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Abstract

In recent years, a great deal has been written in the scholarly literature about the role of resilience in our social world. This scholarship has sparked vivid theoretical debates in psychology, criminology, social work, and political geography about the nature of resilience and how scholars should go about studying it. Yet, International Relations and security studies have been relatively absent from the vibrant discussion. The term is employed but rarely unpacked, let alone theoretically analyzed. This article outlines some necessary steps of convergence, enabling a coherent framework for a resiliencist approach to the study of the securitization process. The bulk of the article lays out the premises of resiliencism; discusses the added-value of the approach, suggests distinguishing between three types of resilience, and illustrates the set of arguments with the case of the securitization of migration in France and in Canada.

Keywords

Resilience; Resiliencism; Securitization; Migration; Canada; France

Introduction

In recent years, a great deal has been written in the scholarly literature about the role of resilience in our social world. This scholarship has sparked vivid theoretical debates in psychology, criminology, social work, and political geography about the nature of resilience and how scholars should go about studying it. Indeed, psychologists have sought to uncover the internal and external resilient qualities that help people to bounce back and to adapt positively in the face of profound adversity – that is, adaptation that is substantially better than would have been expected given the circumstances. Several criminologists and social workers have proposed instead to ‘de-individualize’ resilience and to see it as a temporally and contextually informed process. Political geographers have employed resilience to analyze how co-evolving societies and natural/ecological systems can cope with, and develop from, disturbances. Understandably, environmental change and the environmental regime have been a central focus of attention for this literature.

Yet, political science, International Relations, and particularly security studies have been relatively absent from the vibrant discussion. To be sure, references to resilience have been made in terms of the erosion of sovereignty, social capital and the welfare state in the face of economic liberalization and globalization. Equally, a focus on urban resilience in the face of terrorism and counter insurgency has grown to become a dynamic field of research in the past decade. But while this scholarship has opened up a convincing space for understanding the role of resilience in the study of world politics there is very little coherence and consensus as to the nature and substance of resilience. The term is employed but rarely unpacked, let alone theoretically analyzed.

It is therefore imperative to attempt to pull together the pieces and to suggest a theorization of resiliencism as applied to world politics, and particularly to the securitization process. Indeed, resiliencism could lead to new theoretical and empirical ways of understanding the contemporary security world and could help us to gain a better understanding of the securitization process – i.e. the process of integrating an issue into security frameworks that emphasize policing and defense. The gist of the set of arguments that I put forward in this article is that resiliencism sheds new and significant light on the securitization process as well as on the instruments, strategies, and practices of contesting the securitization process.

The first section of this article provides a brief introduction to how the concept of resilience has been defined and deployed within social sciences and beyond. While recognizing the importance of these contributions, I argue that they all share elements that are problematic in a study about the relationship between contestation and securitization: they eschew that resilience has a dark side and that resilience is always a matter of degree. The second section, in providing a brief outline of the conceptual basis of resiliencism, underscores the usefulness of opting for an understanding of resiliencism as a dynamic, complex, and contextually-informed process. I further raise the stakes by proposing a typology of resilience – resilience as maintenance, resilience as marginality, and resilience as renewal (in short, the MMR resilience). In an effort to establish a dialogue between

ideas and evidence, I illustrate my arguments with the case of the securitization of migration in France and in Canada. The concluding remarks summon up the set of arguments presented and seek to identify some of the main challenges for research on resilience in world politics.

The dark side of resilience

Resilience is a concept that cut across several disciplines. Psychology, ecology, criminology, engineering sciences, human resources studies, nursing, organizational studies, computer science, and social work have all either tackled, debunked, measured, employed, studied, tested, hypothesized or criticized resilience.¹ Resilience has been identified as one of the most important and challenging concepts in contemporary psychology,² in ecology,³ and in human geography.⁴ As works on resilience have increased in recent years, so too have criticisms that resilience is imprecise or useless.⁵ Needless to say, thus, that resilience has attracted a significant amount of scholars' attention.

Political science, and security studies in particular, is a late comer in this field of research. The concept started to make inroads in International Relations a decade ago when scholars connected resilience with global governance, highlighting resilience in the face of economic liberalization,⁶ of globalization and labour market reforms,⁷ and of change in public service reforms.⁸ References to resilience has been made in terms of erosion (or lack thereof) of sovereignty⁹ and about NATO's future in a post-Cold war era,¹⁰ while others have employed the concept to describe Indonesia's national security doctrine in the 1960s.¹¹ In the same lineage, resilience of authoritarian regimes to democratic pressures

¹ Luthans, Fred, "The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23, no. 6 (2002), Ollier-Malaterre, Ariane, "Contributions of Work-Life and Resilience Initiatives to the Individual/Organization Relationship," *Human Relations* 63, no. 1 (2010), Anaut, Marie, "Le concept de résilience et ses applications cliniques," *Recherche en soins infirmiers* 82, no. 4-10 (2005), Bruneau, Michel, *et al.*, "A Framework to Quantitatively Assess and Enhance the Seismic Resilience of Communities," *Earthquake Spectra* 19, no. 4 (2003).

² von Eye, Alexander and Christof Schuster, "The Odds of Resilience," *Child Development* 71, no. 3 (2000).

³ Brand, Fridolin.S. and Kurt Jax, "Focusing the Meaning(s) of Resilience: Resilience as a Descriptive Concept and a Boundary Object," *Ecology and Society* 12, no. 1 (2007).

⁴ Zimmerer, Karl S., "Human geography and the new ecology: the prospect and promise of integration," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (1994).

⁵ Klein, Richard, J.T., *et al.*, "Resilience to natural hazards: How useful is this concept?," *Environmental Hazards* 5 (2003), Tisseron, Serge, *La résilience*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, (2007).

⁶ Ross Schneider, Ben, "Economic Liberalization and Corporate Governance: The Resilience of Business Groups in Latin," *Comparative Politics* 40, no. 4 (2008), Pfister, Ulrich and Christian Suter, "International Financial Relations As Part of the World-System," *International Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1987).

⁷ Yan Kong, Tat, "Globalization and Labour Market Reform: Patterns of Response in Northeast Asia," *British Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 2 (2006).

⁸ Clark, David, "Neoliberalism and Public Service Reform: Canada in Comparative Perspective," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (2002).

⁹ Ansell, Christopher K. and Steven Weber, "Organizing International Politics: Sovereignty and Open Systems," *International Political Science Review* 20, no. 1 (1999).

¹⁰ Barany, Zoltan and Robert Rauchhaus, "Explaining NATO's Resilience: Is International Relations Theory Useful?," *Contemporary Security Policy* 32, no. 2 (2011).

¹¹ Emmers, Ralf, "Comprehensive security and resilience in Southeast Asia: ASEANS' approach to terrorism," *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 2 (2009), Dewitt, David, "Common, comprehensive, and cooperative security," *The Pacific*

has been underscored¹² and the resilience of nationalism in the face of regionalism has been studied.¹³ Peter Hall has spoken about the resilience of social capital in Britain in light of the apparent erosion of social capital in the United States and Paul Pierson about the resilience of the welfare state.¹⁴

In spite of IR scholars relative neglect, the idea of resilience in the context of terrorism and of international intervention has gained popularity in recent years.¹⁵ America, for example, has been said to be resilient in its fight against terrorism and in mitigating natural disasters.¹⁶ Fuelled by the 2005 London bombings and the SARS outbreak, a focus on urban security and threat/risk management has grown to become a dynamic field of research.¹⁷ Efforts to improve preparedness, especially at the community and local level, were intensified, and emergency management infrastructure became a top priority for several governments.¹⁸ Other scholars juxtaposing resilience with biopolitic/biosecurity have interpreted resilience as a strategy for reconciling liberty and security.¹⁹ From a quite different angle, David Chandler has recently proposed distinguishing between the resilience paradigm and the liberal internationalist paradigm to the study of international intervention; the former being about prevention, empowerment, and responsible agency. He defines resilience as ‘the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external

Review 7, no. 1 (1994), Acharya, Amitav, “Culture, security, multilateralism: The ‘ASEAN way’ and regional order,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 19, no. 1 (1998).

¹² Nathan, Andrew J., “Authoritarian Resilience,” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003), Gilley, Bruce, “The Limits of Authoritarian Resilience,” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003), Slater, Dan, “Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia,” *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 1 (2003), Kamrava, Mehran, “Non-Democratic States and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East: A Structural Analysis,” *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1998), Case, William, “New Uncertainties for an Old Pseudo-Democracy: The Case of Malaysia,” *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 1 (2004), Byman, Daniel and Jennifer Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea,” *International Security* 35, no. 1 (2010).

¹³ Dieckhoff, Alain and Christophe Jaffrelot, “La résilience du nationalism face aux régionalismes et à la mondialisation,” *Critique internationale* 23, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁴ Hall, Peter A., “Social Capital in Britain,” *British Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (1999). Pierson, Paul, “The New Politics of the Welfare State,” *World Politics* 48, no. 2 (1996). see also Lindbom, Anders and Bo Rothstein, “La résilience du modèle suédois de Welfare dans l’économie mondialisée,” *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 13, no. 3 (2006).

¹⁵ Baruah, Sanjib, “Separatist Militants and Contentious Politics in Assam, India: The Limits of Counterinsurgency,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009).

¹⁶ Flynn, Stephen E., “America the Resilient: Defying Terrorism and Mitigating Natural Disasters,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (2008).

¹⁷ Coaffee, Jon and David Murakami Wood, “Security is Coming Home: Rethinking Scale and Constructing Resilience in the Global Urban Response to Terrorist Risk,” *International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2006), Harrigan, James and Philippe Martin, “Terrorism and the Resilience of Cities,” *Economic Policy Review* 8, no. 2 (2002), Coaffee, Jon and Peter Rogers, “Rebordering the City for New Security Challenges: From Counter-terrorism to Community Resilience,” *Space and Polity* 12, no. 1 (2008), Vale, Lawrence and Thomas Campanella, ed., *The Resilient City: How modern cities recover from disasters* Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2005).

¹⁸ Kahan, Jerome H., et al., “An Operational Framework for Resilience,” *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* 6, no. 1 (2009), Edwards, Charlie, *Resilient Nation*, London: Demos, (2009).

¹⁹ Lentzos, Filippa and Nikolas Rose, “Governing insecurity: contingency planning, protection, resilience,” *Economy and Society* 38, no. 2 (2009), Lundborg, Tom and Nick Vaughan-Williams, “Resilience, Critical Infrastructure, and Molecular Security: The Excess of “Life” in Biopolitics,” *International Political Sociology* 5, no. 4 (2011).

problems or threats'.²⁰ Whereas Mark Duffield, in his study of the aid industry, understands resilience as a postmodernist technology that internalizes emergency within society and focuses upon the adaptation of the individual.²¹

The importance of these studies should not be underestimated, particularly in making steps toward introducing resilience into the IR literature (broadly defined). Yet, these studies do not seek to theorize resilience nor do they offer any discussion toward such a goal for they are simply asking different sets of questions.

Psychologists, criminologists and social workers have been studying and theorizing resilience for a longer time than IR scholars.²² One of the main elements in this scholarship is the notion of 'bouncing back'. After all, the English word 'resilience' originated in the 16th and 17th centuries, deriving from the verb 'resile', which in turn was drawn from the Latin verb 'resilire', meaning to 'jump back, recoil'. Thus, the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune, adversity, unease, conflict, failure, and/or change is central.²³ A large strand of this scholarship aimed at uncovering the internal and external resilient qualities that help people to bounce back and to adapt positively in the face of profound adversity – that is, adaptation that is substantially better than would have been expected given the circumstances.²⁴ A special issue of the *American Psychologist* seeking to identify and describe resilient qualities (such as happiness, optimism, wisdom, creativity, etc) illustrates this line of research nicely.²⁵

Wanting to move away from a conception of resilience as a set of dispositional qualities or protective mechanisms of the individual, several criminologists and social workers have proposed instead to 'de-individualize' resilience and to see it as a process.²⁶ As such, the definition of resilience was slightly modified to 'a dynamic process encompassing positive

²⁰ Chandler, David, "Resilience and human security: The post-interventionist paradigm," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2012): 217.

²¹ Duffield, Mark, "Challenging environments: Danger, resilience and the aid industry," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 5 (2012). See also O'Malley, Pat, "Resilient subjects: Uncertainty, warfare and liberalism," *Economy and Society* 39, no. 4 (2010).

²² Garnezy, Norman, "The study of competence in children at risk for severe psychopathology," in *The child in his family: Children at psychiatric risk: III*, Anthony, E.J. and C. Koupernik New York: Wiley, (1974), Rutter, Michael, "Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 57, no. 316-331 (1987).

²³ Seery, Mark D., et al., "Whatever Does Not Kill Us: Cumulative Lifetime Adversity, Vulnerability, and Resilience," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99, no. 6 (2010).

²⁴ Hauser, Stuart, "Understanding resilient outcomes: Adolescent lives across time and generations," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 9, no. 1 (1999), Donnon, T. and W. Hammond, "Understanding the relationships between resiliency and bullying in adolescence," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 16 (2007), Bonanno, George A., "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience. Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?," *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004).

²⁵ Seligman, Martin and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology: An Introduction," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000).

²⁶ Rungay, Judith, "Scripts for safer survival: Pathways out of female crime," *Howard Journal* 43 (2004), Gilgun, Jane F., "Evidence-based practice, descriptive research and the resilience-schema-gender-brain functioning assessment," *British Journal of Social Work* 35, no. 6 (2005), Seccombe, Karen, "Beating the odds" versus "Changing the odds": Poverty, resilience, and family policy," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 2 (2002), Norris, Fran H., et al., "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41 (2008).

adaptation within the context of significant adversity'.²⁷ Resilience is therefore seen not as a set of predetermined qualities that an individual possesses (or not), but as a temporally and contextually informed process.²⁸

The fields of political geography and environmental studies have also been dynamic in studying resilience, albeit from a different angle. A large strand of literature employs resilience to analyze how co-evolving societies and natural/ecological systems can cope with, and develop from, disturbances. Stemming from the ecological sciences, this scholarship seeks to address persistence and change in ecosystems,²⁹ socio-ecological systems,³⁰ and in terms of the impacts of natural hazards.³¹ Environmental change and particularly changes of environmental regime have been understandably a central focus of attention.³²

Table 1. Multidisciplinary definitions of resilience

	Focus	Levels of analysis	Definitions
Resilience	Positive adaptation	Individual	The capacity of an individual to positively bounce back from adversity
Resilience	Positive adaptation, process	Individual	A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity
Engineering	Equilibrium,	System	About studying the conditions specifying how far a

²⁷ Luthar, Suniya S., *et al.*, “The Construct of Resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work,” *Child Development* 71, no. 3 (2000): 543, see also Masten, Ann S. and Jenifer L. Powell, “A resilience framework for research, policy and practice,” in *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities*, Luthar, Suniya S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2003).

²⁸ Ronel, Natti and Ety Elisha, “A Different Perspective: Introducing Positive Criminology,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 55, no. 2 (2011), Ungar, Michael, “A Constructionist Discourse on Resilience,” *Youth & Society* 35, no. 3 (2004), Schoon, Ingrid, *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in changing times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2006), Ungar, Michael, “The Social Ecology of Resilience: Addressing Contextual and Cultural Ambiguity of a Nascent Construct,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 81, no. 1 (2011).

²⁹ Carpenter, Steven R., *et al.*, “From metaphor to measurement: resilience of what to what?,” *Ecosystems* 4 (2001), Holling, C. S., “Engineering resilience versus ecological resilience,” in *Engineering within ecological constraints*, Schulze, P Washington DC: National Academy Press, (1996), Gunderson, Lance H., “Ecological Resilience - in theory and application,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 31 (2000).

³⁰ Berkes, Fikret, *et al.*, ed., *Navigating social-ecological systems: building resilience for complexity and change* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2003), Walker, Brian H., *et al.*, “Exploring resilience in social-ecological systems through comparative studies and theory development: introduction to the special issue,” *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 1 (2006).

³¹ Zhou, Hongjian, *et al.*, “Resilience to natural hazards: a geographic perspective,” *Natural Hazards* 53, no. 1 (2010), Cutter, Susan L., “A Place-Based Model for Understanding Community Resilience to Natural Disasters,” *Global Environmental Change* 18 (2008), Klein, *et al.*, “Resilience to natural hazards: How useful is this concept?,” Renaud, Fabrice G., *et al.*, “Understanding multiple thresholds of coupled social-ecological systems exposed to natural hazards as external shocks,” *Natural Hazards* 55, no. 3 (2010).

³² Young, Oran R, “Institutional dynamics: Resilience, vulnerability and adaptation in environmental and resource regimes,” *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010) 378–385 20 (2010), Duit, Andreas, *et al.*, “Governance, Complexity, and Resilience,” *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010).

resilience	return to stability		system can be displaced from a fixed point of equilibrium and still return to that equilibrium once the disturbance has passed
Ecological resilience	Disturbance, persistence	System	The capacity of a system to experience disturbance and still maintain its ongoing functions and controls
Socio-ecological resilience	Robustness, reorganisation, stability	System	The amount of disturbance a system can absorb and still remain within the same state, the degree to which the system is capable of self-organization, and the degree to which the system can build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation

This literature has provided several perspectives on resilience and, in spite of the fact that there appears to be no consensus on how resilience should be theorized, three main currents have emerged: engineering resilience, ecological resilience, and socio-ecological resilience. Engineering resilience is associated with the concept of equilibrium and is about studying the conditions specifying how far a system can be displaced from a fixed point of equilibrium and still return to that equilibrium once the disturbance has passed. Ecological resilience somewhat moves away from the idea of equilibrium and is defined as the capacity of a system to experience disturbance and still maintain its ongoing functions and controls. In the words of one of the most important advocates, ecological resilience determines the persistence of relationships within a system and is a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes and still persist.³³ Unsatisfied with these perspectives, scholars have come up with ‘social-ecological resilience’ to emphasize that the delineation between social and ecological systems is, in fact, artificial and arbitrary. These scholars have transformed research on resilience by arguing that the focus of resilience is not only on being robust to disturbance but also on the opportunities that emerge, in terms of self-reorganization, recombination, and the emergence of new trajectories.³⁴

As summarized in Table 1, these definitions share three elements that are problematic for the transference of resilience thinking to the study of IR and particularly to securitization studies. These problems will be highlighted below, using the case study of the relationship between contestation and the securitization of migration. Firstly, they start with the premise that the disturbance (or the shock) is inherently negative and that resilience is about positive adaptation. There is indeed a large acceptance in this literature that resilience is good and thus must be promoted. This might simply be a disciplinary bias as resilience is often employed to describe the capacity to react to sexual abuse, terrorist

³³ Holling, C. S., “Resilience and stability of ecological systems,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 17.

³⁴ Walker, Brian H. and J.A. Meyers, “Thresholds in ecological and socio-ecological systems: a developing database,” *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2 (2004), Folke, Carl, “Resilience: the emergence of a perspective for social-ecological systems analyses,” *Global Environmental Change* 16 (2006), Berkes, Fikret and Carl Folke, ed., *Linking social and ecological systems: management and practices and social mechanisms* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1998).

attacks, or disturbances of global ecological systems. Being resilient in the face of such trauma is unequivocally a positive adaptation.

Notwithstanding, resilience defined as positive adaptation eschews that resilience has a dark side, especially in societal terms. Resilience is not always a desirable feature of social, political or economic life. Being resilient might in fact mean being an obstacle to positive change in some cases. I am not arguing that one should find a way to interpret terrorist attacks in large cities as positive policy. But I do argue that there might be good reasons for wanting to transform a social structure, a given situation, a regime, a norm, an economic system of exploitation, etc., and that being resilient to these changes could be considered as negative. Displaying an *a priori* normative bias seems rather limiting here as adaptability may be both positive and negative. Approaches to resilience should be able to theorize situations in which endogenous or exogenous shocks could be seen as positive and in which a resilient strategy could be understood as negative. I hope to show in the following section that starting with an inherently negative understanding of the disturbance limits more than it enables in the case of international migration. Furthermore, as heated debates are currently unfolding in securitization research about whether the process of securitizing an issue is inherently normatively positive,³⁵ it appears rather timely and important that our understanding of resilience remains normatively open and avoids this closure.

The second element that these models have in common is their tendency to understand resilience in a binary way. Resilience is usually seen as an all or nothing concept: either there is resilience or there is not. One direct consequence of this is that the notion of a scalar understanding of resilience is either under-theorized or entirely lacking in some cases. Just as there is a scale of securitization,³⁶ there is a scale of resilience. Another consequence of treating resilience in a binary way is that it eschews the question of types of resilience. This is problematic because it creates a disconnection – in theoretical and empirical terms – between the complexity of contemporary security policy and the analytical framework proposed to make sense of the different patterns of response that security policy brings.

A third limit of some of these models – especially the engineering and ecological resilience approaches – is their positivist inclinations and traditional linear conception of causality. These models have difficulties accommodating the plurality of meanings, the complexity of social worlds, the inter-subjectivity of knowledge and measurement, and multifaceted contexts. The applicability of ecosystem-derived dynamics to explain the social world

³⁵ Floyd, Rita, *Security and the Environment: Securitisation theory and US environmental security policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2010), Aradau, Claudia, “Security and the democratic scene: desecuritization and emancipation,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7, no. 4 (2004), McDonald, Matt, “Deliberation and Resecuritization: Australia, Asylum-Seekers and the Normative Limits of the Copenhagen School,” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 2 (2011), Hansen, Lene, “Reconstructing desecuritisation: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 6 (2012).

³⁶ Bourbeau, Philippe, *The Securitization of Migration. A study of movement and order*, London: Routledge, (2011).

composed of complex social structures and reflexive agents remains, thus far, unclear and unconvincing.³⁷

Resiliencism: Premises and the MMR typology

With the limits of these definitions in mind, I suggest an alternative conceptualisation of resilience as the process of patterned adjustments adopted by a society or an individual in the face of endogenous or exogenous shocks. Resiliencism is then a conceptual framework for understanding how continuity and transformation take place under these circumstances.

This position has multiple advantages in the context of a study about the relationship between contestation and securitization. Firstly, it obviously moves away from a conception of social equilibrium; it rids resiliencism of the assumption of a return to equilibrium. Indeed, the underlying model of change in engineering resilience (and resilience as positive adaptation) is of a system in equilibrium disturbed by exogenous forces. In contrast, the approach adopted here underscores that the sources of change may be endogenous or exogenous and that the outcome of change is not necessarily a return to a previous equilibrium. Instead of returning to some prior equilibrium, societies often make adjustments that are best understood as moves to maintain their compatibility with the social construction of their particular collective identity and changing circumstances. Resilience is thereby grasped as an inherently dynamic and complex process.

Secondly, while resilience involves disturbances and adaptation, the ways in which disturbances and adaptation are understood and experienced may differ from context to context, from culture to culture, and from individual to individual. Hence, resilience is dependent on time and context. Resilience can refer to how well a society is navigating through some past adversity such as 9/11 (retrospective), how successfully a society is navigating through some current adversity (concurrent), or the likelihood that a society will successfully navigate through disturbance in the future (prospective). In addition it should be noted that a society may be able to respond with resilience to a particular type of adversity (terrorist attacks) but not to another (rise in urban criminality), or at one time in its history (during the cold war) but not in another (in a post-cold war era).

A third, and crucial, point is that disturbances or shocks are interpretative moments. They do not objectively exist out there waiting to exercise influence. Endogenous or exogenous shocks rarely speak for themselves in the social world. Agents have to interpret shock as being a security threat or a disturbance for that shock to become a security threat. As such, events such as the so-called 'worldwide refugee crisis' of the early 1990's might be seen as a disturbance by one society and not by another one.³⁸ The meaning of an event as a disturbance is often a social construction involving multiple directionality and constant interactions between agential powers and the social structure.

³⁷ Adger, Neil W., "Social and ecological resilience: are they related?," *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 3 (2000).

³⁸ Bourbeau, *The Securitization of Migration. A study of movement and order*.

Contrary to Leach *et al*³⁹ who argue that scholars adopting a resiliencist approach have so far failed to recognize that how resilience is evaluated depends on context and perspective, I argue that if resilience is about anything it is about context and perspective. For some scholars (particularly mainstream security studies ones), this is what makes resiliencism a useless approach. Fully accepting the importance of contextuality does in fact render difficult – if not impossible – the development of a comprehensive theory of resilience, applicable across cases and time. Yet, for those inclined to fully accept the complexity of the social world and the inherent limits that this complexity imposes on our knowledge, this is what makes resiliencism an especially stimulating approach. A context-informed resiliencism stimulates a richer dialogue between ideas and evidence.

Resilience is always a matter of degree; complete immunity towards disturbances and shocks does not exist. As such, societies can be more or less resilient both diachronically and synchronically. Resilience is also constantly in flux. It is not a fixed attribute or an unchangeable characteristic of a society or an individual. No society is always resilient and resilience does not express itself in a flat, stable, or variation-free way. Resilience does not imply finality as the process can never be fully completed; the process is inherently dynamic and always in movement. Furthermore, resilience is always normatively open, depending on the conceptualisation of both the referent system and the crisis or shock to it. For example, on the one hand, resilience could be seen as negative if it reproduces fixed constructions of collective or national identity. On the other hand, resilience could be seen as positive, for example, as a response to a racist public policy shift. In sum, the concept has many sides and thus cannot be seen as intrinsically positive.

Inspired by Stephen Dovers and John Handmer's typology,⁴⁰ I further propose to identify three types of resilience (see Table 2). I indeed distinguish between resilience as Maintenance, resilience as Marginality, and resilience as Renewal – in short the 'MMR' typology.

The first type – resilience as Maintenance – is characterized by adaptation in which resources and energy will be expended in maintaining the status quo. The importance and saliency (and 'threateness') of the problem will often be exaggerated in order to better justify the necessity to implement measures to uphold the status quo against changes provoked by the events. Re-affirmation of the value, benefit, and importance of the status quo will be made on several occasions. A society relying strongly on this type of resilience will deal with endogenous and exogenous shocks with rigidity and will underscore the potentially negative transformative consequences brought about by these events. Disturbances or shocks are not by definition problematic or negative; they will be socially constructed as being threatening and dangerous by dominant discourses. Although the possibility that a disconnection between security discourses and security practices exists,

³⁹ Leach, Melissa, *et al.*, "Governing epidemics in an age of complexity: Narratives, politics and pathways to sustainability," *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010).

⁴⁰ Dovers, Stephen R. and John W. Handmer, "Uncertainty, sustainability and change," *Global Environmental Change* 2, no. 4 (1992), Handmer, John W. and Stephen R. Dovers, "A Typology of Resilience: Rethinking Institutions for Sustainable Development," *Industrial & Environmental Crisis Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1996).

resilience as maintenance will often see an alignment of discourse and practices. Rhetoric and discursive powers will be deployed to portray the event as a significant threat and security practices will also be either implemented or strengthened as a response.

In the context of international migration, a society opting for resilience as maintenance will identify the movement of people (either through an emphasis on ‘mass migration’ or ‘illegal migration’) as an important security threat and as a threat to collective identity that should be fought. The arrival of boatload of refugees on the country’s shores will be interpreted as a security threat to the host society and its social cohesion. Agents’ securitizing moves will reinforce the saliency of the threat and the need to further fix collective/national identity.

The case of how dominant narratives in France interpreted the so-called worldwide refugee crisis of the early 1990s and the chosen pattern of adaptation to this exogenous shock is a clear example of resilience as maintenance. Indeed, while the number of refugees worldwide was 9 million in 1984, it reached a peak of 18 million in 1992. The surge gave rise to all sorts of projections and scenarios such as the image of waves of refugees and the uncontrollable and unstoppable movement of people. And it gave securitizing agents the opportunity, if they were so inclined, to present international migration as a security threat requiring an urgent and strong response otherwise the breakdown of social cohesion beckoned and the very notion of a French nation was in peril. It turned out that there were numerous agents happy to use such a triggering set of events to pursue a securitization agenda.

As early as 1991, Socialist Minister of the Interior Philippe Marchand (January 1991 to April 1992) argued that uncontrolled migratory movement would be a threat to France’s economy and security.⁴¹ His successor, Paul Quilès (April 1992 to March 1993) spoke of the security threat of irregular migration on a number of occasions, arguing that regaining control over immigration was a fundamental element in maintaining social cohesion in France and that irregular immigration had be fought accordingly. Sections of the media joined in, *Le Figaro*, one of the most important newspapers in France with a weekly circulation of two million copies, argued in 1990 that ‘we must suspend immigration otherwise everything is possible: the country is on the verge of burning fiercely’⁴² and that immigration was ‘de-structuralizing French society’.⁴³ Other editorialists openly wondered whether France had a future as a nation⁴⁴ on the basis that ‘the wave will never stop growing’.⁴⁵

In 1993, center-right Prime Minister Édouard Balladur (March 1993 to May 1995) argued that the early 1990s was no ordinary time in the history of France. In fact, it was ‘the most difficult period since the war’ and that bridging the traditional left/right political division

⁴¹ Marchand, Philippe, *Discours de Philippe Marchand, Ministre de l'Intérieur, "Un projet global pour la securite interieure"*, Paris: Ministère de l'Intérieur, 20 novembre, (1991), 3.

⁴² Giesbert, Franz-Olivier, “Éditorial,” *Le Figaro* 2 avril (1990): 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lambroschini, Charles, “Éditorial,” *Le Figaro* 23 avril (1992): 1.

⁴⁵ Marchetti, Xavier, “Éditorial,” *Le Figaro* 1er avril (1993): 1.

was essential to tackle the problem effectively.⁴⁶ He further argued that if measures were not implemented, then ‘what is happening elsewhere would happen in France: principles to which we are profoundly attached [would be put] in serious peril’. ‘France is an old nation’, he continued, ‘which intends to survive and remain the same’.⁴⁷

Echoes of resilience as maintenance also found expressions in Charles Pasqua’s mandate as Minister of the Interior in the Balladur government. Pasqua pushed for a securitization of migration in an unprecedented way, arguing that international migration, particularly clandestine immigration, needed to be urgently and strongly combated otherwise France’s national cohesion would be threatened and France’s national identity would disappear. French people needed to remain strongly together, to foster the national community, and to understand that his bill reinforcing repressive measures to impede access to French territory and to limit the entry of several categories of migrants constituted the ‘last chance to save France’s integration model’.⁴⁸

The second type – resilience as Marginality – is characterized by responses that bring changes at the margins but that do not challenge the basis of a policy (or a society). Resilience as marginality implies responding within the boundaries of the current policy, norm, and/or social structure. The nature and importance of the ‘problem’ will often be presented as being less salient than with the first type of resilience, but an effort to acknowledge the issue and to recognize that marginal adjustment is needed will be made. There is a danger that the minor changes implemented may delay the major changes that some may argue are required. There is also the possibility that the marginal adjustments made at one point in time (and thought of as being marginal at that time) become extremely important and influential at another point in time (and thus not seen as marginal anymore). This type of resilience will often see a disconnection between security discourses and security practices. In some cases, discursive powers will be almost absent and marginal changes in security practices will take place. In other cases, security practices will mostly remain the same but a shift in discourse and how the event is discursively represented will constitute the source of marginal yet important adjustments. As such, studies emphasizing the role of security practices might reveal different patterns of responses than a focus on speech and discourses – and vice versa.

In the particular context of international migration, a society opting for resilience as marginal change will emphasize the need for marginal adjustment given the considerable increase in the movement of people in the past two decades. But there won’t be a whole scale rethinking of the immigration policy. Dominant discourses will highlight the need to keep adjustments within the boundaries of the existing immigration policy. ‘New

⁴⁶ Balladur, Édouard, *Déclaration de politique générale de M. Édouard Balladur, Premier ministre, à l'Assemblée nationale*, Paris: Bureau du Premier Ministre, 8 avril, <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/933113800.html> (consulted on December 19, 2012), (1993).

⁴⁷ Balladur, Édouard, *Déclaration de M. Édouard Balladur, Premier ministre, sur le bilan des réformes du gouvernement, aux journées parlementaires du RPR, La Rochelle*, Paris: Bureau du Premier Ministre, (1993), 4.

⁴⁸ Pasqua, Charles, *Intervention de M. Charles Pasqua, Ministre de l'Intérieur, à l'université d'été des jeunes RPR*, Paris: Ministère de l'Intérieur, 4 septembre, (1993).

challenges' brought by the disturbances will be acknowledged but reassurance will be made that current immigration policy can adapt successfully and that an extensive revision of the policy is not required to deal with these challenges. Efforts to crystallize the collective identity of the host society will be present but less salient and powerful than with resilience as maintenance. Practices at the heart of the securitization of migration (e.g. detention policy) will be maintained and most likely further developed and expanded. However, no fundamental governmental reorganisation will be pursued as a response to the disturbance.

The arrival of 599 Chinese refugees on Canada's western shores in four decrepit boats and one shipping container during the late summer of 1999 – the so-called 'Chinese summer of 1999' – is illustrative of resilience as marginality. This exogenous shock resulted in a groundswell of emotion across Canada and significant media coverage for a few months, and it prompted debate over state sovereignty, radicalization, citizenship, collective identity and failing immigration and refugee policies.⁴⁹ While Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (November 1993 to December 2003) played down the arrival by emphasizing that more asylum applicants arrive in Toronto (Canada's largest city) every month than arrived by ship on Canada's west coast in summer 1999, two political agents, in particular, competed in the effort to inscribe meaning to the crisis and to define Canada's reaction to the exogenous shock: Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign affairs (January 1996 to October 2000), and Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (August 1999 to January 2002). Caplan's interpretation of the 'Chinese summer of 1999', and what it meant for the immigration and security policy of Canada, ultimately prevailed.

Instead of mounting a charge to the effect that immigration was bringing all sorts of security problems to Canada, Axworthy cast the whole incident under the human security agenda. That is, that the arrival of the boats 'brought home to Canadians the ugly reality of another human security threat of global proportions - the smuggling and trafficking of human beings'.⁵⁰ In fact, the 'Chinese summer of 1999' was a sordid illustration that 'millions of vulnerable people have been forced from their homes; been driven to borders which are open one minute and closed the next; forced into hiding; separated from their families; made to act as human shields; stripped of their identities; sexually abused; and callously killed'.⁵¹

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan decided to interpret this exogenous shock differently. In one of her first speeches following the event, Caplan kept the

⁴⁹ Bourbeau, Philippe, "Processus et acteurs d'une vision sécuritaire des migrations : le cas du Canada," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* forthcoming (2013), Bourbeau, Philippe, "Politisation et sécuritisation des migrations internationales: le cas du Canada," *Critique Internationale* forthcoming (2013), Bourbeau, *The Securitization of Migration. A study of movement and order*, Mountz, Alison, *Seeking asylum: human smuggling and bureaucracy at the border*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, (2010).

⁵⁰ Axworthy, Lloyd, *Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Atlantic Diplomatic Forum*, Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs, November 5, (1999), 3.

⁵¹ Axworthy, Lloyd, *Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Middlebury College 200th Anniversary Symposium on International Affairs*, Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs, March 30, (2000), 2.

traditional focus on the ‘abusers’ while adding something new: a security component through the issue of detention. ‘We know that if an accelerated process is part of the solution, so is an enhanced detention policy’ argued the Minister. ‘We have already announced proposals to increase detention if a person is undocumented and uncooperative... We will take every action necessary to deal with the abuse of immigration and refugee processes’ continued Caplan.⁵²

Caplan’s key message was that there was no need for a large-scale rethinking of Canada’s immigration policy, only adaptation at the margins of how Canada dealt with some aspects of the movement of people.⁵³ Detaining migrants in correctional facilities to counter the security threat of the arrival of boats loaded with refugees was the key adaptation to the Chinese summer. Citizenship and Immigration Canada had had a contingency plan for the arrival of refugee boats since the late 1980’s, but changes were made to the plan to allow the systematic use of containment and detention in cases similar to the Chinese summer. Unsurprisingly, the use of detention of migrants in correctional facilities to manage refugee and migration flows saw an increase of more than 50 per cent between 1999 and 2003.⁵⁴

The third type – resilience as Renewal – is characterised by responses that transform basic policy assumptions and, thus, potentially remodel social structures. Resilience as renewal implies introducing novel vectors of response that will (in an implicit or explicit way) fundamentally change existing policies and set new directions for governance in this field. Redefinitions, however, do not take place in a vacuum but draw on past experiences, collective memory and social history, as well as the windows of opportunity upon which agential powers decide to act (or not).⁵⁵ As with resilience as maintenance, the importance of the disturbance (or the shock) may often be exaggerated, but unlike the objectives of the first type of resilience, that seek to maintain the status quo, the goal here is to present the option of renewal as inescapable. The disturbance has such profound ramifications that substantial re-organization of the policy is strongly desired. Redefinition often involves important shifts in interpretation and meaning, in agents’ power relations, as well as in institutional and organizational configurations. The particular social mechanisms by which

⁵² Caplan, Elinor, *Remarks by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Canadian Club*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, September 9, (1999), 4.

⁵³ Caplan, Elinor, *Remarks by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Canadian Club*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, September 9, (1999), Caplan, Elinor, *Statement by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, on Illegal Human Smuggling to Canada*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, August 11, (1999), Caplan, Elinor, *Notes for an Address by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Council for Refugees*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, December 3, (1999), Caplan, Elinor, *Notes for an Address by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the European Union Seminar on Illegal Migration*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, July 20, (2000), Caplan, Elinor, *Notes for an Address by the Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Bill C-11 The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, March 1, (2001).

⁵⁴ Bourbeau, *The Securitization of Migration. A study of movement and order*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

redefinition and renewal are carry through are multiple and could include analytic deliberation, nesting strategies, institutional variety, etc.⁵⁶

Table 2. Resilience in securitization research: a typology

Types	Focus	Discourses and Practices	Outcome	International Migration
Resilience as Maintenance	Quest for constancy and stability	Often aligned	Fixing national identity; Resurgence and/or saliency of political usage of collective memory; Reinforcement of existing agents' power relations	Arrival of boatload of refugees interpreted as a security issue for a society; Potential threat to social cohesion if nothing is done
Resilience as Marginality	Marginal adjustments	Often not-aligned	Changes at the margins that do not fundamentally challenge a policy; Responses within the boundaries of the norm or social structure	No wholesale rethinking of the immigration policy; Dominant discourses highlight that current immigration policy can adapt successfully
Resilience as Renewal	Efforts to remodel social structures	Often aligned	Remodelling of a given policy or social structures; Pressure (and potentially shift) in agents' power relations; Low mobilisation of collective/social memory	Profound reform of immigration and citizenship policy; The arrival of boatload of refugees seen as offering a window of opportunity for a new beginning

This is not to argue that everything would be created anew after a disturbance, as if events and agency were unfolding in a social vacuum. Yet, resilience as renewal means that disturbances would play a triggering role in a sustained and systematic effort to change profoundly a given policy or how a society understands and interprets a particular set of issues.

In the context of securitized migration, a society opting for resilience as renewal will identify the disturbances created by international migration as a window of opportunity to reform their understanding of the movement of people, and eventually their relationship with diversity and alterity. Renewal could take the form of embarking on a profound remodelling of how migration is described and perceived. Citizenship and refugee determination policy programmes or national security policy might be entirely reformed, for example.

These types are not mutually exclusive and they can be found in the same society diachronically and synchronically. Furthermore, a society can adopt one type of resilience

⁵⁶ Dietz, Thomas, *et al.*, "The Struggle to Govern the Commons," *Science* 302, no. 5652 (2003).

in one domain and another type of resilience in another domain. By definition, resilience as maintenance is no more normatively negative or positive than resilience as renewal; as such, there is no normative continuum that starts with maintenance and ends with renewal.

Conclusion

A number of researchers have recently questioned the theoretical approaches of the securitization process by emphasizing the role of contesting strategies in security studies.⁵⁷ Still, studying social mechanisms of contesting securitization in IR remains an uphill debate with many questions being raised but few being resolved. This article has sought to deepen our understanding of the various meanings and practices that can be attached to resiliencism in different socio-cultural contexts. In doing so, I have (a) briefly traced the evolution of the definition of resilience; (b) put forward a few premises of a resiliencist approach as applied to securitization research; and (c) proposed to distinguish between three types of resilience.

Resiliencism holds a great deal of potential for renewing the wider security and governance research agenda. Resiliencism broadens the definition of resilience beyond its meaning as a set of qualities that an individual possesses or as a process of positive adaptation in the face of threats. Multi-type resilience helps in understanding the constant and complex interplay between persistence and change, reproduction and transformation. A resiliencist approach provides one among several arenas for generating integrative and interdisciplinary collaboration on issues of change and stability, adaptation and design, hierarchy and self-organization in the study of contemporary security governance. All in all, resiliencism may hold the key for developing securitization research in dynamic directions as it may establish new areas of empirical investigation currently either ignored by mainstream security scholars or overlooked by critical security scholars.

Notwithstanding these potentials, resiliencism comes with thorny challenges that will most likely orient future research. One of the most important challenges is a methodological one. Undoubtedly, there is a lack of a methodological toolkit that could adequately capture the role of resilience in securitization research and in world politics. This is hardly surprising given the fact that a resilient approach to the study of securitization is still very much in its infancy. Yet, the question of whether mainstream social sciences methods are capable of incorporating all aspects of resilience might be the logical and conventional place to start. Research attuned to practices, genealogy, and deconstruction might offer more promises. All in all, the best we can hope at this stage of the research is the participation of a multiplicity of research methods in our quest to better understand resilience in world politics.

⁵⁷ Balzacq, Thierry, ed., *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* London: Routledge, (forthcoming), Bourbeau, "Politisation et sécuritisation des migrations internationales: le cas du Canada."