The Rise of Resilience in EU Foreign Policy
– *A Shift of Paradigm or Parlance?*

A comparative case study of the EU foreign policy before and after the EU Global Strategy

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Abstract

This master’s thesis studies the European Union’s (EU) foreign policy in the Eastern Partnership before and after the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) and investigates whether or not there has been a policy shift towards the paradigm of resilience. Previous research disagrees on the implications of the EUGS and I argue that more empirical research on the matter is needed. The purpose of this thesis is thus to empirically investigate whether or not a shift in EU foreign policy towards a paradigm of resilience has indeed taken place in practice after the launch of the EUGS. Two sources of data are used in the study: the first and principal are the annual action programmes for the Eastern Partnership used by the EU for planning and delivering of external assistance; the second is a set of semi-structured elite interviews conducted with respondents representing the Eastern Partnership and the EU respectively. The results are mixed, showing a slight trend towards resilience-building but no ground-breaking paradigm shift has occurred. I argue that the resilience-building focus and principled pragmatism approach presented by the EUGS rather should be seen as an attempt by the EU to be honest with the foreign policy it is already conducting.

Keywords: resilience, European Union, Eastern Partnership, European Union Global Strategy, principled pragmatism, liberal interventionism, external intervention

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# Table of Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 4
2. Purpose and Research Question .............................................................................................................. 6
3. Theory and Previous research .................................................................................................................. 7
   3.1 Liberal Interventionism and Resilience - Two Paradigms of Foreign Policy ........................................ 7
   3.2 Previous Research on the EUGS ......................................................................................................... 12
   3.3 Summary ........................................................................................................................................... 15
4. Analytical framework ............................................................................................................................... 16
5. Method ................................................................................................................................................... 18
   5.1 Research design – Comparative Case Study ....................................................................................... 19
   5.2 Case Selection and Generalisability .................................................................................................... 19
   5.3 Material ............................................................................................................................................ 21
6. Analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 23
   6.1 Objectives ......................................................................................................................................... 23
   6.2 Methods ........................................................................................................................................... 28
   6.3 Responsibility and Ownership ........................................................................................................... 34
   6.4 Instruments of Implementation ........................................................................................................... 39
7. Discussion ............................................................................................................................................... 44
8. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 48

List of references ........................................................................................................................................ 50

Appendix .................................................................................................................................................... 53
1 Introduction

Liberal values appear to be having a bad decade. According to Freedom House’s 2018 report, world-wide political rights and civil liberties saw its lowest point in more than a decade in 2017. The European Union (EU), a paragon for liberal values and one of the world’s most influential economic powers, is suffering recurrent difficulties in the wake of the European dept crisis, the refugee crisis, and the United Kingdoms’ decision to leave the EU. These challenges have given rise to an existential anxiety that appears to threaten the stability and cohesion of the whole Union (Tocci, 2017). Moreover, external events such as the worsening geopolitical environment to the south and east of the Union have led to doubts regarding the EU’s role and ambitions as a normative actor and its ability to contribute to peace and stability has been questioned (Juncos, 2017). Against the background of the geopolitical development in Europe and the claims that the EU’s level of ambition on the global stage has decreased, this thesis scrutinises the EU’s foreign policy before and after the launch of the EU Global Strategy for foreign and security policy (EUGS). Since the EU is one of the world’s most important international actors, a new turn in its foreign policy would be expected to have great consequences for all its neighbours and members alike making it highly significant to study in detail.

When the EUGS was presented in June 2016, it was not surprising that it indicated a sharp turn from its predecessor, the European Security Strategy (ESS). Scholars argue that as a result of the political development within the EU itself and in its neighbourhood, ambitious liberal projects have become more difficult to launch than it was a decade ago (Altafin et al., 2017; Biscop, 2016; Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The optimism that signified the EU’s foreign policy in the 2000’s had in 2016 changed into a more defensive and cautious approach (Altafin et al., 2017; Biscop, 2016; EUGS, 2016; Tocci, 2017). As a way to counter the negative development, the EUGS introduced a highly ambitious strategy building on the concept of ‘principled pragmatism’, stating that the Union will be guided by clear and strong principles stemming as much from realistic assessment of the current strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world (EUGS, 2016). As a part of this approach, the EUGS identifies state and societal resilience in the neighbourhood as one of five key priorities for the foreign policy. Being all but absent in the previous strategy, the concept of resilience is now mentioned more frequently than both democracy and human rights (Juncos, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016).
The new focus on resilience-building introduced by the EUGS is portrayed a strategic priority and has made scholars and policy-makers announce a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy that will change how foreign policy is made and implemented for years to come (Altafin et al., 2017; Biscop, 2016; Grevi, 2016; Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Several scholars claim that the pragmatist approach of the EUGS indicates a shift away from the traditional values-based liberal interventionist approach and towards a paradigm of resilience that prioritises regional stability and security (Altafin et al., 2017; Biscop, 2016; Juncos, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Sceptics, point out, however, that when the EU launches new concepts and approaches like ‘principled pragmatism’ and ‘resilience’, it tends to result in little more than a change of buzzwords (Juncos, 2017). Some argue that while the EUGS seemingly represents the EU’s idealist tendencies, the strategy must be critically assessed against what the EU realistically can achieve with its ongoing fragmentation and internal diversities (Smith, 2016). Much of the change that is suggested to lie behind the paradigm shift, these critics argue, might just be wishful thinking and overly ambitious objectives from the EU (Smith, 2016).

Despite the EU’s importance as a foreign policy world actor, we seem to know little about the changes its latest strategy entails. This thesis investigates the argument that the shift in EU foreign policy towards resilience is part of a broader paradigm shift away from a liberal interventionist approach that has dominated Western foreign policy making in the post-Cold War era. However, few empirical studies have been carried out that explore the practical meaning of the new approach. In order to establish whether or not a paradigm shift has taken place and what it could mean for the EU’s promotion of democracy and human rights, I argue that more empirical research needs to be done. This thesis aims to contribute to a bridging of this empirical gap by studying the EU’s practical foreign policy implementation in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) through a comparative case study of the so-called annual action programmes (AAP) for the six countries included in the EaP: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In order to triangulate and corroborate the material, a number of semi-structured elite interviews with representatives from the EaP and the EU have been conducted.

The outline of the thesis is as follows. First, the purpose and research question of the study will be presented in more detail. Second, a section presenting theories and previous research on the subject will be outlined. After the literature review, the analytical framework of the study will be presented and motivated. Following the framework, the method’s section presents the logics behind the chosen method and motivates the choice of material and case for the study. With theory and methodology in place, the analysis section will present the findings and interpretation of the data. Concluding the thesis is a discussion where the results of the study
are interpreted and put in relation to theories and previous research and where potential avenues for future research is discussed.

2 Purpose and Research Question

While the introduction of the EUGS in 2016 was interpreted by some (Altafin et al., 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Biscop, 2016) as a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy towards a resilience approach, others dismissed it as wishful thinking and a mere change of rhetoric (Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2016). The resilience paradigm might just prove to be the most recent example of EU rebranding in line with previous labels such as ‘effective multilateralism’ and the ‘comprehensive approach’ to crisis management (Juncos, 2017). It might, however, also be a real indication of an overarching change in EU foreign policy-making that will affect how security and development policy is promoted for years to come. The purpose of this thesis is to empirically investigate whether or not a shift in EU foreign policy towards a paradigm of resilience has indeed taken place in practice after the launch of the EUGS.

The unclarity and ambiguity of the EUGS is important to study since the EU’s legitimacy as a normative actor hinges on its credibility as a values-driven actor and on the effectiveness and consistency of its policies (Altafin et al., 2017; Brassett et al., 2013; Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2016; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Drawing on theories of resilience and liberal interventionism combined with previous research on the EUGS, I hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the EU’s foreign policy overall, not only in the neighbourhood but in other interest areas as well. The focus of the study is on the EU’s foreign policy implementation in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP) before and after the introduction of the EUGS. The case selection builds on the assumption that the understanding of the EU’s goals and instruments in the neighbourhood is intrinsically related to the main motives of action or inaction in the Union’s overall foreign policy (Noutcheva, 2015; Smith, 2016). This assumption leads us to the thesis’ research question:

Does the proclaimed shift in EU foreign policy towards a resilience paradigm, introduced by the EUGS, reflect on the EU’s policies in practice, and if so how?

This question is important to answer because the EU, being one of the world’s most powerful international actors, affects projects of democratisation and development all around the world. If there has been a practical shift towards the paradigm of resilience in EU foreign policy, it is imperative to gain as much empirical knowledge as possible about the implications of such a paradigm shift. By learning more about the EUGS and its implementation in the EaP, it should
be possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the EU as a foreign policy actor in other parts of the world as well.

3 Theory and Previous research

In the following section, the theoretical framework of the thesis will be outlined along with a short literature review on the previous research in the field. Since the aim is to evaluate the claims of a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy, it is necessary to determine what constitutes the particular traits and characteristics of the liberal interventionist and resilience paradigms. First after having identified what separates the paradigms from each other, it is possible to categorise discourses brought forward under each paradigm and investigate whether or not a paradigm shift has taken place in practice. Before a constructive analysis is possible, we must therefore seek to clarify and understand how the concepts of resilience and liberal interventionism are understood in the literature. The purpose of this section is consequently to give a systematic overview of the concepts’ use in discourses of world politics, with a specific focus on the EU foreign policy. In the following paragraphs, I will present a review of the most prominent theories on resilience and liberal interventionism respectively. Having established what each paradigm means in a general sense, the section will be concluded by a review of previous empirical research on the EUGS and the paradigm shift.

3.1 Liberal Interventionism and Resilience - Two Paradigms of Foreign Policy

In the following paragraphs, I present theories on the paradigms of liberal interventionism and resilience that will hopefully shed some light on these phenomena and provide with a foundation for the analytical framework.

Liberal Interventionism

As a product of the liberal world order, the paradigm of liberal interventionism is founded on a number of fundamental assumptions made about the ontology of state-building and societal life. The belief in liberal democracy, the conviction of a moral prerogative and the trust in a supreme right to intervene on behalf of ‘universal’ liberal values has shaped Western foreign policy for decades. Almost every Western-led intervention conducted after the Cold War has been motivated and legitimised by interveners claiming a moral duty to protect victims of human rights abuses and to secure the sovereign rule of law for the good of the ‘international community’ (Chandler, 2012; Manea, 2017). This foreign policy approach is often called the paradigm of liberal interventionism and has been central for Western foreign policy since the
1990’s (Balthasar, 2017; Chandler, 2012; Paris, 2014). While the methods have differed over the decades, liberal principles of freedom, democracy and human rights have been promoted by liberal actors under the assumption that these values are universal and true for all peoples (Sørensen, 2011). Following the belief of a moral prerogative to protect liberal values worldwide, the liberal interventionist paradigm emphasises the role of the external interveners as global defenders of human rights with the obligation to protect and secure citizens of fragile states (Paris, 2014).

Under this paradigm, interveners are influenced by the idea that problems in promoting a liberal world order of sustainable development, prosperity, peace and post-conflict reconstruction lies in elite blockages created by corrupt authorities and weak or failing state institutions (Chandler, 2013; Pugh, 2014). To address this problem, interveners aim to replace malfunctioning institutions and systems with liberal frameworks of democracy and rule of law through various methods of external intervention. According to the liberal understanding of state-building, it is the formal institutional frameworks that shape and determine the outcomes of social interaction (Bourbeau, 2013; Chandler, 2013; Joseph, 2014). These institutions are assumed to stand above the rest of society and operate independently from ‘bottom-up’ social forces. This conclusion builds on the liberal assumption that the societal sphere, if left unconstrained from elite blockages, intuitively will work as a force of ‘good’ that leads to democratic and economic development (Chandler, 2013; Pugh, 2014).

A second assumption of liberalism is the belief that the most secure foundation for peace, both within and between states, is a so called ‘market democracy’, i.e. a liberal democratic polity and a market-oriented economy (Manea, 2017). According to the liberal interventionist paradigm, peace and democracy is presumed to be guaranteed through the external introduction of a liberal state model. In practice this has traditionally meant a universal ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution where mainstream liberal institutional frameworks of democracy and the market have been exported (Chandler, 2013). Actions to implement liberal systems span from the unconditional reform of government, constitutional arrangements and courts, to systems of political representation and the organisation of the police and military (Chandler, 2013; Manea, 2017). When it comes to questions of agency such as ownership of the interventions and responsibility for its outcomes, the liberal interventionist belief is that ownership resides with the interveners themselves. Inhabitants of fragile states are mainly perceived as victims of failed governments or state-sanctioned abuses and are as such treated as passive subjects (Chandler, 2012; Paris, 2014). An example of the belief in the universal validity of liberal values can be found in the United States national security strategy from 2002 which states that: “the United
States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them” (The White House, 2002, p. 3). As a consequence to this view on liberal values, national sovereignty sometimes has to give way to external intervention in cases where liberty, justice, and global human rights is believed to be under threat (Chandler, 2012; Newman et al., 2009; Paris, 2014).

The paradigm of liberal interventionism has, according to Chandler (2015a), thereby given rise to an asymmetrical and potentially oppressive discourse as critics argue that the liberal assumption of the ‘right to intervene’ is based on the presumed superior knowledge, resources and moral of the policy-intervener. According to Sørensen (2011), the principal dilemma for interveners is that the promotion of liberal values, including human rights and democracy, has to be respectful of other cultures and societies while at the same time uphold the position that there are universal values true for all people. Critics also contend that a fundamental part of the problem with liberal interventionism has been that Western powers have tried to promote liberal values in ways that risk to undermine those very same principles, often leading to arguments of hypocrisy and neo-imperialism (Balthasar, 2017; Chandler, 2012; Paris, 2014; Sørensen, 2011).

In addition, there are those who claim that the liberal interventionist paradigm often has proved to be less successful than anticipated, has led to unintended consequences and side-effects, and has shown significant limitations in effectively responding to mass violence (Balthasar, 2017; Chandler, 2015b; Paris, 2014).

In an attempt to avoid the structural problems of liberal interventionism, policy makers have sought to establish internationally accepted foundations for ‘just’ interventions. In 2005 this resulted the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine which was unanimously endorsed by the members of the UN (UNGA, 2005). However, according to Manea and Paris (2017; 2014), policies claimed to be in the interest of the international community which at the same time challenges principles of sovereignty and non-intervention have often proved counterproductive, even under the R2P. This problem is commonly called the ‘liberal peace paradox’ and has become increasingly apparent as institutionalist and social constructivist theories have become more influential in discourses of international development and peace-building (Chandler, 2015a; Manea, 2017). Following the limitations of liberal interventionism described above, policy makers have sought to develop new practices of global governance to promote liberal values around the world.
The paradigm of resilience is a relative newcomer in the fields of political and social sciences. Advocates of the resilience approach see possibilities of democratic development where previous approaches have met resistance. Critics on the other hand warn for neo-liberal tendencies of passing responsibility and possibilities of blame onto the most vulnerable. The following section will provide a clarification of the concept and a review of the theories on the resilience paradigm found in the literature.

While resilience has been a commonly used concept in areas such as psychology, engineering and biology for decades, it is relatively new to political science and global governance. Resilience began to influence the field in the beginning of the 2000’s when scholars started to connect the concept to global governance and liberal societal reforms (Bourbeau, 2013). As resilience is a highly complex and multifaceted concept, stemming from several disciplines and schools of thought ranging from biology to development studies, the resilience debate has often been pursued from several different theoretical perspectives, leading to conceptual confusion and frequent contradictions (Bourbeau, 2013; Chandler, 2012). So, what is resilience? One of the most commonly accepted elements of resilience is the notion of ‘bouncing back’ or recovering from chocks or crises (Bourbeau, 2013; Brassett et al., 2013). In contemporary political science, resilience includes a wide range of significances and definitions stretching from areas of humanitarian aid, development, and the environment to security politics and external interventions. One of the most fundamental aspects for the understanding of the resilience paradigm is that changed views on societal complexity and state transformation entered into foreign policy reasoning in the last decades, challenging the fundamental assumptions of liberal interventionism (Pugh, 2014). With the liberal peace paradox in mind, policy makers started to seek out forms of intervention that would take societal complexities and local ownership into greater account, resulting in several re-evaluations of liberal interventionist assumptions (Chandler, 2013; Paris, 2014; Pugh, 2014). The interventions work in indirect ways by appealing to the freedom and autonomy of the governed by emphasizing empowerment, creativity, local resources and self-awareness (Brassett et al., 2013; Cross, 2016; Joseph, 2014; Smith, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016).

Contrary to the liberal interventionist belief that problems in promoting democratic and economic reforms lies in elite blockages, the resilience paradigm understands the problems of democratic and economic underdevelopment as being endemic to societies and communities themselves (Chandler, 2013; Evans and Reid, 2013; Pugh, 2014; Walker and Cooper, 2011). The paradigm of resilience directs attention away from universal blueprints of liberal state-
building by focusing on local actors and bottom-up actions to evade problems of sovereignty and external responsibility (Altafin et al., 2017; Chandler, 2012; Finkenbusch, 2017; Juncos, 2017; Pugh, 2014; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The liberal assumption of laissez-faire in the societal sphere is thereby inverted with the resilience paradigm and societal intervention becomes the precondition for social peace and development (Chandler, 2013). The methods of reform are as a consequence focused on monitoring, peer reviewing and the promotion of local agency and bottom-up development (Joseph, 2014). Long-term solutions are believed to come from within the fragile societies themselves and cannot be inserted by external interveners, only facilitated and encouraged through induced knowledge of the problematic behaviours. Local responses and practices are therefore regarded as key to achieve positive transformation, making local actors central in handling the complexities of societal life in engaging the ‘right partners’ and implementing the ‘right policies’ (Chandler, 2015b; Joseph, 2014; Pugh, 2014).

Another important aspect to understand is that one fundamental difference between the two paradigms has not so much to do with whether or not interventions happens with or without coercive force, but rather with the conception of agency and responsibility (Bohle et al., 2009; Chandler, 2013; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). As is mentioned above, liberal interventionism perceives the inhabitants of fragile or failed states as victims in need of protection. Under the paradigm of resilience, as societal complexities are put at the centre of the discourse, inhabitants are instead regarded as vulnerable subjects trapped in irrational and problematic societal practices (Chandler, 2013; Kaufmann, 2016). The agency of citizens in governance thus changes from that of passive victims to active, but vulnerable, subjects in need of support and empowerment. The interveners, on the other hand, seek to remove their external subject position and to distance themselves from the discourses of superior knowledge, asymmetrical dependency and accountability (Chandler, 2013; Finkenbusch, 2017). Instead of supreme protectors of liberal values, the interveners present themselves as facilitators of local solutions to local problems (Bohle et al., 2009; Bourbeau, 2013; Chandler, 2013, 2012; O’Malley, 2010; Schmidt, 2015). This has made some scholars worry that the promotion of liberal values and principles will be down-prioritised and lead the so called democratisation versus stabilisation dilemma, meaning that the more external actions for democratisation is needed, the less likely they are to occur due to the risk of instability (Börzel and van Hüllen, 2014).

Rhinard (2017) argues that resilience first and foremost should be regarded as a second-order effect of other policies and that the ambition to build resilience through external interventions might be little more than wishful thinking. There are also critics who see the resilience paradigm as a way for interveners to deny responsibility for their actions and put the blame for
unsuccessful interventions on the most vulnerable (Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015). Scholars holding this view often present resilience as a method of ‘governing through insecurity’ and see resilience as a way for the West to promote the status quo of fragile neighbours (Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015; Evans and Reid, 2013; Walker and Cooper, 2011). Some critics contend that the aim of resilience policy is to maintain the status quo of a fragile or weak country in order to more easily manage its subjects and frame the effects of external interventions as unavoidable, fostering a culture that abandons long-term expectations of resistance and improvement (Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015; Evans and Reid, 2013; Heath-Kelly, 2015; Reid, 2013; Walker and Cooper, 2011). From the field of development and humanitarian aid, some scholars also worry that the resilience paradigm deviates from the traditional needs-based approach of external aid, i.e. that actions are taken as crises occur, as resilience-building actions mainly are suggested to be preventive. This has made some scholars believe that resources will be used where they have most impact, and not in areas where people need them the most. By following a resilience-building approach, policy makers supposedly blur the line between humanitarian and development aid, leading to politicisation of external aid (Dany, 2015).

In sum, the resilience paradigm can be described in many ways and carry different meanings to scholars and policy makers alike. Advocates of the approach promotes the idea that policies of resilience serve to strengthen and ameliorate states’, societies’ and individuals’ abilities to handle and mitigate the effects of shocks or crises. Critics, on the other hand, claim that the resilience approach resilience might have undesirable or perhaps unintended consequences for fragile states and its peoples. Politics of prevention and empowerment might also lead to a reiteration of the democracy versus stability dilemma. This thesis aims to bring answers to this discourse by investigating to what extent and how the resilience paradigm is manifested in practice. In the following section, the theories presented above will be put into the context of the EU as previous research on the EUGS and the EU paradigm shift is presented.

3.2 Previous Research

In this section, I will give an overview of the previous research made on the EUGS. When the EU Global Strategy was launched in 2016, it was received with varied enthusiasm among both scholars and policy makers. Some see the strategy as a way for the EU to show that despite its internal troubles, it is still a powerful international actor in the world. Others see the EUGS as a strategy caught between the old and the new, with lowered ambitions and weakened ideological goals (Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2017). First, it is important to note that resilience as a concept was not introduced in EU vocabulary for the first time with the EUGS. In fact, resilience has been a central concept for several key documents in the field of development and
humanitarian aid since the beginning of the 2000’s (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). However, in the EUGS, state and societal resilience-building in the neighbourhood is for the first time stated as one of five top priorities in EU foreign policy (EUGS, 2016).

One feature that separates the use of resilience in the EUGS from the policy areas of development and humanitarian aid is that it refers to a wider understanding of the concept, including a broad range of referent objects. In the EUGS, resilience is used as a part of the policies for areas ranging from security politics to democratisation, the judicial sector, public administration, civil society and the market (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Under the approach presented in the EUGS, the EU aims to empower its partners by strengthening the resilience of public institutions, critical infrastructure, networks and services and the civil society. The EU defines resilience as “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises” (EUGS, 2016, p. 23). Even though the strategy perceives a resilient society as featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development, it also admits that while repressive states are inherently fragile, “there are many ways to build inclusive, prosperous and secure societies” (EUGS, 2016, p. 25-26). This ‘pragmatic’ approach has made critics argue that the EUGS shows alarming tendencies of a move towards the stabilisation of repressive states rather than democratisation (Biscop, 2016; Smith, K., 2017, Smith, M., 2016). Juncos (2017) argues that by proposing principled pragmatism in the form of resilience-building, the EU inevitably gives rise to an impossible theoretical dichotomy similar to the liberal peace paradox. To state that it will be true to liberal principles while at the same time apply a pragmatic approach by building resilience in different ways, the EU gets caught in a paradox where it has to deny the moral imperative of its fundamental values (ibid.). Instead of engaging directly in discourses of democratisation and human rights, the EU will invest in empowerment and stabilisation in the neighbourhood through the less ‘tainted’ concept of resilience (ibid.). According to some critics, policies of political reform and humanitarian aid has thus been made more flexible and less ‘provoking’ in order to keep reform-reluctant governments satisfied and to not thwart political instability in the region (Altafin et al., 2017; Biscop, 2016; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Smith (2017) even claims that the resilience approach in the EUGS should be seen as a step away from previous EU rhetoric on democracy promotion, in line with the democratisation versus stabilisation dilemma.

Proponents of the paradigm suggest on the other hand that the EUGS proposes a more ‘smart-powered’ approach with a tactical combination of hard and soft power influenced by both idealistic aspiration and realistic assessment (Altafin et al., 2017; Cross, 2016; Juncos, 2017;
Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The pragmatist approach could therefore work as a catalyst for EU foreign policy and release it from the blockages of the liberal peace paradox described above. According to this view, one of the greatest benefits with the resilience approach is that it brings European projects and actors from different sectors together to work in the same place at the same time on the basis of their comparative advantages (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Regarding liberal values of democracy and human rights, there are those who see the resilience paradigm, with its bottom-up approach and increased focus on societal life, as a democratisation of the discourse with potential to advance existing EU frameworks of human rights policies (Altafin et al., 2017). In addition, the EUGS proposes to build societal and individual resilience by renewed focus on the fight against poverty and inequality and humanitarian actions might therefore get a strengthened focus with the strategy (ibid.).

However, one implication of the EUGS is that the EU states it will lead principally as a facilitator and an agenda shaper in the future (EUGS, 2016). This speaks to the literature above claiming a change of agency where external interveners seek to remove themselves from positions of responsibility and has worried scholars of humanitarian development. They fear that the new approach will entail a down-prioritisation of human rights protection as operations become a question of prevention rather than response (Altafin et al., 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The official EU foreign policy discourse has traditionally aimed at promoting fundamental liberal values such as democracy and economic liberties through the principles of conditionality and ‘more for more’ (Noutcheva, 2015). By putting up universal conditions for financial assistance and access to markets and trade, the EU has used its economic and political appeal to influence reform and spur transformation in countries in the neighbourhood. The explicit conditional connection between liberal reform and external assistance have thus been fundamental for how the EU has acted in the neighbourhood and beyond (Grabbe, 2002; Noutcheva, 2015). By reiterating the focus on stability and governance through resilience-building, some scholars fear that the EU will turn a blind eye to reluctant governments that fail in democratic reforms (Wagner and Anholt, 2016).

In the literature, there are those who are sceptic to the talk about a paradigm shift and consider the new resilience approach of the EUGS as a mere rebranding of policies. According to Smith (2016), the sheer quantity of values, principles, priorities and interests that are stated in the EUGS makes is easy to lose sight of the critical fact that the EU cannot possibly achieve all of these objectives at the same time. Because of the extensive scope of the strategy, Smith argues, the EU will inevitably fail to accomplish many of the goals in the EUGS, making it a lot less revolutionary than it might seem at first glance. Wagner and Anholt (2016) propose that one
reason to why resilience plays such a central part in the EUGS is because of the concept’s vagueness and the fact that it refers to such a broad range of actions. The resilience approach has also been described to carry an inherent constructive ambiguity, which can appeal to many different stakeholders (Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The downside of this ambiguity is according to some that it becomes unclear what resilience really means and if it therefore can have any practical implications, and there is a lack of clarity as to how the EU should build resilience and for whom (Juncos, 2017; Rhinard, 2017). As is mentioned in the purpose section above, the unclarity and ambiguity of the EUGS is possibly harmful for the Union as its legitimacy hinges on the effectiveness and consistency of its policies (Altafin et al., 2017; Brassett et al., 2013; Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2016; Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Smith (2016) argues that lack of clarity regarding credible EU capabilities and that the long list of objectives framed under the resilience approach is strategically incoherent and that the aim to build resilience in the neighbourhood it is overly optimistic. Perhaps most importantly, several critics point at the unclarity regarding how the EU will tackle the challenge of balancing support for autocratic governments with the objective to promote liberal values of democracy and human rights that inevitably challenges such regimes (Biscop, 2016; Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015; Smith, 2017).

3.3 Summary

Following this literature review and the account for previous research on the EUGS, it should be clear that the perception of the resilience-building and the practical implications of the EUGS differs among scholars. As previous research has shown, some scholars claim that the EU’s unprecedented focus on resilience-building entails a changed approach in state-building, while sceptics argue that the difference mainly consists of new formulations. Whatever view one might have of its implications, the EUGS exhibits a new usage of the resilience concept that separates it from previous strategies and could indeed contain a shift in EU policy-making. It is however unclear as to what extent any practical alterations have been made in EU foreign policy and further empirical studies are needed. Based on the theories above, I argue that the most significant differences between the two paradigms can be summarised into four categories: the different objectives posed; the different methods and targets; the questions of responsibility and ownership; and the instruments used to implement the policies. In the next section, I present an analytical framework based on these categories that will be used in order to investigate whether or not a change of paradigms has taken place.
4 Analytical framework

In this section, the analytical framework for the thesis will be presented and motivated. In order to answer the research question and investigate if the proclaimed paradigm shift has had any empirical implications, it is necessary to operationalise the theories in a methodological way. An analytical framework does this by summarising what is theoretically known about the phenomena at hand and translates that knowledge into an analytical tool that allows for sorting and systematic analysis of the data collected from the material. While there are many ways to construct an analytical framework for interpretive analysis of qualitative empirical material, one way of creating a framework is to focus on generally accepted dimensions that are grounded in political philosophy and theory (Bergström and Boréus, 2012). Using dimensions as the basis for the analytical tool comes with the advantage that they are relatively intuitive to identify and that they allow for systematic comparison over time (ibid.). The framework in Table 1 constitutes a typology where the general traits of each paradigm have been summarised into their essential characteristics. The analysis consists of a thorough examination of all AAPs for the given periods, together with a set of semi-structured elite interviews based on operationalised questions from each category. When formulating an analytical framework using dimensions, it is important to make sure that the dimensions cover every aspect of interest and that they are mutually exclusive (Bergström and Boréus, 2012). It is also imperative to show that the framework is not unduly forced onto the material, i.e. that the findings are manipulated and presented so that it fits into the framework (ibid.). I argue that following the theories of liberal interventionism and resilience presented in the theory section above, the analytical framework fulfils these requirements. Using this analytical framework, the analysis will be able to show, in a transparent and replicable way, how EU foreign policy has been implemented in practise and to determine under what paradigms those actions should be included. Drawing on the theories and previous research presented above, I argue that the two contrasting paradigms of liberal interventionism and resilience correspond to four categories, or dimensions.

First is the objectives dimension, focusing on the aims of the EU foreign policy. The objectives of the actions are relevant to study since they are able to tell us about the underlying ideologies of the policies. While the literature shows that both paradigms seek to introduce democratic and economic reforms, they differ when it comes to whether change will be achieved through the exportation of liberal systems or through the empowerment of local conditions. Second, the methods dimension concerns what means the EU uses to realise its policy. As is argued by several scholars in the theory section, the methods and targets proposed by the paradigms differs significantly and can therefore serve as an indicator of what approach is being followed. Third,
the responsibility and ownership dimension regards the question of agency mentioned above. This dimension is one of the most decisive in the analytical framework since the perception of agency is a fundamental dividing line between the two paradigms. As is argued by several scholars in the theory section, the roles of both the interveners and the actors intervened upon differs significantly from the ideologies of the liberal interventionist paradigm and the resilience ditto. Fourth and finally, the instruments of implementation dimension concerns the instruments, the ‘hands-on’ working methods, used by the EU to achieve its aims. Instruments of implementation differ depending on policy level but include mechanisms or activities that can be of a coercive nature, e.g., sanctions or conditional clauses in agreements, or of a ‘softer’ nature like for example policy advice or technical assistance. The instruments dimension also includes the important aspect of tailor-made contra universal approaches and is central to assessing the programmes. In Table 1 below, the columns for liberal interventionism and resilience contain traits that represent the two paradigms’ most ‘extreme’ dimensional expressions following the arguments presented in the theory section.

Table 1: Analytical framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Liberal interventionism</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Operational Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Democratisation and a liberal state</td>
<td>Democratisation and a resilient state</td>
<td>What are the overarching objective(s) of the policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Top-down, coercive, state/elite/institutional focus</td>
<td>Bottom-up, empowering, societal/individual/comm unity focus</td>
<td>What overarching approaches and methods are suggested in the documents to reach the objective(s)? What partners are targeted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility and ownership</td>
<td>Western responsibility and external ownership, interveners seen as protectors</td>
<td>Local/individual responsibility and internal ownership, interveners seen as facilitators</td>
<td>Who is considered responsible for the policy? Who has the ownership of the actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments of implementation</td>
<td>Universal instruments, e.g. HR clauses in trade agreements, strengthening of law enforcement</td>
<td>Tailor made/context sensitive instruments, e.g. twinning with local administrations, support for the media environment</td>
<td>What instruments does the EU use in practice to meet its objective(s)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To complement the textual analysis, I include semi-structured elite interviews as a source of auxiliary data in order to triangulate my results. The analytical framework has been translated into a set of interview questions, as shown in Table A1 in the appendix. While the interview method will be presented in more detail below, the aim is to extract information of the paradigm shift that is difficult or impossible to obtain from textual analysis alone, and to corroborate the findings by a triangulation of data. Not only do the interviews increase the validity of the study, but they do also increase the scientific significance of the thesis with a contribution of unique qualitative data. To assess the data gathered from the analysis, the results will be critically and meticulously evaluated on a five-degree dimensional scale presented in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L</th>
<th>L/M</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>M/R</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal interventionist approach</td>
<td>Mixed/liberal interventionist approach</td>
<td>Mixed approach</td>
<td>Mixed/resilience-building approach</td>
<td>Resilience-building approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Coding scheme*

The coding scheme is based on the analytical framework and ranges on a dimension from ‘liberal interventionist approach’ to ‘resilience-building approach’, with the label ‘mixed approach’ as the intermediate value. As variations and combinations of actions might occur, I have chosen to code the findings after a de facto five-degree scale, with the ability to categorise findings that fall in between the dimensional ends. In order to avoid hasty conclusions, I will categorise possible borderline cases quite conservatively, meaning that observations containing conflicting results will be assessed after the most general expression.

5 Method

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not a paradigm shift has taken place after the introduction of the EUGS and follows the argument that more empirical studies are needed on the subject. One way to examine a policy shift is by conducting a comparative case study where the object of analysis is carefully scrutinised before and after the proclaimed change (Gerring, 2017). The analysis will be done by extracting data from EU annual action programmes using the analytical framework presented above, and by conducting semi-structured elite interviews.
5.1 Research design – Comparative Case Study

This thesis uses the methodological approach of a comparative case study analysis based on the analytical framework presented above. Comparative case studies involve the analysis of similarities, differences and patterns with a relatively broad focus of attention to two or several cases that share the same common focus or goal (Gerring, 2017). I argue that this is the most feasible research design for this thesis since it offers the opportunity to go in depth into a small number of cases – the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) – and analyse the EU’s implementation of foreign policy in detail. In most case studies, the goal is twofold and consists in one part of an attempt to explain the specific case or cases under investigation, while at the same time being able to say something about a larger collection of cases – a population. For a study to qualify as a case study, it must therefore be possible to extract the conclusions of the analysis and put them in a larger context, even if that is not the intention to begin with (ibid.).

As is stated above, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate whether or not the proclaimed shift in EU foreign policy towards a resilience paradigm reflect on the EU’s policies in practice. This will hopefully lead to a deeper understanding of the EU’s foreign policy in the EaP and in addition to this, a deeper understanding of the resilience paradigm in EU foreign policy overall.

As the main added value provided by comparative case studies is in-depth evidence, the study has to contribute to the general knowledge of a subject with some new evidence that is not apparent or easily available (Gerring, 2017). I argue that by combining the analysis of the annual action programmes with data received from semi-structured elite interviews, this thesis will build on a unique basis of pertinent data that will contribute to the empirical research in the field of international relations. A common view in political science is that most of the problems addressed in policy-making comes not from objective features of existing circumstances, but from social constructs differently understood, framed and problematised (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2015). In following a comparative case study approach in this thesis and by scrutinising the material in detail, it should be possible to see if a paradigm shift has indeed taken place in practice.

5.2 Case Selection and Generalisability

Described as a global superpower and an engine of liberal transformation (Manea, 2017), the European Union and its foreign policy implementation is relevant to study for a multitude of reasons. Apart from being a powerful diplomatic actor, the EU constitutes one of the world’s largest economies, is the first trading partner and foreign investor for almost every state in the world, and the world’s largest donor of development assistance as it gives more than half of the
development aid globally (European Commission, 2018; Manea, 2017). Despite being a global actor, the EU focus much of its external actions on the regions most immediately connected to its borders, the so called Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods (Gaub et al., 2017). This focus is confirmed in the EUGS which declares that state and societal resilience in the EU’s neighbourhood is one of five key strategic priorities (EUGS, 2016).

While the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods exhibit some important differences in regard of challenges and possibilities, they are both part of the European Neighbourhood Policy and represent two key interest areas for the EU. The initial intention of this thesis was to study both neighbourhoods, but due to temporal and spatial limitations I have chosen to focus on the Eastern neighbourhood in particular. The EaP is a cooperation programme between the EU and six of its closest neighbours to the east: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Founded in 2009 on the initiative of Sweden and Poland, the official goals of the partnership are to ensure security, stability and prosperity in the region on the basis of shared values of democracy and respect for human rights. Despite the diversity between the six countries included in the EaP, there are several internal challenges that applies to the partnership as a whole (Gaub et al., 2017). The need for democratic reforms, problems with political instability, weak economic systems and generally high levels of corruption have generated fragile states with vulnerable structures (ibid.).

Apart from the neighbourhoods there are however several other areas of importance to the EU that could have served as focal points for this study. In suggesting that a case is representative of a larger population or context, one presents an assumption that might be plausible but at the same time subject to some uncertainty, concerning not only the representativeness of the case itself but also the boundaries of the larger context (Gerring, 2017). The larger context in this case is the population of interest areas or actors that the EU engages with its diplomatic and economic influence. I argue that other cases of interest for the EU deriving from the same population as the EaP are the Southern neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, Turkey, Russia, China, sub-Saharan Africa and Iran. The conclusions of this study should be possible to generalise following the argument that the understanding of the EU’s goals and instruments in the neighbourhood is intrinsically related to the main motives of action or inaction in the Union’s overall foreign policy.

My choice to focus on the EaP is based on the assumption that the vicinity and geopolitical atmosphere in the Eastern neighbourhood makes it the most delicate and important area for EU security and foreign politics. Given that the EU has a limited strategical leverage over its
partners and since mistakes in foreign policy could be costly, I argue that the EU’s interests are so closely tied to the stability of the region that the EaP could be seen as a significanda for how the EU balances strategic interests against liberal values. By studying the EU’s foreign policy implementation in the neighbourhood, it should therefore be possible to draw some tentative conclusions that apply to EU interest areas in the world. From this logic, I argue that the EaP is a most likely case for a paradigm shift towards resilience building to materialise in practice. If the analysis shows that a paradigm shift has taken place in the EaP, it would be in line with some of the arguments presented above but does not necessarily mean that a shift is likely in the rest of the population. On the other hand, if the result is that a change could not be detected, I argue that it would be unlikely to occur in the rest of the population.

5.3 Material

To examine whether or not the suggested paradigm shift has occurred, I have chosen to examine the annual action programmes (AAP) of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) established in 2006, and its successor the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) established in 2014. The ENI/ENPI framework is used for planning and delivering external assistance proposed by the EU and it is one of the general instruments providing direct support for the EU’s external policies (European Council, 2014, 2006). According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2015), in order to make a substantive contribution to political analysis, studies must focus on material and discourse that are relevant to the political processes or events under analysis. The choice of material must therefore be motivated from the point of its relevance and use in relation to other, comparable sources of information. I motivate my choice of the AAPs since they are concrete programmes, used by the EU to specify objects pursued, the fields of intervention, expected results, management procedures and total amount of financing planned under the course of the projects (European Council, 2006). I argue that by analysing these documents, the study will be able to give a comprehensive picture of the EU’s foreign policy in the region before and after the introduced paradigm shift. To limit the scope of the study, the material has been selected from 2012-2014, the time period directly before the introduction of the EUGS, and the period succeeding the launch 2016 to 2017. All analysed AAPs are listed in Table A2 in the appendix. Regrettably the AAPs for 2018 were not published by the date of this thesis’ completion. in order to cover the most relevant time before and after the production process of the EUGS. The AAPs for 2015 were not included as they were produced under the same time as the EUGS and therefore possibly implicitly biased by the procedure. Another exception is the case of Ukraine regarding 2017 where no AAP has been presented due to the unrest in the country. The AAP’s from the establishment of the ENPI
in 2006 up to 2011 are deemed to be superfluous since the scope of this thesis is on time the just before and after the introduction of the EUGS.

By analysing AAP’s using the theoretical lens provided above, I argue that it should possible to study the expression of the EU’s foreign policy in the neighbourhood. With the prospect of getting a more nuanced picture of the shift and to corroborate the data received from the text analysis, this thesis will also make use of semi-structured elite interviews. For this task, I have interviewed five high-ranking delegates from the EU and the EaP. Three of the respondents are representatives of three countries of the EaP, namely Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, and are all stationed at their respective country’s representation to the EU in Brussels. The two remaining are high ranking representatives from the EU – one from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one from the EU Delegation to Georgia. All relevant countries and delegations were contacted with requests for an interview, but only the above mentioned were able to participate. The respondents all have important roles in the policy making concerning the EaP and special insight into decision-making processes. The list of respondents is presented in Figure A1 in the appendix.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher typically poses open-ended, descriptive, questions from a list of themes that are relevant to investigate but at the same time serves as a mere starting point for the interview (Leech, 2002). To get the most relevant data, the questions have been constructed so that they are flexible and does not impede alternative answers or ideas from the respondents. This flexibility might result in slightly different interviews and it is reasonable to assume that not all questions will be treated the same in every interview. However, since this study involves an analysis of several cases, some continuity of the questions is needed in order to ensure a systematic and transparent method. For this purpose, I have constructed an interview guide consisting of sixteen questions that can be found in Table A1 in the appendix. The interviews were conducted over phone or in person with the use of the interview guide presented. One important thing to keep in mind when interviewing elite respondents is to be careful about not asking too sensitive questions. Since high-level bureaucrats have positions that include handling of sensitive information, not all questions will be possible to answer due to classified information (Beamer, 2002). To mitigate the risk of censorship, this thesis’ interview questions in Table A1 have been operationalised so that they allow the respondents to answer in an honest way without being challenged by dilemmas of confidentiality. Given the nature of the method, the respondent also has a relatively large degree of freedom when formulating his or her answers, which allows for a flexible process (Leech, 2002). Another aspect to keep in mind when using elite interviews is that respondents always
have an agenda of their own and will formulate their answers in order to portray their role or frame events in a certain way (Tansey, 2007). To address this challenge, the data from the interviews are critically assessed and evaluated in search of possible biases and triangulated with the literature presented above in the theory section.

I argue that by following the interview guide in Table A1 in the greatest extent possible, the interviews will be able to provide valid and transparent data. One might argue that the number of respondents has to be greater in order to allow for scientifically valid conclusions and provide possibility for further generalisations. I argue that since the purpose of the interviews is to corroborate and complement the analysis of the principal source of data, the AAP’s, the small selection of respondents can still be of empirical use in this thesis. The acquired data from the interviews will contribute to the triangulation of the findings from the AAP-analysis and strengthen the validity and robustness of the study. By following the demarcated analytical framework in Table 1 and the dimensional scale in Figure 1 used to code the material, I argue that the data will be analysed in a clear and replicable way, ensuring reliability of the study.

6 Analysis

In this section I present the evidence retrieved from the text analysis and the interviews, starting with the findings from the period before the introduction of the EUGS. The analysis is constructed around the four dimensions of the analytical framework and the findings before and after the EUGS are compared. As is presented above, the evidence obtained in the analysis is evaluated on a coding scheme based a dimensional scale, ranging from the most ‘liberal interventionist approach’ expression to the most ‘resilience-building approach’ expression as outlined in Figure 1. In Table 2 below, the results are summarised in order to visualise the result.

6.1 Objectives

Before the EUGS

Regarding the first dimension, the operational question posed to the texts was: what are the overarching objectives of the actions? Each annual action programme (AAP) contains a section where the general objectives of the EU’s programmes are stated, and, in most cases, these are further specified into particular sub-objectives. As a consequence, each AAP might contain a number of objectives that are more or less mutually enforcing. In most cases regarding the period before the EUGS, the EU’s focus lies on support for governmental and institutional
capacities and on strengthening the rule of law and justice systems in the EaP-countries. In the AAP for Armenia concerning 2012, for example, the overarching objectives pursued were:

(i) to develop a more independent, transparent, accountable, accessible and efficient judicial system;
(ii) to foster enhanced trade relations between Armenia and the EU in the context of the negotiations for the DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, red); and (iii) to support Armenia to negotiate, conclude and implement new contractual relations with the EU¹.

The objectives presented in this example are representative of the period and contain illustrations of two of the EU’s overarching goals with the partnership: to strengthen the rule of law and to foster closer EU-EaP relations through assimilation. In pursuing the objectives stated in the AAP for Armenia in 2012, the EU seemingly aims for transformation in a liberal direction, placing the AAP in the liberal interventionist approach. However, apart from experience sharing and institutional capacity-building, a majority of the AAPs also contain objectives aimed at economic diversification, strengthening of the labour market and supporting sustainable regional development. One illustrative example that resonates with both the liberal interventionist paradigm and the resilience ditto is the AAP for Moldova of 2014, which states that the main objectives are:

(i) to enhance the institutional and human resource capacity of public administrations to elaborate and implement policy and to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of high-quality public services and (ii) to support the Republic of Moldova to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion in an environmentally sustainable fashion, developing rural areas and increasing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector through modernisation and market integration.²

In this example, the EU aims at enhancing the Moldovan official institutions’ capacity to formulate policies and to support sustainable country-wide development. The institutionally aimed objectives are in this example complemented by intentions of supporting development in rural regions and underdeveloped sectors. These objectives indicate a broader, more inclusive, understanding of state-building that leans towards a mixed approach on the dimensional scale in my coding scheme, however with elements of a liberal interventionist approach. However, not every AAP for the period previous to the EUGS followed the same objectives. One outstanding example is to be found in the AAP for Belarus concerning 2013:

¹ C (2012) 5940, p. 2
² C (2014) 5140, p. 2
The objectives pursued by the Annual Action Programme are to contribute to the improvement of healthcare and wellbeing of the Belarusian people, and to promote sustainable regional development in Belarus.¹

All AAPs for Belarus in the period before the EUGS contain objectives that are aimed at the Belarusian people and although these are not representative of the overall objectives for the period, it shows that the EU adapted objectives depending on the context in the country subjected to intervention. With the focus on societal empowerment and the facilitation of internal development, most Belarusian AAPs lean towards the resilience-building approach and are examples of a diversification in EU policy implementation under the period previous to the EUGS.

The semi-structured interviews with the five respondents supplement this picture. In order to get a more nuanced picture of the EU’s objectives for the EaP, the respondents were asked questions about goals and objectives of the partnership. In order to investigate differences in perception of the objectives for the EaP, the respondents were asked not only to give their own view of the overall objectives, but also on the objectives of the other party. When asked about the EU and the EaP countries’ overarching objectives with the partnership, Respondent 4, who is a delegate for one of the EaP countries’ representations to the EU, replied in the following way:

We are speaking of different regional initiatives which are mostly concentrated on sharing experience between the EU and us. So basically, seeing what kind of EU best practices the EU experiences, both institutions and the member states could be useful to us. But here there are many different initiatives. You have this multilateral architecture and formats for cooperation where all twenty-eight member states, plus the EU institutions, plus the six partner states gather together, and we discuss on concrete topics.⁴

Similar to what was found in the AAPs above, Respondent 4 states that the objectives of assimilation and alignment between the partner countries and the EU are two overarching goals for the partnership. This result connotes to the liberal interventionist objectives of creating liberal state systems presented in Table 1, leading to an inclination towards a liberal interventionist approach. The conclusion is corroborated by most of the respondents, both among representatives of the EaP and from the EU. One of the respondents answering on behalf of the EU, Respondent 5, explained the objectives in the following way:

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¹ C (2013) 4488, p. 2
⁴ Respondent 4
We, the EU and the EaP countries, all share the same principles. […] Within the peculiarities within the EaP countries, they have put these economic and political values together that we all share, and that is the purpose. The whole idea is just to align their policies, our policies, together and to have a common and joined understanding and shared values.⁵

When summarising the findings from the AAPs for each country in the period predating the EUGS, it becomes clear that the general direction for the objectives is geared towards institutional capacity-building and regional development. The EU appears to follow an overall liberal pattern in the formulation of the objectives, but there are also examples of a differentiated approach with individual resilience-related objectives for certain countries. The overall result regarding the objectives for the period preceding the EUGS is however that the majority of the AAPs lean towards a liberal interventionist approach, with a few examples of resilience-building elements.

**After the EUGS**

Much like the previous period, the most frequently observed objectives stated in the AAPs are regional development, institutional capacity-building and diversification of the economy. In some of the AAPs, the objectives have been further specified so that they appear to include elements that connotes to both liberal interventionist and resilience-building approaches. One case that is representative of the AAPs containing objectives bridging both ends of the dimensional scale is the one for Azerbaijan regarding 2016. In this AAP the overall objectives are:

I. Financial Governance: to improve the efficiency of public expenditures and revenue collection;  
II. Economic Governance: to strengthen the competitiveness and export performance of SMEs;  
III. Judicial governance: to strengthen access to justice to all citizens and businesses, especially to vulnerable groups and women victims of domestic violence⁶

In this example the objectives are threefold and show a broad range of goals with intended targets spanning from public institutions to citizens and vulnerable groups. The enhancement of financial governance and the justice system are typical liberal interventionist objectives, but they are accompanied with elements of internal development relating to the resilience-building approach. The objectives stated in the AAP for Azerbaijan in 2016 thus exhibits a mixed approach, with components of both liberal interventionist and resilience-building approaches. Several of the respondents representing the EaP countries mention a change in the EU’s objectives, appearing around the launch of the EUGS. Respondent 2, a delegate from one of the

⁵ Respondent 1  
⁶ C (2016) 4859, p. 2
EaP countries’ representations in Brussels, commented on the change in objectives in the following manner:

Well the EaP has its own goals. It has been an ambitious strategy. The EU has forged an ambitious strategy in respect of its neighbours, its eastern neighbours, and some of them are seeking deeper engagements and more comprehensive engagements. […] The revised strategy of the ENP from 2015 already set out this course, which we highly appreciate because it reflected not only on its own ambitions but on the aspirations of the partner countries as well.7

Respondent 2 expresses something that is not explicitly stated in the AAPs, namely that the EU’s objectives have changed so that they are taking the varied aspirations of the partner countries into greater account than before. This development is commented by Respondent 3, one of the respondents representing the EU, when asked about the objectives of the EaP:

The objective with the EaP is the partner countries’ economic integration and political association with the EU. The point of departure is that the partnership countries, who are free and sovereign states, choose their own foreign- and security policy cooperation […] It is important to keep the EaP together. Some EaP-countries wants to do more than the lowest common denominator in the partnership allows. It is important that the countries are on the EU agenda for the right reasons, not only when there is a crisis.8

By allowing for a differentiated interpretation of the main objectives, the EU tries to keep all six countries within the EaP-framework even if they have different goals with their own participation. This approach is an indication of a resilience-building approach with tailor-made solutions and context-sensitive objectives. Another indication of a changed approach is the introduction of the resilience concept in the objectives of some AAPs. In the programmes from before the EUGS the concept was completely absent, but in the AAPs for Georgia and Moldova regarding 2017, resilience is mentioned as part of the objectives. In the AAP for Georgia of 2017 the pursued objectives are:

1) to foster socio-economic development in Georgia and its regions; and 2) to enhance Georgia’s economic resilience and sustainable growth through human capital development9

In the AAP for Moldova concerning 2017, the resilience concept is used as well, as the overall objectives are to:

(i) empower citizens through constructive participation of civil society organisations in local, regional and national decision making processes, (ii) support a more transparent, efficient,

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7 Respondent 2
8 Respondent 3
9 C (2017) 8575, p. 2
competitive and resilient economic environment in the Republic of Moldova, (iii) promote key EU policies and core values, including media freedom in the Republic of Moldova, and (iv) contribute to improved living conditions of the population through the minimisation of health risks, and to improved environmental protection and smarter use of natural resources.

The Moldovan example shows a clear inclination towards a resilience-building approach with objectives aimed at the empowerment of citizens and improved living conditions of the population. However, these examples are outliers in the period after the EUGS and the most common objectives are to support institutional capacity-building, socio-economic development, sustainable growth and a competitive business environment. The analysis of the post-EUGS AAPs thus shows that the objectives are similar to the preceding period, however with the distinction that some contain explicit references to resilience-building. Overall, the objectives in the AAPs for this period is therefore placed under the mixed approach.

**Summary: Slight change from overall liberal interventionist approach**

Regarding the first dimension, the analysis showed that a liberal interventionist approach was detected in both periods with similar objectives posed in most AAPs before and after the launch of the EUGS. However, there is a slight overall difference in inclination between the periods. For the earlier AAPs, the average programme manifested a liberal interventionist approach with some examples of a more mixed inclination. For the later period, there is a larger focus on objectives encompassing regional development, empowerment of citizens and the strengthening of non-state actors, with some direct references to resilience-building. The combined analysis of the objectives of the post-EUGS period demonstrates a slight change in overall approach away from liberal interventionism, however with a retained focus on institutional development.

### 6.2 Methods

**Before the EUGS**

For the methods dimension, the operational questions posed were: what overarching approaches and methods are suggested in the documents to reach the objective(s)?, and what partners are targeted? Depending on project, different arrangements for managing financing are used, often referred to as ‘management modes’. The different management modes are dependent on the variable level of implication of the European Commission in their implementation and can be summarised into three different sorts of management (European

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10 C (2017) 7533, p. 2
Commission, 2018b). First is the *direct* management, which indicates that the EC is in charge of all EU budget implementation tasks. These tasks are carried out directly by the Commissions departments, either at the headquarters in Brussels, the respective EU delegations, or through European executive agencies. The EC or the executive agency acts as the contracting authority and makes decisions on behalf of the partner countries. Second, under the mode called indirect management, the EC entrusts tasks of budget implementation to one or several parties consisting of the national authorities of partner countries (or actors they designate), international organisations, agencies of EU member states, or other relevant bodies. Third, the EC might use the approach of shared (or joint) management, which means that programmes are jointly managed by the Commission and national authorities of EU member states. The analysis of the period predating the EUGS shows that every AAP is managed through direct management, with some instances of a combination with indirect and/or shared management. In the cases where indirect management was used, it is predominantly together with international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In some cases, governmental agencies of EU member states have been entrusted with budget-implementation tasks on behalf of the Commission.

Each AAP comes with a section in which the actions’ targets and beneficiaries are listed. The main result of the analysis of this period is that in all but a few examples, the government or other state institutions are the main targets of the actions. When some other entity is the target, like CSOs or SME cooperation’s, the government still has a central role in the action. One representative example of this phenomenon is found in the AAP for Azerbaijan of 2014, in which one of the actions presented is support for civil society through grant contracts under direct management. The main targets named for this action are the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), local executive authorities in selected regions, the Ombudsman office, the State CSO council, and the Civil Society Facility National Platform. Despite that the focus of the programme is CSO capacity development, governmental institutions are specified as especially important targets:

The MoJ is a primary government focal point agency for CSOs, which has broad powers to register and supervise CSOs, register grant contracts, conduct studying of CSO activities and other. It is also an initiator of amendments to the CSO legislation. Projects on freedom of association could not be efficient without cooperation and dialogue with the MoJ. The Programme will try to promote this dialogue, leading for improvement of legislative and operational environment for CSOs\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\) C (2014) 6280, annex 2, p. 35
In this case, the EU focus primarily on top-down institutional targets since they are believed to have the most influence over the development towards civil society development. Following the argumentation in the theory section, this approach indicates a liberal interventionist understanding of how societal change can be promoted. Even if the AAP also mentions several examples of bottom-up targets, the emphasis is generally put on top-down actions. This leads to the conclusion that AAPs such as the one for Azerbaijan regarding 2014 correspond with a liberal interventionist approach, slightly leaning towards the middle and a mixed approach.

However, not all targets and methods in the AAPs from the pre-EUGS period contain bottom-up elements. One representative example of a straight-out top-down approach is found in the AAP for Moldova regarding 2012, where one of the main objectives is to improve the employability of Moldovan citizens. In the AAP at hand, the EU judge that the governance of vocational education and training (VET) was not conducive to interplay of governmental and non-state actors:

The Ministry of education defines the qualifications and the certifications, including where the supply is organised by line ministries (Health, Agriculture, etc.). Curricula and curriculum innovations need the approval of the Ministry of Education. Other major stakeholders include the National Employment Agency, Republican Centre for VET Development, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Economy, Employers’ and Employees’ National Federations, the Sector Committee on Agriculture and Food Industry and the Sector Committee on Construction, the National Council on Occupational Standards, Accreditation and Certification.12

With the seemingly bottom-up objective to improve the employability of the workforce for the benefit of all affected Moldovan citizens, the EU follows a top-down approach to address the problems of the labour market. While the EU seemingly attempts to be inclusive and focus on a broad range of stakeholders, operational focus lies on the national authorities. This is thereby a typical example of a liberal interventionist approach, found in several AAPs for the period.

Finally, as for the objectives dimension, there are some relevant examples of exceptions from the most commonly used top-down approach. In the AAP for Belarus regarding 2012, one of the main objectives is to enhance people-to-people contacts between Belarusians and to citizens of EU member states through increased university and research cooperation, youth exchanges and cultural cooperation. The main targets and beneficiaries of the actions are:

Public sector: National and regional government bodies in the respective fields […]; local authorities; public organizations in the respective fields; educational and research establishments; media. […] Private companies involved in research and education; private culture and creative

12 C (2012) 5518, annex 3, p. 6
In this case, the EU follows a holistic approach by focusing the support both on national and regional governmental bodies and actors separated from the national government, including targets from the civil society. Drawing on theories presented above, the EU’s approach in this case can be understood as a clear example of a mixed approach leaning towards resilience-building. This example is however an outlier and the analysis show that the actions concerning Belarus demonstrates the highest overall resilience-building methods in the period before the EUGS. As is demonstrated by the examples above, a majority of the cases for the period preceding the EUGS follows a top-down approach where the targets are mainly governmental institutions and agencies. Non-state actors such as CSOs and interest associations are present, but their role is complementary.

After the EUGS

For the period succeeding the launch of the EUGS, no changes regarding management mode have been detected. Direct centralised management is the predominant mode, combined with elements of joint management and/or indirect management through the same kind of actors as previously. However, the specified targets and the top-down versus bottom-up approaches that are mentioned above show more variation. A common method among the post-EUGS AAPs is found in the programme for Ukraine regarding 2016. In this AAP, one of the objectives is to support Ukraine in designing and implementing key reforms, stemming from the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The management mode is mixed, including elements of direct management as well as indirect and shared management. The action is to be implemented through the following approach:

- Particular attention will be paid to governance issues, especially ensuring evidence-based policy and legislative development, including Media/Audio-visual, Financial Services, Transport, and Labour inspections reforms, as well as key reforms supported through EBRD-Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable Growth Multi-Donor Account (MDA) and linked primarily to high-level advice to the Ukrainian authorities, to the public administration reform, National Reform Council and the Business Ombudsman.14

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13 C (2012) 1123, annex 2, p. 5
14 C (2016) 4719, annex 2, p. 2
Main targets for this programme are national authorities involved in the reforms along with the National Reform Council and the Business Ombudsman. The programme is not exclusively top-down as it also targets some bottom-up actors, leading to an overall mixed approach tilting towards liberal interventionism. As is shown above in the account for pre-EUGS-methods, the strategy to support national authorities by also targeting non-governmental actors is not exclusive for the programmes following the EUGS, but it has a larger presence in the AAPs for the later period. When asked about changes in the EU-EaP relations, Respondent 2, one of the EaP delegates, explained the approach as:

So, in the past there were sort of megaphone diplomacy which was, you know, mentoring I would say. A mentoring psychology that meant that partner countries should replicate or absorb some elements from the EU that was mandatory, otherwise the Eastern Partnership would fail, or the partnership strategy will go down. That is the most important thing that the EU and the EaP has abandoned, that relation and interaction.\(^\text{15}\)

In this quote, Respondent 2 describes that the EU has taken a step away from previous strategies of mentoring and mandatory cooperation forms that chime well with the liberal interventionist approach. This change in the overarching approach is mentioned in similar manners by most respondents, even if Respondent 2 was the only one to go so far as to call the previous approach a “megaphone diplomacy”. Respondent 3, one of the EU representatives, was more moderate when asked about the changes brought in by the EUGS:

It is difficult to say that the EUGS as such has given rise to a changed approach to the cooperation. There were parallel processes in the formulation of the EUGS and the cooperation projects in the EaP. The EUGS-processes have however given rise to spill-over effects in other EU policy work. More member states could accept the resilience concept when resilience-thinking was introduced in the EaP thanks to the EUGS.\(^\text{16}\)

The potential changes in methods in the EaP for the period can according to Respondent 3 not be connected solely to the launch of the EUGS, but rather to several parallel processes. However, even if a resilience-building approach seems influential for the partnership in the later period, not all programmes followed the same methods and there are some outlying examples of a more straight-out top-down approach in this period as well. In the AAP for Georgia regarding 2017, one of the overall objectives is to foster socio-economic development in Georgia and its regions under direct and indirect management. The primary target of this action is the Georgian government:

\(^{15}\) Respondent 2  
\(^{16}\) Respondent 3
The main activities are geared towards policy targets that the Government will commit to achieve in relation to the following policy areas: legal reforms in the commercial sphere (insolvency and enforcement proceedings); modernised financial infrastructure in insurance; and enterprise development focused on business integration through clusters and innovation.\(^{17}\)

In this AAP, the EU motivates its choice of target by highlighting the official top-down capacities of the national government and its influence over structural reforms. The EU thereby follows a traditional liberal interventionist approach of institutional focus and official targets. While this example is not representative of the overall findings from the period, it shows that the EU did not change its approach completely from the earlier period. Another unusual but occurring approach found in some of the AAPs investigated is that of Azerbaijan regarding 2017. In this programme, cooperation with non-public business stakeholders and actors from the civil society is a guiding principle of the project. The programme is carried out under direct centralised management with the overall objective to support the government in promoting a diversification of the economy while balancing inclusive growth in the regions. The AAP states that:

As target groups and final beneficiaries the action will aim to support: producers in the fruit and vegetable sector, producer groups, cooperatives, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises, red), which represent the majority of the private sector actors in rural areas of Lankaran; communities of concerns, local action groups, community supported agriculture groups and other civil society actors active in this domain as well as the rural population of Lankaran\(^{18}\)

In this example, the EU targets stakeholders at a societal level in one specific region with the aim of creating a large-scale transformation of the economy. While this particular action is geared towards support of a particular national region, the ideas behind the overall approach indicated by this method is found in most AAPs of the period. Given that the essentials of the resilience paradigm involve bottom-up engagement and tailor-made empowerment of actors, AAPs similar to the one for Azerbaijan of 2017 are representative examples of a resilience-building approach.

**Summary: A shift towards resilience-building**

The analysis of the methods dimension shows a slight shift towards the resilience-building side of the dimensional scale. The management methods proposed were essentially the same for both periods with a strong prevalence of direct management and numerous examples of shared and indirect management. Regarding the pre-EUGS period, a top-down focus with

\(^{17}\) C (2017) 8575, annex, 1, p. 29

\(^{18}\) C (2017) 6090, p. 2
governmental institutions and agencies as main targets was the most common approach but deviating examples with various bottom-up targets occurred. The overall analysis of the post-EUGS period shows that CSOs, SMEs and other local actors seem to be given a more active role than before. Top-down approaches of targeting ministries and governmental institutions are still present in almost every case, but these are supplemented in a higher degree by combinations of bottom-up support of non-governmental actors. Given the collective analysis of the methods, the conclusion is that a general trend in methods seems to be moving towards a mixed and resilience-building approach on the dimensional spectrum, however with retained elements of a liberal institutionalist approach.

6.3 Responsibility and Ownership

Before the EUGS

For the responsibility and ownership dimensions, the operational questions posed to the material investigates which actor or actors carries the responsibility for the policy implementation and who is considered to have ownership of the actions. In a majority of the cases studied for the period before the EUGS, governments, through affected ministries and agencies, have been given direct or indirect ownership of the actions. A telling example can be found in the AAP for Georgia regarding 2014. The action at hand concerns the implementation of agreements between Georgia and the EU through direct and indirect management with European and UN agencies. While the stakeholders of this particular project range from the government to SMEs and local/regional authorities, ownership for the implementation lies with:

the MoESD (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, red.), responsible for the implementation of the budget support activities. The MoESD has also responsibilities over the agencies "Entrepreneurship Development Agency (EDA)" and "Georgian Agency for Technology and Innovation (GITA)"

Ownership and responsibility for the implementation of the actions in this case lies with the ministry of economy and sustainable development, i.e. the national government. As is argued in the theory section, one of the most important differences between the liberal interventionism paradigm and the resilience ditto is the understanding of agency. The liberal approach builds on interventions that are carried out under the intervener’s responsibility and ownership. In contrast, interventions under the resilience paradigm promotes internal responsibility and ownership by extracting the external subject position of the intervener. This leads us to conclude that AAPs such as the one above are examples of a resilience-building approach since

19 C (2014) 5020, annex 1, p. 39
ownership is carried by national competences. Another common finding are AAPs where the responsibility for implementation is shared between various governmental bodies and non-governmental stakeholders. In these programmes, the government is usually the main implementing part but acts with the support or under the monitoring of external actors. The AAP for Ukraine concerning 2013 is a representative example of this approach. The programme follows a combined top-down/bottom-up method under direct and joint management. The aim is to support the implementation of agreements with the EU and the main stakeholders responsible for the actions are:

the concerned ministries and implementing agencies, relevant civil society groups and also, though indirectly, the donor community. This Framework Programme will primarily impact on the policy-setting and implementing agencies.

Programmes of this sort puts emphasis on the national governments and civil society as owners and key players in the process of implementing EU-EaP agreements. The donor community, including the EU, is sometimes framed as an indirect stakeholder with secondary responsibility at best, although always with a monitoring role. Due to the external actors’ more active roles in these AAPs, cases of this character are placed around the middle of the dimensional scale resulting in a mixed approach. In relation to this example, the analysis shows that some AAPs express an overall mixed approach that is combined with elements of liberal interventionism or resilience-building approaches, resulting in inclinations towards one or the other end of the dimensional scale. In some of the AAPs studied for the pre-EUGS period, the EU goes further and shares more of the responsibility with national actors. A representative example of such an approach is found in the AAP for Armenia regarding 2013 in which the overall objective is to support Armenia to implement its agreements with the EU under the so-called Comprehensive Institution Building programme (CIB). The Ministry of Economy and the National Coordinator of the EU assistance are key actors in coordinating and prioritising the areas of support, together with relevant CSOs and the EU Delegation:

As CIB coordinator, the Minister of Economy co-chairs the CIB steering committee with the EU Delegation. Members of the steering committee include all relevant Ministries and agencies which ensure coordination with other donors in their respective areas.

In this example, the EU Delegation co-chairs the project together with the minister of economy and thereby shares some of the responsibilities for the implementation. By participating in steering committees, the EU plays a more active role than in the cases shown above, where the

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20 C (2013) 8095, annex 4, p. 85
21 C (2013) 8257, annex, p. 4
EU merely monitors the national government’s actions. While this is not to go as far as to assume external responsibility and ownership in a liberal interventionist fashion, it exemplifies a degree of external governance that manifests the EU’s role as an external intervenor. AAPs following this approach are thus examples of a mixed approach tilting towards the liberal interventionist side on the dimensional scale.

After the EUGS

Turning now to the results retrieved from the period following the launch of the EUGS. As for the previous period, these AAPs show a tendency of governmental ownership and responsibility. However, in some of the cases the EU imposes shared ownership through steering committees or with other stakeholders such as CSOs or various affected associations. A representative example of this approach can be found in the AAP for Armenia of 2017 where one of the objectives is to support Armenia’s justice reform process and strengthen its justice system in line with EU best practices. While the national government has ultimate ownership and the Ministry of Justice is the main body responsible for policy development and implementation, the responsibility is shared the EU Delegation:

Oversight of the overall programme will be entrusted to a Steering Committee co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Economic Development and Investments. Among others, the Steering Committee will include the staff of the Government, Judicial department, representative of judiciary suggested by the Court of Cassation, the EU Delegation, the Chamber of Advocates, and representatives of other relevant governmental and nongovernmental actors and International Organisations such as WB, UNDP, GIZ. This set up will ensure a structured policy and technical dialogue and close coordination among all stakeholders during implementation.

The approach of entrusting other national entities than governmental bodies with the ownership of the actions is common among the AAPs of the post-EUGS period and can be found in programmes for every country. In a number of AAPs, external actors such as the EU delegation, various IOs and EU member state agencies are however included in the governance and implementation of the programmes. In the AAP for Armenia above, this approach is motivated with the argument that a credible reform plan needs to be in line with EU best practices and take into account considerations of EU peer review recommendations. With an increased EU responsibility and ownership, these AAPs thus lean towards a mixed approach, with elements of liberal interventionism. One explanation to this change could be that implementation has

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22 C (2017), annex 2, p. 14
failed to live up to levels requested by the EU, leading to a desire for more insight. Respondent 3, one of the EU representatives, explained the question of responsibility in the following way:

The EU has a responsibility to contribute with resources, the EaP-countries to implement the actions they have committed to. The countries in the EaP possibly think that the EU carry a larger responsibility than the EU itself thinks. It is today an unequal partnership with different asks. The EU wants the EaP countries to do more for the cooperation, following that it is investing resources for their development.23

Steering committees serve as a way for the EU to maintain some control of the implementation of the actions and the spending of its resources. There are however some cases in which the committees have a less active role in the governing of the projects and rather acts as monitoring organs. Another approach that is present in several AAPs can be found in the one for Moldova regarding 2016. In this programme, one of the overall objectives is to increase the capacities of the government and other key national institutions in implementing the EU-Moldova Association Agenda (AA). The key stakeholders to reach this objective are:

the State Chancellery and the ministries concerned, other central executive bodies and certain relevant civil society groups. This action will be coordinated by the State Chancellery in its capacity as National Aid Coordinator. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration will be closely associated as the coordinating ministry in charge of monitoring implementation of the AA24

Including several ministries and other executive bodies, the Moldovan government has supreme ownership for the proposed actions. However, the AAP also states that for each action a steering committee consisting of national stakeholders and the EU delegation will be created to review and guide the work. The difference from the approach shown in the Armenian example above is that the role of the steering committees is less explicit on governing and more focused on supervision. While it might seem to be an insignificant disparity, I argue that it shows an important difference when it comes to agency. In cases such as the 2016 Moldovan AAP, the focus on internal stakeholders together with the passive role of the EU leads to the conclusion that some AAPs for the post-EUGS period are following a mixed approach.

The analysis further shows that the roles of CSOs and other non-governmental actors often are related to monitoring and supervision. In some examples from the post-EUGS period, however, non-governmental organisations have been given more responsibility and active ownership. In the AAP for Ukraine regarding 2016, CSOs are mentioned as a highly relevant, although not

23 Respondent 3
24 C (2016) 7752, annex 2, p. 4
the principal, stakeholder responsible for the implementation of the objective of anti-corruption reforms:

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a key role in the reform process. Many of the laws adopted as part of the anti-corruption package in October 2014, were prepared with contribution of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), supported by donor funding. CSOs are also very active in advocating anti-corruption reforms in the country and monitoring how the adopted legislation is implemented in practice.25

In this example, CSOs are promoted both as supporters and advocates of reform that has the ability to influence the national government to implement the programme. While the EU retains a monitoring role, responsibility lies within national competences. AAPs such as the one for Ukraine of 2016 thus lean towards a resilience-building approach. While CSOs were far from absent in the period preceding the EUGS, their role is more dominant in this period. Several of the interviewees share this understanding and emphasise the role of CSOs in the implementation of policies. When asked about who is responsible for the implementation of the programmes and if that has changed, Respondent 4, one of the EaP countries’ delegates to the EU, described it in the following way:

Projects that are explicit from the EU differs depending on sectors. […] Different actors are encouraged to participate. There are also panel meetings, both in bilateral and multilateral context that is a platform for CSOs and political associations. […] The EUGS has a clear focus on CSOs. There were problems for CSOs to participate before. Up to 2016, CSOs didn’t receive as much contact. But after the EUGS, CSOs have gained more funds and are more included. The same activities as before, but they are more framed. A more articulated message from the EU with the new framework. But CSOs were always there.26

According to Respondent 4, the main difference brought by the EUGS regarding responsibility and ownership was that the role of CSOs became more explicitly framed than before. This corroborates the findings from the AAPs above that show an increased focus on non-governmental ownership compared to the period before the EUGS.

**Summary: Overall internal ownership**

The analysis of this dimension indicates an overall internal responsibility and ownership both before and after the EUGS. Governments and other national authorities were most often

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25 C (2016) 4719, annex 1, p. 8
26 Respondent 4
responsible for the implementations, and non-governmental actors such as CSOs, SMEs and municipal authorities included as responsible for monitoring the implementation. In the period predating the EUGS, the EU primarily has a supervisory function in the programmes with emphasis on audits and monitoring, leading to an overall resilience-building approach with some liberal interventionist tendencies. Regarding the time following the EUGS, the prevalence and involvement of steering committees increased in some cases, and the EUs role became more active. This development caused some of the AAPs to shift towards a more liberal interventionist approach, however with a retained placement around a mixed approach. In sum, the balance between external and internal ownership and responsibility seems to be more or less constant over time, showing no substantial changes between the two periods.

6.4 Instruments of Implementation

Before the EUGS

Regarding the fourth dimension, instruments of implementation, the operational question guiding the analysis is: what instruments does the EU use in practice to meet its objective(s) and principles? The degree of detail and description of the instruments proposed by the AAPs vary, but there is a section in each that describes the programmes ‘main activities’ which conform with my definition of instruments. The analysis shows that the instruments used are similar for most AAPs, and the activities range from instruments used for institutional capacity-building to legislative assistance and training of civil servants. As a representative example of the instruments used in the period before the EUGS, the AAP of Azerbaijan for 2012 is presented below. The overall objective for the programme is to build the capacity of public administration institutions with the aim to implement reforms under EU-Azerbaijan agreements. The instruments, or activities, suggested to achieve this objective are:

This component will provide the necessary resources to continue the EU-Azerbaijan cooperation, based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the EU-Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan, through the Twinning instrument, as well as with the provision of necessary technical assistance and policy advice. The Programme Administration Office (PAO) at the Ministry of Economic Development will also continue to be supported by dedicated technical assistance. The use of the Twinning instrument is however not exclusively reserved for this component.

Technical assistance and twinning are two of the most commonly used instruments and are found in nearly all AAPs in the period before the EUGS. Using instruments focused on policy

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27 C (2012) 5946, annex 1, p. 4
28 Twinning is an instrument used for institutional cooperation between public administrations of EU member states and the partner countries that bring together public sector expertise from each side with the aim of achieving concrete operational results through peer-to-peer activities (European Commission, 2018)
dialogue and expert advice, the EU aims at capacity-building and empowerment in line with theories on resilience presented in section 3. Instruments used in cases such as the Azerbaijani AAP for 2012, thus clearly lean towards a resilience-building approach. While the instruments presented in this case are representative of the overall trend for the period, not all programmes projected the same activities. The AAP for Moldova of 2013 illustrates another common set of instruments used in the period. The overall objective of this programme is to facilitate the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by increasing confidence between the rivaling parties, support the technical dialogue and support the participating working groups. Some of the instruments to reach the objective are:

Technical assistance facility: continued support for the “Working Groups on Confidence Building” – to provide timely expertise on the issues commonly agreed by the two sides: economic cooperation, banking systems, customs, statistics, standards and norms, transport, telecommunication, visa liberalization dialogue and these activities’ impact on the Transnistrian region

In this example, technical assistance is used to provide expertise on a broad range of activities in order to facilitate the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The AAP for Moldova of 2013 provides an illustration of activities aimed at conflict resolution that follows a resilience-building approach where the intervening part plays a facilitating role. Although few of the AAPs for this period are aimed directly towards conflict resolution, the broad range of instruments proposed in this example is a common observation that implies a context-sensitive approach with tailor-made solutions, leaning towards a resilience-building approach.

Aside from technical support, twinning and policy advice, most of the AAPs contain financial transfers and performance assessments as instruments of policy implementation. As a characteristic example of such an approach, the AAP for Georgia regarding 2014 is presented below. One of the objectives for this programme is to improve the system of administration of justice, strengthen the rule of law and to enhance human rights protection after international standards. This is suggested to be implemented through:

The main activities to implement the budget support package are ongoing and directed policy dialogue, financial transfer against specific performance, ongoing monitoring and periodic assessment of performance against targets and indicators, reporting on progress and issues arising in the implementation of reforms, and Government empowerment and capacity development

29 C (2013) 5199, annex 2, p. 5
through the obligation and commitment to fulfil specific reform requirements through compliance with disbursement conditions.\(^{30}\)

In this example, the EU continuously monitors and evaluates the Georgian authorities’ performance in implementing the suggested reforms and their alignment with the posed requirements. EU support is thereby offered to the Georgian government on a conditional basis, implicating a certain degree of coercive external management. While the instruments of ongoing and directed policy dialogue and financial transfers against specific performances are context-sensitive and serve an empowering purpose, their conditional quintessence is of a more liberal interventionist approach than e.g. twinning and technical assistance. AAPs such as the Georgian for 2014 are thus deemed to be of a mixed to resilience-building approach.

**After the EUGS**

Regarding the last part of the post-EUGS analysis, the results are quite similar to the preceding period. Instruments such as twinning, technical assistance, policy dialogue and legislative support are common in all studied AAPs. Like in the previous period, monitoring activities and performance assessments are also important parts of the policy implementation. A representative example for the period can be found in the AAP for Belarus regarding 2017. In this AAP, one of the main objectives is to strengthen the conditions for private-sector economic growth by improving the business environment in the country. The programme is conducted through direct management with a mixed top-down/bottom-up approach and is implemented by:

Supporting access to financial management skills and services to improve SME performance. This activity will include a diagnostic of SME access to financial management skills and services and targeted capacity building of business support organizations (BSOs) to improve SME access to relevant skills and services. The diagnostic will be based on strong stakeholder dialogue, assessment and feedback and aim to identify gaps in the access to services that Belarussian SMEs encounter in undertaking important financial management activities and making important business decisions. Targeted training would then be provided to those BSOs, in particular private ones, that reach significant groups of SMEs to support them and address their key needs for growth.\(^{31}\)

By focusing on capacity-building of SMEs through stakeholder dialogue and capacity assessments, this AAP shows a representative example of non-coercive instruments of a resilience-building approach. Another set of instruments that are common in the post-EUGS AAPs is the approach to conduct evaluations in combination with stakeholder dialogue in order

\(^{30}\) C (2014) 5020, annex 1, p. 14

\(^{31}\) C (2017) 8655, annex 2, p. 10
to identify weaknesses or gaps in capacities of the targets. The usage of studies and detailed analyses is something Respondent 4, one of the EaP delegates to the EU, stresses as among the most important actions taken by the EU in order to develop and implement new policies in the EaP. When asked about concrete actions made in the field, Respondent 4 replied:

So, the EU conducted the so-called hybrid threat survey in our country. We were chosen because as a former Soviet republic, one may say that there is an information war and disinformation campaign from the outside. And basically, that it has a very strong impact on the civility and the state, and once changed the system and the government through this disinformation campaign. [...] They made a survey, it was a bilateral project. When the EU received the answers, they made an analysis and came up with thirteen recommendations of how to improve the resilience in our country.  

An increase in the usage of EU-conducted surveys and studies with the aim to increase efficiency and resilience is one of the most distinct changes that has been detected in the analysis and chimes well with the stated focus of the EUGS. As is shown above, similar activities were present in the previous programmes as well, but according to several respondents it became more evident after 2016. The most common activities carried out by the EU during the period, however, is institutional capacity-building through policy dialogue or the introduction of EU-practices. One AAP that summarises this in a representative way is the one for Armenia of 2016. In this programme, the overall objective is to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency of the central public administration through direct management and budget support. Some of the instruments used to achieve this are:

[E]nhancing the policy development and coordination of the central public administration; on the improvement of civil service professionalism through development of training capacities and development of merit-based civil service; enhancement of accountability and transparency of public administration and ensuring of openness for civil society participation; and the introduction of modern and up-to-date e-governance solutions to ensure highest possible level of provision of public services

Instruments such as policy coordination, the development of training capacities and the introduction of European e-governance solutions to increase the efficiency and capabilities of public administration are clear examples of activities that aim at empowerment of key stakeholders. The instruments are of a non-coercive nature and show an inclination towards the resilience-building approach. Following the objectives to strengthen regional development, institutional capacity-building instruments have also been aimed at specific regional projects

32 Respondent 4
33 C (2016) 7226, annex 1, p. 19
ranging from waste and water management to digitalisation. One of the EU representatives, Respondent 3, describes general instruments used in later years as:

Concrete actions take place in many different contexts. One example is that we now are discussing conditions for inter-regional roaming that hopefully will become a reality around 2020. Another concrete area is environment and climate actions. The EaP has strengthened its focus in these areas. It becomes a democracy-building action when citizens are included and can affect the situation. We have to work from below, it is completely fundamental in order to succeed.34

Most of the EaP-respondents also mention regional projects when asked about the most important hands-on actions. Respondent 5 describes it as:

The EU is doing very important projects like when it comes to agricultural related things and rural policy. They are doing quite important work and helping villages outside of the cities. But people have to know from where this comes and to who it is related to, that it is related to the EU. I think that there is still space to improve the strategic communication and we do have cooperation with the EU on this and I think we can go forward in that direction so that we can be more successful in communicating what we are doing together.35

Related to the regional actions, instruments aimed at the support for CSOs and local interest organisations is a common element for the AAPs of the post-EUGS period and can be found in almost every observation. While the civil society is frequently supported through EU-instruments in the pre-EUGS period, they have an even more prominent role in the later AAPs. An illustrative example of this approach can be retrieved from the AAP concerning Moldova for 2017 in which one of the main objectives is to empower citizens through constructive participation of CSOs in local, regional and national decision-making processes. Some of the instruments suggested to achieve this are:

Provide Capacity Development Activities to CSOs, (including organising and carrying out backstopping, quality assurance, trainings, workshops, guidelines, studies, etc.) in order to enable citizens to monitor procurement, management and maintenance of public infrastructure in water supply and sanitation and solid waste management36

By organising workshops and conducting studies aimed directly at relevant CSOs, the EU applies non-coercive instruments of information sharing and mentoring in order to empower local actors to achieve change in a resilience-building approach.

Summary: Clear indications of a resilience-building approach

34 Respondent 3
35 Respondent 5
36 C (2017) 7533, annex 1, p. 15
The analysis of the instruments of implementation dimension shows that the approach used by the EU before and after the EUGS both showed clear indications of a resilience-building approach. In the period predating the Global Strategy, the instruments used were predominantly of a resilience-building fashion with a strong focus on capacity development, twinning and technical assistance. In some instances, however, the instruments used where of an empowering but coercive and conditional character indicating a slight shift towards the liberal interventionist side of the dimensional scale. Regarding the later period, all AAPs showed a clear resilience-building approach with non-coercive measures and a low degree of conditionality or coercion. Some rare occurrences of a mixed approach were found in the analysis, but the overall result is that the EU favoured instruments of a resilience-building approach for both time periods. In the next section, the implications of the above findings will be commented along with a more comprehensive discussion of my study.

7 Discussion

In the analysis above, a number of findings have been presented that display similarities and differences between the periods before and after the introduction of the EUGS. The overall results from each AAP have been summarised in Table 2. As has been demonstrated, the focus on resilience-building introduced by the EUGS has made some scholars proclaim a paradigm shift towards resilience that they deem will change how EU foreign policy is formed and implemented. On the other hand, sceptics claim that new EU-concepts of foreign policy tend to result in little more than a change of words, and that the suggested change must be critically assessed against what the EU can achieve. Being one of the world’s most powerful international actors, the understanding of the EU foreign policy is essential for the understanding of democratisation and development not only in Europe, but in regions across the world. If a new paradigm indeed has entered EU foreign policy-making, it is imperative to gain more empirical knowledge about this change. As such, the aim of this thesis is to investigate whether or not a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy has taken place in practice. In this section, the results of the analysis will be discussed and interpreted on the basis of the previous research presented above.
Table 2: Summary of findings

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<th>Country</th>
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<td>L/M</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>M/R</td>
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$L =$ liberal interventionist approach, $L/M =$ mixed/liberal interventionist approach, $M =$ mixed approach, $M/R =$ mixed/resilience-building approach, $R =$ resilience-building approach

Regarding the first dimension, objectives, the result of the analysis is that there is an overall liberal interventionist approach for the pre-EUGS period and a mixed approach in the later period. The change is modest and as most AAPs for both periods express objectives aimed at institutional capacity-building, regional development and the strengthening of the rule of law, the conclusion is that the EU mainly pursues objectives of a liberal interventionist character both before and after the EUGS. The perhaps most outstanding indication of a change towards resilience-building in this dimension is the introduction of the resilience concept into the objectives’ sections for two AAPs, speaking to the literature claiming that the EUGS mainly should be regarded as a rebranding of policy. The evidence from the responsibility and ownership dimension supports this conclusion. As I argue above, this dimension is one of the most crucial for the separation of the two paradigms since the perception of agency is fundamentally opposing. In the analysis, no substantial changes were detected and internal ownership and responsibility is by far the most common observation made in AAPs for both periods. The overall evaluation shows that a mixed or resilience-building approach is used in four of the countries, while the remaining two tilt towards a liberal interventionist to mixed approach. Resilience-building measures were thus commonly used by the EU in the EaP before the introduction of the EUGS, corroborating previous research that perceives the Global Strategy as a mere rebranding of parlance. The most apparent change detected in the analysis of this dimension was that of an increased EU presence in the implementation of the programmes through a reiterated role of steering committees. A finding in contrast to the
assumption that the EUGS would implicate a more passive role for the EU, as is argued by Smith (2016) and others.

On the other hand, the analysis did show a somewhat changed approach regarding which internal actors were targeted as responsible for the implementations. Non-governmental actors such as CSOs and NGOs were to a greater extent portrayed as owners of both policy formulation and implementation in the later period, indicating a distribution of responsibility that connotes to resilience-building ideas. This observation is corroborated by most interview respondents who finds the strong focus on civil society in the EUGS as a major change from previous strategies. In the post-EUGS analysis of the responsibility and ownership dimension, Respondent 4, one of the EaP delegates to the EU, describes the renewed focus on CSOs as a reframing from the EU’s side contributing to greater inclusion of non-governmental actors. The role of civil society appears indeed to be strengthened with the EUGS, but the activities conducted are essentially the same as before, making claims of a paradigm shift seem overly optimistic.

Concerning the methods dimension, the results show a somewhat diverging picture. The logic for this dimension is based on the argument that methods and targets proposed by the paradigms of liberal interventionism and resilience differ significantly. The result of the analysis of this dimension shows a change over time from an overall liberal interventionist/mixed approach in the pre-EUGS period towards a mixed/resilience-building approach in the later period. Although the changes in this dimension are far from revolutionary, I argue that some key signs of a changed attitude towards state-building can be identified. As proponents of the resilience paradigm argue above, the shift would indicate a more smart-powered approach with combinations of hard and soft power that could circumvent old blockages. Given the increased bottom-up targeting in the later period, I argue the EU indeed can be understood to apply a new more pragmatic approach in the post-EUGS period, built on tailor-made solutions and context-sensitive adaptations. This result speaks to the literature claiming a change in EU foreign policy but is however not enough to proclaim a paradigm shift.

Regarding the instruments of implementation dimension, the result shows that the EU uses the same type of instruments for both periods with little or no change detected. Through the organisation of education, EU-conducted studies, work-shops and high-level meetings for CSOs and other non-governmental actors, the EU seemingly focus on instruments to motivate transformation in accord with a resilience-building approach. However, since this practice is common for both periods, I argue that it is unfeasible to claim that the introduction of the EUGS
has had any tangible implications for this dimension. Still, the result chimes well with the resilience paradigm and the findings from this dimension adds to the conclusion that the EU used an approach with resilience-building elements before the launch of the EUGS. The most explicit examples of this are found in the Belarusian AAPs. Most objectives, methods and instruments used in the cooperation with Belarus clearly express a resilience-building ideology despite the typical mixed to liberal interventionist approach of the pre-EUGS period. This is in line with the observation that the EU, to a certain degree, already was following a resilience-building approach in its foreign policy before the introduction of the EUGS, and I argue that the principled pragmatism concept should be understood as a continuation of already existing practices. Although the analysis has not resulted in any tangible evidence of significantly lowered ideological ambitions in the EU foreign policy as some scholars suggest, some of the answers received from the interviews might support their claim. As is shown above, Respondent 2 describes the development in EU-EaP relations over the last years as a shift away from a unilateral “megaphone diplomacy” following a mentoring psychology, towards a more tailor-made and “equal” partnership where the EU does not try to impose Western values. This speaks to the literature arguing that the EU’s pragmatic approach will result in a less persistent focus on unconditional values and liberal reforms. Even if one observation is far from enough for any conclusions to be drawn, fears about possible implications for the future promotion of democracy and human rights might be justified following this observation.

So, is it possible to detect a shift in the EU foreign policy for the EaP? Following the results of this study I argue that the short answer is no. The analysis has shown tendencies of a shift towards a larger focus on bottom-up interventions and a stronger role of civil society, but no large-scale practical differences seem to have taken place after the introduction of the EUGS. Further, the study has shown numerous examples of resilience-building measures used by the EU in the years before the EUGS, suggesting that the ideas behind the resilience paradigm were already present. These findings corroborate the arguments of Juncos (2017) who claim that the EU is caught between the old and the new and raises questions regarding the practical implications of the EUGS. Based on these results, the resilience-building approach and the principled pragmatism in the EUGS seems to be more about the Union trying to be honest with some of the policy it already follows, and less about a large-scale paradigm shift. This can be interpreted as a way for the EU to somewhat ease itself of the burden of moral prerogatives and to acknowledge its role as an interest driven international actor. Following my argumentation that the EaP is a most likely case for the resilience paradigm to be fully implemented, the result of this study leads to the conclusion that a paradigm shift is unlikely to occur in the rest of the
population. Since generalisation is a practice of assessment it is however important to note that there are differences between the parts of the population that can affect the implementation of resilience in various ways. Nevertheless, this study argues that a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy towards the paradigm of resilience has yet to take place.

8 Conclusion

In this thesis I have studied the foreign policy implementation for one of the world’s greatest political powers, the European Union. I have argued that since the EU has a unique influence over global democratisation and development, it is imperative to study and seek to understand its foreign policy implementation. As several scholars and policy-makers have claimed that the EUGS entails a paradigm shift towards resilience that will change how the EU formulates and implements its foreign policy, this thesis has sought to answer the question: does the proclaimed shift in EU foreign policy towards a resilience paradigm, introduced by the EUGS, reflect on the EU’s policies in practice, and if so how? The purpose of this thesis has thus been to empirically investigate whether or not a shift in EU foreign policy towards the paradigm of resilience indeed has taken place in practice after the launch of the EUGS. The study has been carried out by assessment of annual action programmes for the Eastern Partnership in combination with semi-structured elite interviews conducted with respondents from countries of the Eastern Partnership and representatives of the EU.

I argue that this thesis has made two main contributions to the research of EU foreign policy. First, I have made a theoretical contribution in the creation of an analytical framework which makes analyses of paradigm shifts from liberal interventionism to resilience possible for future studies. Second, the empirical findings have provided an account of the proclaimed paradigm shift where there previously has been an empirical gap. The result from this study is that no large-scale practical differences have occurred after the introduction of the EUGS and that resilience-building measures were already being used by the EU. I argue that the EUGS therefore should be regarded primarily as an attempt by the EU to be honest with what its foreign policy is and can achieve rather than proof of a paradigm shift. Following the argumentation that the EaP is a most likely case where the resilience paradigm would be implemented, the result of the study suggests that the EUGS is unlikely to inspire a paradigm shift towards resilience in other regions as well. Further studies on the empirical implications of the strategy are however needed in order to evaluate long-term implications of the resilience concept’s effect on EU foreign policy. Principled pragmatism and the resilience-building
approach might just change the way the EU acts in the future and it is my belief that the world has not seen the last of the resilience paradigm.
List of references


Smith, M.E., 2016. Implementing the Global Strategy where it matters most: the EU’s credibility deficit and the European neighbourhood. CONTEMPORARY SECURITY POLICY 16.


## Appendix

**Table (A1): Operationalised interview questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Operationalised interview questions</th>
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</table>
| **Objectives**      | 1. Could you describe your overarching goals with the partnership?  
2. How do you perceive the EU’s/EaP-countries’ overarching goals with the partnership?  
3. Can you give examples of how they have changed since the launch of the EUGS? |
| **Method**          | 4. Can you give examples of general approaches to reach the goals of the partnership?  
5. Could you describe how the cooperation between the EU and the partners works in general?  
6. Could you give examples of actors that are involved in the cooperation projects?  
7. Which actors are in your opinion the most important in order to achieve change and development? |
| **Responsibility and ownership** | 8. Could you describe the different roles in the partnership?  
9. Who is responsible for the development of the partnership?  
10. What is the EU’s responsibility towards the partners?  
11. Could you describe the role of local actors in working with cooperation projects?  
12. Who has ownership of the overall implementation of projects; has this changed since the launch of the EUGS? |
| **Instruments of implementation** | 13. Could you give examples of how projects concerning democracy and human rights have been implemented through the partnership?  
14. Can you give examples of how the implementation has changed since the launch of the EUGS?  
15. Can you give practical examples of how the partnership contributes to the management of local challenges?  
16. Can you give examples of the most important hands-on actions to reach the goals of the partnership? |
Botchorisvili, Maka. Deputy Head of Mission of Georgia to the European Union
Rabii, Igor. Counsellor, Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union
Sanchez Ruiz, Asuncion. Head of Political, Press and Information Section, EU delegation to Georgia
Shukurov, Anar. First Secretary, Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the European Union
Westerholm, Anna. Ambassador to the Eastern Partnership, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Figure (A1) Respondents

Table (2A): Analysed documents

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