior—they cannot be operationalized as a flexible bargaining tool in a comprehensive strategy. The possibility of sanctions being gradually lifted in exchange for a phased implementation of the Minsk Agreements might have carried more sway in terms of pressuring Russia to change its policies, but was precluded from the start and is unlikely to be introduced at this stage as EU member states are fearful that re-opening the sanctions package would break European unity. While not amounting to a strategy, however, what the sanctions did successfully achieve is the signaling the EU’s condemnation of Russia’s violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity (Elgström et al. 2018: 314).

Second, the policy demands made to the target state must be clear and aimed at concrete policy change, and sanctions must be designed so as to be clearly correlated to these changes. If the target state anticipates long-term political conflict and is left with the impression that changing its behaviour would not necessarily lead to the sanctions being lifted—in other words, if it believes it is being sanctioned for what it *is* rather than for what it *does*—it is unlikely to amend its behaviour and policies. Furthermore, there is an important temporal element to the efficient use of sanctions as a policy instrument that requires a long-term timeframe, as it is commonly noted that sanctions are easy to put in place but much harder to lift.

Third and relatedly, the sanctions policy must include planning and monitoring capacities, both to anticipate what the envisaged measures could potentially achieve and to constantly monitor their impact and effectiveness once they have been implemented. EU sanctions policy has long lacked such capacities (de Vries et al. 2014), which “suggests that the political message conveyed by sanctions has been the main motivation rather than the actual effects of the measures” (Portela 2016: 39). In



recent years, however, monitoring and review mechanisms have been developed by EU institutions and their importance is emphasized in the CFSP guideline documents, underlining the requirement to prolong engagements (European Council 2018). Nevertheless, experts point to remaining limitations in terms of pre-assessment evaluations (Giumelli 2013: 40) and of monitoring, both with regards to the impact of sanctions on the political landscape in the target state and to the realization of the EU's policy objectives (Portela 2016: 40).

## **2. ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS: RESILIENCE IN TRADE AND AID POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

Over the past three decades, trade policy has persistently figured among the most important instruments in the EU's relationships with its neighbours, although it has always been poorly integrated in wider EU foreign policy-making. With the increasing difficulties experienced by the multilateral trading system, the main objective of trade policy has progressively become the creation of a network of trade agreements with countries and regions economically important for the EU. The focus of the policy has been less to promote development and more to protect and advance EU interests in global trade.

While EU trade policy objectives are economic in nature, more successful trade policies can contribute to strengthening resilience by increasing economic wellbeing and promoting better governance by enhancing social trust, political legitimacy, and more efficient institutions. For example, by providing economic opportunities, trade policies should assist in addressing some of the underlying socio-economic issues in partner states, such as youth unemployment, which would otherwise feed social unrest and conflict. Thus, although resilience is not systematically indicated as a central objective in trade policy-making, it is fostered indirectly, as a product of continued and enhanced trade relations.

In aid policy frameworks, in contrast, resilience has been incorporated more explicitly since 2012, as a means to shift from short- to long-term actions and assist fragile societies beyond the post-disaster recovery phases (Council of the EU 2013; European Commission 2013b). Today, financial assistance is not only meant to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development, but encompasses a whole range of diverse activities to foster resilience—from democracy support and economic macrostabilization to migration management (EC and HR/VP 2017; EEAS 2016b).

This section analyses how EU economic instruments have evolved to contribute to strengthening the resilience of states and societies. First, we examine the evolution



of EU trade policy, in particular towards the Southern Neighbourhood, and secondly, we focus on aid policies.

## 2.1 EU Trade Policy: Facilitating Resilience in the Neighbourhood

Since the 1990s, promotion of a liberal order, multilateralism, and democratization have made up the core of the EU domestic and foreign policies. In this framework, and building on the successes of EU economic integration, free trade agreements (FTAs) have been considered one of the most effective tools to enhance a rule-based international liberal trading system as well as economic prosperity. Free trade was also a key objective in the relationship with and between neighbouring states, to support market-driven development efforts and with a view to creating a ring of stable, prosperous, and friendly states at the EU borders. The FTAs were meant to provide unhindered access to the large EU internal market, which is economically important for neighbouring countries, as the EU is the major trading partner for the majority of them. FTAs would trigger export-led growth, help EU neighbours to attract the foreign investment essential to facilitate knowledge transfer, create employment, reduce poverty, and build the skills of the local workforce (Anyanwu et al. 2016: 210). In turn, partners would commit to economic and institutional reforms to create a more conducive business environment and improve economic governance. The virtuous processes kick-started by FTAs would thus help modernize the Union's partners' economies and upgrade their socio-economic standards. Over time, benefits deriving from FTAs would help tackle ongoing political and economic problems in these countries, such as crony capitalism, rent-seeking behaviour, and corruption.

In 1995, the launch of the “Barcelona Process” or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed) (European Commission 1995) in the Southern Neighbourhood established the ambitious objective of creating a Mediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010. As a first step, bilateral FTAs were concluded as part of the Association Agreements, which the EU negotiated with each Euromed partner. These FTAs were limited to goods and did not include services, and quotas were established on imports of agricultural products due to resistance among member states and the restrictions dictated by the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

Similarly, in 2004 the EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) “to help the EU support and foster stability, security and prosperity in the countries closest to its borders ... and create a ring of friends” (European Commission and HR/VP 2015a) with whom it could “achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration” (EEAS 2016a: 2). The ENP was based on the 2004 EU enlargement model, which, through the adoption of the



*acquis communautaire* (Community acquis), had promoted a comprehensive reform agenda and helped acceding countries to manage the transition to a market economy. Trade was a crucial component of the ENP's economic offer. Greater economic integration with the EU through trade liberalization and alignment with EU standards and regulations would be among the incentives that partner countries would have in the ENP. This was followed, in 2008, by the founding of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), aimed at strengthening the Barcelona Process and promoting human and sustainable development through concrete projects (UfM 2008).

The ENP was revised in 2011, and then again in 2015, to deal with instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The 2011 Arab Spring increased awareness on the ENP's failings to anticipate the protest movement brought the need to adapt to the new and volatile political situation. The EU would “calibrate its response to the events of the Arab Spring and put a strong focus on the promotion of deep and sustainable democracy, accompanied by support for inclusive economic development” (European Commission and HR/VP 2015c: 5). The EU “proposed the incentive-based approach (‘More for More’) to foster stronger partnerships with those neighbours that made more progress towards political and institutional reform” (European Commission and HR/VP 2015c).

The 2015 review came at a time when the Arab Spring's early hopes of a liberal democratic transformation across the MENA region had waned and the EU's foreign policy was confronted with a much more unstable neighbourhood. The conflicts in Syria and Libya, the return to authoritarianism in some countries, increasing numbers of migrants and refugees arriving to Europe, as well as security risks and threats prompted by Islamic State which impacted both southern neighbours and EU countries; all led the ENP increasingly towards more differentiated and comprehensive approaches. There was also recognition that partner countries have different levels of ambition in relation to the EU (Tocci 2020). Thus, a new diversified response would be more apt to deal with ALS and CO through bilateral Priority Partnerships where the partners and the EU would select areas for joint work within the framework of the ENP.

Moreover, crucial security issues—such as radicalization and terrorism—and some of the root-causes of instability—including inequality, poverty, and poor economic and social growth—would be tackled comprehensively. The idea was to mobilize all the political, diplomatic, security, and economic instruments at the disposal of the EU (Hoekman 2017). In this framework, strengthening the resilience of the EU's partners became a key priority as means to prevent risks turning into threats and ameliorate the socio-economic pressures that neighbouring countries were



experiencing. It is worth stressing, however, that the review of the ENP approach did not greatly modify the economic offer. With the exception of new schemes aimed at mobilising investments in cooperation with International Financial Institutions, like the EU External Investment Plan, the new ENP economic leverage remained substantially similar to that of the previous iteration of the ENP. Trade liberalization, potentially greater access to the EU's market and regulatory framework, and greater participation in EU agencies and programmes remain at the centre of the EU policy palette. Trade, however, needs to be understood as part of a more comprehensive strategy of fostering resilience.

### **2.1.1 From FTAs to Deep and Comprehensive FTAs: Old Wine in a New Bottle?**

The objective of an expanding free trade area in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods lost momentum through the 2010s, as the EU was busy adapting its policies and instruments to the changing political and security environments. From an economic point of view, several shortcomings of the trade liberalization agenda had become apparent. First, in spite of their geographic proximity, while the first-generation of trade liberalization agreements had had some positive impact on trade creation, they had failed to stimulate high growth rates and a large inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the southern economies. Second, due to the prevailing political economy dynamics—generally fostering oligopolistic and rent-seeking business elites—these countries had been reluctant to adopt a reformist agenda and to open-up to foreign competition. The benefits from the liberalization of the Association Agreements had been monopolized by a small number of economic actors, generally large state-owned or politically-connected enterprises that were best placed to take advantage of export opportunities. It became clear that the measures had neither reduced the oligopolistic structure of the economies nor favoured economic decentralization or the development of peripheral regions. Third, with the exception of Algeria, Euromed integration had led to deficits in the partners' trade balance, mostly due to lack of diversification and high dependence on natural resources (Interview #3).

In the past decade, the trade policy offer to the neighbouring countries has crystallized around the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs). DCFTAs are broader than normal FTAs, encompassing the extension of the four freedoms of the EU Single Market to partners—free movement of goods, services, capital, and people; the latter, though, with specific limitations—as well as regulatory approximation to address non-tariff barriers. To make them more appealing to potential partners, and having learned from the shortcomings of





previous trade agreements, DCFTAs would be asymmetrical, in that they would give partner countries the possibility to protect key sectors of their economy from the negative impact of strong EU competition after the conclusion of the agreement. Furthermore, partners' right to temporarily shelter certain products from the effects of liberalization would be recognized and accepted by the EU in the negotiations.

In 2011, the EU started pursuing DCFTAs with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. The latter three agreements, in the Eastern Neighbourhood, are now in the implementation phase. The Commission considers these DCFTAs to be on track, though in need of a more coherent and more coordinated approach for monitoring the implementation of commitments (Interview #3). However, learning from the lessons of the negotiating experience, there is recognition that the EU's approach was too top-down, and partner countries experienced difficulties in following a strategic approach and identifying clear national priorities (Interview #3).

Negotiations with the Southern Neighbourhood have been more difficult. Countries have been hesitant to consolidate agreements and negotiations have been complex, slow and highly politicized. Negotiations are currently at a standstill, and the Commission is reflecting on how to move forward. There is consensus, however, that DCFTAs should not be pursued through one-size-fits-all or top-down approaches, as these might hinder societal resilience. Progress on regulatory alignment, for example, depends on how countries see the future of their economic relationship with the EU and context-sensitive strategies are required. Some countries, like Morocco and Tunisia, are clearly benchmarking against the EU while other states, such as Algeria or Egypt, are less interested in doing so (Interview #4). Furthermore, to derive maximum benefit from closer integration with the EU and negotiate effectively, partner countries must have a vision about the future of their economies and prioritize key sectors accordingly. Yet long-term visions and strategies are not widespread in the MENA region, and negotiating capacity is often limited.

DCFTAs have attracted a wide array of criticism in the Southern Neighbourhood. Some of these remarks are concerned with the negative social and environmental consequences and are similar to the arguments made by European civil society organizations that oppose trade agreements with the US and other major trading partners (CADTM 2019). Some analysts consider that DCFTAs are tools to expand neoliberal agendas that may benefit large local or multinational corporations to the detriment of small and medium-sized enterprises and less modern sectors of the local economy. These sectors are thought to face increasing difficulties adapting to the highly competitive environment that emerges at the conclusion of such an agreement (Lafrance 2019; Samound 2019). In the absence of mechanisms to



compensate the groups most affected by the most damaging effects of trade liberalization, DCFTAs could potentially destabilize the weakest economies in the neighbourhood, exacerbate inequalities, and heighten social and political tensions. There is also scepticism about the developmental impact of FDIs, as so far results have been limited and concentrated in energy, natural resources, and non-tradable goods, such as real estate and construction, rather than in export-oriented manufacturing or high-tech services, thereby limiting integration in global value chains. Finally, the EU trade negotiations have often been accused of not engaging sufficiently with civil society groups and setting bottom-up initiatives that do not critically address policy consequences (CADTM 2019).

### **2.1.2 Trade and Economic Cooperation amidst Order Contestations**

Some countries which are not interested in a DCFTA, such as Egypt, have highlighted some of the limitations of the current DCFTA model and proposed alternatives to the EU. These would be, for instance, initiatives aimed at concluding bilateral investment agreements. Instead, the EU is aware that the most suitable approach to promote stability and resilience is tying economic trade to broader objectives and adopting a common perspective for the region based on common interests and joint priorities. According to an EC official, in the face of strong political fragmentation, diverging priorities, and a lack of regional integration, the EU needs to develop a more holistic approach, involving more policy areas and incentives, rather than focusing on narrow trade-negotiation dynamics (Interview #3).

The Southern Neighbourhood is a top priority for the EU, which increasingly links trade to migration and security concerns and seizes the economic opportunities that this region provides. This is important since the MENA region is witnessing a high level of contestation of the traditional regional order that has, among its pillars, a special political and economic relationship with Europe. Other external powers, including China and Russia, are challenging the EU's role with renewed geo-political and geo-economic activism. The Union appears divided and indecisive over what to do with its neighbourhood, and member states currently prefer national, bilateral projection, often with short-term political and economic objectives, over EU and regional approaches (Morillas 2019b). This fragmented approach hinders the efforts to increase the resilience of neighbouring countries.

Trade policy is also contested within partner countries, and it is often perceived as promoting the interests of foreign powers and local elites, who are seen as corrupt figures monopolizing all economic benefits. Therefore, more attention should be devoted to integrating trade into multi-policy and multi-dimensional strategies. These include joined-up actions in the areas of connectivity, investment, and





technical cooperation, as well as education and training. Institutions, governance and regional integration efforts should also be supported, as they are key to improving the region's resilience.

## 2.2 EU Aid: Diversifying Activities to Foster Resilience

EU aid policies have emphasized resilience since 2012, when the European Commission highlighted the need to strengthen the capacity of partner countries and populations to adapt to disasters and crises (European Commission 2012). Initially, strengthening the resilience of partner countries was deemed key to address poverty reduction and lifesaving, with a special focus on vulnerable populations (Council of the EU 2013; European Commission 2013b). In response to the 2012 food crises in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, the EC wanted to reinforce the link between humanitarian and development aid and to anticipate similar crises by switching from short- to long-term actions. At the operational level, the introduction of resilience in the EU aid mechanisms implied several changes: an improvement of risk analysis; inclusion of resilience factors into the programming and project management cycle of EU aid in several disaster-prone and conflict-affected countries; greater use of flexible funding mechanisms (review of trust funds, introduction of new social protection mechanisms); and better donor coordination (European Commission 2013b).

Since the publication of the EUGS in 2016, the EU has widened and deepened the notion of resilience, which no longer focuses exclusively on poverty reduction. Financial assistance is now linked to a whole range of diverse activities—including but not limited to democracy support, economic macrostabilization, prevention of risks and threats, climate change and environmental degradation, and migration management—to foster resilience (EC and HR/VP 2017; EEAS 2016b). This shift resulted partly from the larger catalogue of risks and threats to be covered (from security to migration concerns) but also from the premise that the risks and threats are not linear and do not have easily identifiable or predictable tipping points (Bressan et al. 2019). Thus they must be prevented or addressed by simultaneously targeting a wide range of shortcomings, including weak governance, economic shocks, migratory challenges, or order contestation by external powers.

Further changes were introduced in EU aid policy at the operational level. Regarding aid in the EU neighbourhood, the 2015 ENP review, coordinated closely with the EUGS, emphasized several aid instruments to cooperate on economic development, migration, and security issues, with the objective of strengthening the resilience of partner countries (European Commission and HR/VP 2015b). The examples included: the Economic Resilience Initiative that sought to boost economic resilience in the



Southern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans by investing in vital infrastructure, developing the private sector, and stimulating growth and job creation; the European External Investment Plan that was intended to attract more investment into the EU Neighbourhood and Africa, from businesses and private investors in particular; or trust funds to ensure better migration management (such as the EU emergency trust fund for Africa and the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis).

Furthermore, the aid programming was based on a new generation of documents, referred to as Partnership Priorities, as well as on the revision of already existing documents, in order to develop more differentiated, tailor-made partnerships between the EU and its neighbouring partners. Most importantly, a new funding scheme enabling greater financial resources for unpredictable crises was presented by the EC in the scope of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 negotiations (European Commission 2018). It was proposed that the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the main source of financing in the area, be included in a larger external tool covering EU aid globally; the Neighbourhood, International Cooperation and Development Instrument (NDICI). Such pooling of financial instruments would boost the financial resources for unexpected risks by creating a financial reserve of €10.2 billion. However, as the NDICI is a global instrument, a risk for the ENP region would be the unpredictability of such emergency funding. The inclusion of ENI into NDICI involves the possibility of a transfer of funds for crisis-related EU actions away from the neighbourhood to other regions (and vice-versa), as there is no guarantee that the funds from the new NDICI financial reserve will be spent on ENP goals.

### **2.2.1 Limitations of EU Aid: Is It a Priority?**

Strengthening resilience in the ENP region by widespread use of aid policies, particularly the ENI, faces three main shortcomings: ineffectiveness of conditionality, low flexibility of EU funding, and weak prioritization of EU aid. First, according to the evaluation of the European Court of Auditors, the EU financial assistance has only partially contributed to supporting the reform agenda in Tunisia (2011-2015) and Ukraine (2007-2015) (European Court of Auditors 2016; European Court of Auditors 2017). Particularly in the case of Tunisia, a major deficiency relates to the government's weak effort in implementing supported reforms in political dialogue. The use of conditionality was hampered by poorly defined or wrongly designed EU conditions for disbursements of financial assistance, lack of systemic monitoring together with insufficient data collection, and weak supervision of effective implementation of reforms. Second, while in both countries EU aid (mainly loans and general budget support) was disbursed rapidly to help stabilize the fragile



economies in post crisis situations, the conditionality attached to it was too flexible. Last, according to the EC's evaluation of this instrument (Hennion et al. 2017), even though the ENI's response capacity has improved in terms of flexibility of funding, it is not yet proportionate to the scale of challenges like the prevention of crises and conflicts.

In the academic literature, most scholars attribute the ineffectiveness of EU aid policies that are conditioned to democracy promotion to their flawed design and implementation, as well as limited interest by national partners and low receptiveness by local populations (Kostanyan et al. 2017). The lack of membership perspective in the ENP weakens the effectiveness of the EU's conditionality, and the EU assistance is not sizeable enough to offset the costs of domestic change in the ENP countries. The EU's positive conditionality—i.e., the incentive-based or “more (funds) for more (reforms)” approach—has been criticized for being inconsistently applied in different countries, as the EU has provided increased benefits under the ENP even in the absence of sustained progress (Buscaneanu 2015: 36). The EC acknowledged that the incentive-based approach has not worked out in countries where there is no political will to commit to such reforms (European Commission and HR/VP 2015b), while the effectiveness of the negative conditionality—i.e., suspension of funds—has not been documented sufficiently (Interview #5). Other major shortcomings highlighted by scholars relate to the low publicity of EU aid, which is unknown to the general public, and the low level of coordination of various financial instruments both at the EU level and between the EU and member states (Kostanyan et al. 2017).

France and Germany have been the most vocal member states regarding the EU aid programmes in the ENP region, as expressed during the 2015 ENP review (European Commission and HR/VP 2015b). They called for a stronger link between the EU's political priorities and the technical implementation of its aid programmes, enhanced aid flexibility and swifter responses to crisis situations, better coordination of programmes, and greater ownership by partner countries. Currently, German concerns relate to the fact that the term “resilience” is often used to mask a strong drift towards securitization, both in terms of Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending (the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is a case in point) and in the objectives of policy frameworks, namely the ENP (Interview #6).

In the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region, France, Germany, and Italy oppose increasing their financial support and impose strict conditions for disbursing EU aid (Kaca et al. 2019). This group of countries has, however, a common interest in supporting EaP initiatives and allocating funds, aimed in particular at improving the investment and business environment in the region. In relation to the Southern



Neighbourhood, Italy's major concern is to ensure the centrality of the Mediterranean region in financial allocation and tackling illegal migration (Vdovychenko 2017: 187–208). Although Italy is the most active promoter among member states, there is a broad consensus on the need to link development aid and migration. As already seen above in relation to trade, development is meant to promote socio-economic stability that in turn may halt migration movements (European Parliament 2019).

In France, foreign aid is intended to strengthen resilience and prevent the deterioration of risks in ALS and CO (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs 2018). The comprehensive strategy links development aid and defence and thus provides support at different levels—state, society, and community—to mitigate risks of an economic, environmental, political, security, and societal nature. The spectrum of targeted aid areas is diverse—from food programmes to assistance to civil society development and business growth—and is not limited to post-crisis assistance but is sustained across long-term frames. Emphasis is put on early recovery, post-crisis loans, and budgetary support for macroeconomic stabilization, as much as on conflict prevention.

In Germany, foreign aid focuses on humanitarian and development policies (called transitional development assistance) and is geared towards fostering long-term resilience (BMZ 2013: 5). The process of enhancing the resilience in ALS has three pillars that cover multiple domains: identification of development opportunities and promotion of peaceful relations between competing groups or institutions; strengthening national disaster risk management and climate change adaptation plans in countries particularly exposed to natural hazards and climate change; and supporting conflict and disaster recovery scenarios, including reconstruction and rehabilitation of basic social and productive infrastructure, disaster risk management, integration of refugees, and food and nutrition security (BMZ 2013: 10–13; BMZ 2019: 14–17). Like the EU approach, the German one is comprehensive and highlights the importance of promoting institutional coordination and collaboration, including state authorities, local structures, and the private sector (BMZ 2013: 8).

In sum, the EU approach to strengthening resilience in partner countries by its financial assistance is gaining momentum as it is linked to other relevant sectors such as migration, security, or economic stability. The EU's approach to aid has thus shifted from being restricted to humanitarian aid in post-disaster recovery to being diverse in focus and intended to promote societal resilience in the long term. Beyond EU institutions, member states like Germany and France have also started applying aid beyond post-crisis stabilization phases.



### 3. LIMITS AND POTENTIAL OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS

Civilian crisis management has been a distinctive feature of the CSDP since its inception at the Santa Maria de Feira European Council in 2000. Initial tasks were mainly related to policing, rule of law, civilian administration, and civil protection, and later extended to monitoring and providing support to the EUSR (Council of the EU 2005). Its evolution has been marked by capability development processes borrowed from the military, including the Civilian Capabilities Commitment Conferences initiated in 2004 and the subsequent Headline Goals 2008 and 2010 (Council of the EU 2007). The civilian CSDP missions have gradually become the EU's primary procedure for crisis management on the ground, as they ensure a widespread and sustained presence and can enable cooperation with several instruments simultaneously, despite limitations in terms of availability of expertise, visibility, and investments.

To date, the EU has launched 34 different civilian and military missions and operations, as part of a broader effort to facilitate resilience (EEAS 2019b; EEAS 2020). There are many more civilian CSDP missions than military operations, even though many of the civilian missions also include police/gendarmerie forces or other uniformed personnel. Civilian missions are seen as less controversial than military ones, which have been constrained from the outset by an apparent overlap with NATO missions, require greater capabilities, and entail more political risks. Nevertheless, as we argue in this section, developing an autonomous military capacity appears increasingly vital to support other EU and member states instruments in helping other societies to be resilient to ALS and CO.

This section analyses how EU civilian and military missions and operations have evolved in the last years and their contribution to building resilience. First, we examine the evolution of civilian missions, particularly in the Southern Neighbourhood, and secondly, we focus on military operations.

#### 3.1 Towards More Flexible, Fast, and Comprehensive Civilian Missions

Since the launch of operational CSDP in 2003, 22 civilian missions (out of 34) have been deployed to areas ranging from the Western Balkans to sub-Saharan Africa, and 12 in the Middle East and the Southern Caucasus. From 2010 to 2018, the personnel deployed in civilian CSDP missions declined drastically from 2,307 to 1,247 officers. In particular, numbers of personnel seconded by member states diminished consistently over the period while personnel contracted directly by EU institutions remained constant in absolute terms, coming to represent 40% of deployed forces in



civilian CSDP missions (Interview #7). It is also interesting to note that, among the top contributors, Germany and Italy participate in all 10 civilian missions currently run by the CSDP, while the French personnel are almost all deployed in the Sahel region; i.e., in Mali and Niger.

The EU's approach to civilian crisis management has significantly changed in recent years, particularly after the launch of the EUGS and the adoption of its Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (HR/VP 2016). Traditionally, civilian crisis management was considered the best means to tackle risks and threats that were social in nature, with a view to supporting the establishment of democratic institutions, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the promotion of sustainable development and peace. In the EUGS, civilian capabilities are presented as key components to achieve the new level of ambition in security and defence matters set by the EU, ensure resilience of states and societies in surrounding regions, and implement the integrated approach to risks and threats. At the same time, its Implementation Plan also identifies the need for more flexible, faster, and targeted actions in civilian crisis management, with the aim of enhancing the CSDP's awareness and responsiveness in all phases of the conflict cycle, including conflict prevention (HR/VP 2016: 3).

As specified in the latest progress report of the EUGS released by the HR/VP in June 2019, the objective of resilience does not substitute previous priorities such as democracy and human rights, but rather complements them with a view to "support states and societies undergoing change to prevent, react and recover from the shocks and crises" (EEAS 2019a: 22).

The process that followed the adoption of the Implementation Plan in the field of civilian CSDP was marked by a Concept Paper released in April 2018 (Council of the EU 2018d) and a Civilian Capability Development Plan adopted in September 2018 (Council of the EU 2018a), which prepared the launch of the so-called Civilian CSDP Compact in November 2018 (Council of the EU 2018c). The primary objective of the Civilian Compact is to reform civilian CSDP in line with the transformation of the security environment over the past years. This goal affirms that the priorities for civilian crisis management defined at Feira in 2000 are still valid and relevant, but they need to be updated in light of today's security risks and threats. The document confirms the preponderant influence of internal security priorities on the foreign policy agenda and marks an increasing tendency to narrow down stabilization efforts and capacity-building carried out by CSDP missions to migration management and connected issues (Pirozzi 2018).

The Civilian Compact explicitly mentions the contribution to "resilience and security of partner countries" as an objective for the renewed civilian CSDP and underlines





the need to ensure “the ownership of the host country to achieve effective and sustainable results” (Council of the EU 2018c: 5). Resilience, therefore, is facilitated indirectly, by providing a context of societal security and trust, institutional legitimacy, and stability, where societies can adapt to risks and threats using their own means. In the document, the reference to the concept of resilience has two main operational points for civilian crisis response actions: the geographical focus on the neighbourhood countries in the East and in the South; and an integrated approach in programming and implementation, encompassing civilian CSDP missions, other actors in the field of the CFSP, and development actors (Council of the EU 2018c: 10).

The year 2019 marked the translation of the renewed concept of civilian CSDP into concrete actions by EU institutions and member states. In April 2019, the EEAS and the EC produced a Joint Action Plan, which provided a short analysis and proposed concrete actions to operationalize the commitments undertaken by the Council and the member states in the Civilian Compact, to be realised by 2023 at the latest (Council of the EU 2019c). Here again, the concept of resilience is associated with the integrated approach to risks and threats and is instrumental in advocating for enhanced coordination in “the formulation of conflict prevention responses, EU programming and the design of major EU interventions in conflict sensitive countries/regions” (Council of the EU 2019c: 13). In practical terms, it means that relevant services in the EEAS, the EC, and the member states should increase efforts to work together, and CSDP missions should be further exploited to support current actions on issues such as mediation, Security Sector Reform (SSR), and civil protection (Council of the EU 2019c: 13–14).

Member states have begun the process of developing their own National Implementation Plans, which were initially discussed at the first Annual Review Conference in November 2019 (Council of the EU 2019b). National approaches remain highly diversified within the EU: only a few member states—in particular the Nordic countries—have developed specific strategic documents for civilian crisis management; training, recruitment, and analysis processes vary significantly; and some countries have to cope with legislative obstacles to the deployment of civilians or the lack of a dedicated budget line. The implementation process of the Civilian Compact represents an opening for national capitals to either streamline or reform decision-making and coordination mechanisms in order to boost their contributions to civilian CSDP.

Overall, the Civilian Compact and the related impact of the migration phenomenon on the operational priorities of member states in the field of CSDP have been the main game changers for civilian crisis management in recent years. Thus, key EUGS priorities such as resilience have only partially influenced the rethinking of civilian



CSDP, which still focuses on immediate and short-term security concerns; for example, border management and maritime security. At the institutional level, one implication connected to adoption of the idea of resilience is the gradual enhancement of cooperation between civilian CSDP structures and relevant Commission's Directorates General of European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and International Cooperation and Development, in line with a joined-up approach that mobilizes security, humanitarian, and development cooperation instruments (EC and HR/VP 2017). Such cooperation has improved in particular as regards the ongoing strategic review of missions and the programming and implementation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, where a common pool of money is to be used by different actors for targeted countries (Interviews #8, #9, #10, #11).

At the operational level, capacity building remains a core task for civilian CSDP and an anchor of resilience. In addition, the mandate of civilian missions has been or is in the process of being reviewed in order to incorporate key EUGS objectives, including resilience. Examples include statehood support for security sector reform by European Union Advisory Mission EUAM Iraq, strategic advice and practical support for good governance and human rights by The European Union Advisory Mission EUAM Ukraine, and help in rebuilding governance and improving security—including the fight against terrorism and illicit trafficking—in fragile areas by European Union Capacity Building Mission EUCAP Sahel Niger (Interviews #8, #9, #10, #11). This should also contribute to the broader objective of correcting top-down approaches to state-building and as means to engage with the societal level through a processual strategy that tries to work from below to achieve social legitimacy and cohesion (Bargués-Pedreny 2015a; Ejodus and Juncos 2018).

The operationalization of the idea of resilience in this sector has been constrained by two connected factors: the limited involvement of civilian CSDP structures in the process of its elaboration and the fuzziness of its definition. First, CSDP structures in charge of civilian crisis management felt marginalized in the work on resilience conducted in the aftermath of the EUGS (Interviews #9, #10).

The second impediment has to do with the still partial clarification of resilience both in terms of its object and relevant instruments. There is no consensual understanding of the implications of resilience at the institutional and operational levels among civilian CSDP actors, even within single CSDP structures. It is mainly used as a sort of all-encompassing concept referring—on a case by case basis—to rule of law, energy, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, strategic communications, security sector reform, counter violent extremism and terrorism, and climate change





mitigation, among others (Interviews #8, #9, #10, #11). Until these issues are addressed and solved, the role of civilian CSDP missions in fostering resilience will remain relatively narrow.

### 3.2 CSDP Military Structures: Beyond Bullets and Weapons

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) provides the EU with military capacity and is an instrument that the Union has at its disposal in fostering resilience in its neighbourhood. What distinguishes CSDP military missions and operations is that they aim to endow the EU with an apparently autonomous military capacity, implying an ability to plan, launch, deploy, command, and sustain military operations without relying on NATO or the US; two traditional guarantors of European hard security (Smith and Gebhard 2017).

The development of CSDP military missions and operations followed the guiding principle that NATO remains the main pillar of European security, along with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Consequently, the CSDP was strictly seen as an auxiliary vehicle for addressing security challenges and threats in the European neighbourhood, while NATO retains primacy regarding major crisis management operations in the transatlantic area. This decision was influenced by the US, who shaped the framework for developing the CSDP, and a group of EU members, with the United Kingdom in the lead (Hunter 2002). The result was a number of caveats and self-limitations for the projection of EU military power.

The most crucial one was that the EU was prevented from developing a proper command and control system for CSDP military missions and operations. In consequence the EU could not develop its own, dedicated civilian and military structures (and procedures) tasked with early warning, contingency planning, managing the force generation processes, controlling the deployment of forces, and finally commanding the operation. The guiding assumption was that—in line with the so-called Berlin plus mechanism—the EU would “lease” NATO Command Structure to prepare, deploy, and run its operations. As this assumption did not hold because of political setbacks—only two operations were launched according to this scheme with one, Bosnia and Herzegovina, still running—the EU gradually established an autonomous command and control capability for CSDP military missions and operations (Reykers 2019).

The legal foundations for the CSDP military missions and operations, which indicate their role as an instrument of building resilience in the EU neighbourhood, are set in the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), which provides a list of specific tasks to be undertaken in the framework of CSDP. In accordance with the TEU, the EU may



operationally use civilian and military assets to conduct “joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization” (Bonde 2009: 41). Furthermore, the TEU stipulates that the EU’s operational activity within the CSDP is “peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security” (Bonde 2009: 39). While CSDP missions and operations are not conceived so as to foster resilience directly, they are meant to provide the necessary secure and stable environment to regions, states, or ALS to enhance resilience to violent conflicts and governance breakdowns. That is, military operations are understood as a necessary fulcrum for the whole set of resilience-building instruments and actions.

In the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), a founding document for CSDP, security building in the neighbourhood was already linked to enhancing the governance of institutions. The objective was to “promot[e] a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean” (Council of the EU 2003: 10). Yet, the role of CSDP military missions and operations in carrying out this multifarious and multidimensional task was considered limited. Achieving proper governance in the neighbourhood was a responsibility not just for the military, but also for EU diplomacy, aid, and trade structures. The military dimension of CSDP appeared useful to address the threats of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the effects of regional risks and threats, and failure of statehood. Even here, however, the ESS underlined: “none of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means” (Council of the EU 2003: 9). From their inception, CSDP military missions and operations would never be used as a sole response to a violent conflict or governance breakdown.

The central concept was reflected in the ESS as the need for a “comprehensive approach”, which would imply that the EU uses a “full spectrum of instruments for crisis management and conflict prevention, including political, diplomatic, military and civilian, trade and development activities” (Council of the EU 2003: 13). This approach was meant to strengthen the coherent use of all policies at the EU’s disposal and focused particularly on coordinating the use of the military toolkit and civilian instruments (diplomacy, trade, official development assistance, civilian advice, etc.). Coherent and joined up strategies which can perform as many diverse actions as possible gradually became EU’s modus operandi in its approach to hybrid and diffuse conflicts and governance breakdowns in the neighbourhood (Morillas 2019a). In 2013, the comprehensive approach counted “a wide array of policies, tools and instruments ... spanning the diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields” to respond to ALS and CO



(European Commission 2013: 3). It was in 2013 when the notion of “resilient societies” appeared prominent and was linked to the EU’s commitment to long-term engagements where military support is vital.

In the EUGS, CSDP military missions and operations are deemed an auxiliary tool to promote resilience in the European neighbourhood. The military assets of the CSDP are strictly meant to allow the EU to “protect Europe, respond to external crises, and assist in developing our partners’ security and defence capacities” (EEAS 2016b: 19). Thereby, the EUGS builds on the ESS to project military missions and operations only as a part of a wider effort to respond to violent risks and threats and governance breakdowns. Yet, the emphasis is even greater. The EUGS suggests moving from a “comprehensive” to an “integrated” approach to tackle risks and threats, which is bound to deepen, broaden, and streamline the former concept. The integrated approach of the EU to risks and threats in its neighbourhood is meant to be multi-dimensional (covering different dimensions of security), multi-phased (addressing different stages of conflict), multi-lateral (engaging different actors), and multi-level (applied at different governance levels) (EEAS 2016b: 28–29).

With the introduction of the integrated approach, the link between CSDP military missions and operations and the will to foster resilience in the neighbourhood is presented more directly and clearly. First, military tools are seen as necessary to stabilize the security situation on the ground so that the application of other instruments can follow. In this sense, operations of an executive character, falling broadly under the category of “peace-making” and “tasks of combat forces in crisis management” are seen by the EU as an opening phase of its long-term engagement to foster resilience in ALS and CO.

Second, military instruments are no longer understood traditionally, as forces of combat, but are also geared towards accessing and influencing the societal level. For instance, “military advice and assistance tasks”, falling under the category of EU military “missions”, are deployed to strengthen local capacity, required for making both the state and society more resilient to potential risks and threats and CO. The EUGS confirms this link, as “security and stabilization” are the primary tasks for CSDP military missions and operations and, at the same time, seen as preconditions for a long-term effort to build resilience in the EU neighbourhood. The EUGS states that the EU will engage militarily not only in response to erupting risks and threats, the rise of terrorism, or to protect human life, but also to allow consolidation of ceasefires and implementation of peace agreements, with particular focus on “paving the way for capacity building”, enabling local and regional actors to adapt to risks, threats, and shocks (EEAS 2016b: 30).



CSDP military missions and operations work on multiple levels, cooperating with diverse local actors as much as with other regional powers and international organizations. Military missions of a training character, which are aimed at capacity building to help with stabilization and security, are clearly geared towards working with local actors. These complex partnerships enhance legitimacy and effectiveness. Further, the EU military engagement can be framed as a “bridging operation”, i.e., setting the conditions for a transition of responsibility from international to local actors and keeping the security environment stable for all.

#### **4. CONCLUSION: MULTIPLE, SUSTAINED, AND INDIRECT ACTIONS TO FOSTER RESILIENCE**

The growing diffusion and uncertainty of risks and threats poses serious challenges to the external action of the EU. At the time of writing, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic is forcing the EU to act jointly and rethink its strategies and tools to adapt to looming complex crises that involve humanitarian emergencies, economic downturns, governance breakdowns, and risks and threats. While most of this working paper has been written pre-pandemic, its value lies in offering a comprehensive analysis of the different instruments that the EU and MS wield to respond to ALS/CO. We have argued that the EU’s diplomatic, economic, and military instruments are evolving so as to strengthen resilience of conflict-affected societies through multiple, long-term, and indirect actions.

First, instruments have expanded and diversified to undertake as many different actions as possible. Diplomatic actions, for example, cover different policy fields—from energy, economy, and cultural diplomacy—to increase the degree of engagement with ALS and CO and are pursued in coordination with many actors from different levels (regional, national, and local agents). Creative initiatives like organising conferences and comprehensive dialogues to mediate conflict are part of the EU’s “multi-track diplomacy” approach, which seeks to connect and facilitate cooperation at the global level. Economic instruments such as trade or aid are also linked to a whole range of different concerns—such as democracy support, conflict prevention, climate change mitigation, and migration management. No single instrument is expected to work independently from any other; sanctions support diplomacy as much as economic aid relates to societal or energy security. As risks and threats have become increasingly diffuse, hybrid, and interconnected, actions aiming to foster resilience have expanded and integrated.

Second, instruments are sustained over long periods of time, for risk and threats are protracted, and peace, security, and resilience always appear fragile. All EU and member state instruments—from sanctions to aid, trade, or civilian and military



missions—are gradually set in a long-term perspective that is crucial to continually foster resilience and adapt to new risks and threats as these emerge. The EU's growing presence abroad through delegations and public diplomacy campaigns is about guaranteeing that the EU can influence both present and future developments. A widespread assumption today is that all phases of conflict response—from prevention to peace consolidation—overlap due to their non-linearity, thus requiring constant and long-term engagement. For example, civilian and military missions and operations are not conceived as deployments with specific and strict mandates, but as comprehensive and lasting structures that support social cohesion, trust, and an efficient institutional design over long periods of time.

Third, since resilience emerges “from below”, drawing on each society's resources, the EU's instruments are often understood to facilitate resilience indirectly. That is, resilience cannot be imported or engineered from the outside but is enhanced or nurtured through processes of assistance. Sanctions, for example, are not meant to provide social cohesion or sustainable development. However, in targeting and coercing the actions of certain governments or groups, they encourage change. Sanctions often accompany other diplomatic actions like “dialogue”, which foster resilience by providing a stable environment for confidence-building between opposed groups. Similarly, while the objective of trade is contributing to economic growth, it is also tied to environmental and social goals—from respect for human rights to environmental and labour standards—which strengthen resilience in the long run. By deploying all instruments at the same time, the EU and member states ensure a continued engagement to prevent ALS and CO from deteriorating into governance breakdown and violent conflict.



## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS

- Interview #1 EEAS official, Pol Bargués, Brussels, March 14, 2019.
- Interview #2 HR/HV Cabinet official, Pol Bargués, Brussels, March 14, 2019.
- Interview #3 European Commission official, Luigi Narbone, Brussels, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.
- Interview #4 European Commission official, Luigi Narbone, Tunis, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- Interview #5 European Commission official, Elzbieta Kaca, [Brussels], December, 2018.
- Interview #6 Researcher in a German institution in development policy, Elzbieta Kaca [Brussels], June 12, 2019.
- Interview #7 Italian Permanent Representation to the EU official, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Brussels, June 7, 2019.
- Interview #8 IPS official, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Brussels, June 6, 2019.
- Interview #9 CPCC official 1, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Brussels, June 7, 2019.
- Interview #10 CPCC official 2, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Brussels, June 7, 2019.
- Interview #11 CPCC official 3, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Brussels, June 7, 2019.



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