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Localizing resilience: discursive projections, entrapments and domination

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Introduction

Resilience has become a central notion in the discourse of international foreign aid and development institutions and actors. Although it was often used metaphorically in political realms, extensive theorization of resilience and its appropriation by hegemonic international actors contributes to its conceptual stabilization. Despite the wealth of literature on resilience, the interrogation of the discursive projections and power plays that underpins the concept when it is applied at the local level have been rarely considered. Julian Reid, for example, demonstrated how colonial discourses—in the American, Canadian and Nordic contexts—projected resilience as a trait that is inherent to indigenous peoples' being and way of life.¹ The aim here, as he observed, is to dominate indigenous imagination and facilitate colonial and neoliberal intrusions. This was echoed by another study that highlighted how resilience is used as part of the settler-colonial and neoliberal structured attack on the resource rights of indigenous people of Australia.² These few critical studies reveal a curious process in which power relations are projected under the guise of building and supporting local resilience. It is therefore vital to empirically and critically examine this process to further understand its implications in different contexts.

In this article, I interrogate the dynamic of discursive projections of resilience in the policy circles of hegemonic development and foreign aid institutions. The discussion is animated by two key questions: first, how does resilience projection operate? And second, for what purposes? These questions will be pursued by examining the EU's approach to resilience and the associations it makes between resilience and the Palestinian concept of *sumud*. This focus on the resilience-*sumud* relationship is particularly helpful to understand the practice that projects exogenous notions onto local concepts and practices because the meaning of *sumud* is well-developed in the Palestinian context and resonates in the Arabic-speaking world. The interplay between *sumud* and resilience illustrates a general practice of co-optation and capturing of local practices and concepts into hegemonic international discourses and interventions.

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¹ Julian Reid, "Ensnare the Language": Imagination and Resilience in Indigenous Arts of the Self. In *The Politics of Knowledge*, edited by Samuli Hurri and Iiris Kestilä (Helsinki: Samuli Hurri, 2019): 16–41.

² Anna Stanley, 'Resilient Settler Colonialism: "Responsible Resource Development," "Flow-Through" Financing, and the Risk Management of Indigenous Sovereignty in Canada', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 48, no. 12 (2016): 2422–2442.

The incorporation of resilience into realms of foreign policy, development aid and power-politics imbues its meanings, and therefore this translation is out of touch with the new discursive and political landscape on resilience.

Scholarship on Palestine tended to translate the Arabic expression *sumud* into 'resilience' at face value, providing a useful starting point for donors to project their politically-driven conceptions of the word. The incorporation of resilience into realms of foreign policy, development aid and power-politics imbues its meanings, resulting in *sumud* ultimately becoming out of touch with resilience's discursive and political landscape. There is no satisfactory translation of the word *sumud*, and steadfastness, perseverance, tenacity to the land, staying put, getting by and resilience are used interchangeably in the literature. But the original word is usually bracketed to indicate the inability of foreign terms to carry its full meaning. Aid and development actors make no such concession and readily use *sumud* as an attempt to indigenize their definition of resilience and afford exogenous interventions a semblance of local normative value. The loaded political meanings and registers attached to resilience serve certain political purposes and outcomes.

I argue that projections of exogenous notions onto locally resonant concepts and practices aim to achieve conceptual transfer, with the aim of grafting dominant understandings onto local concepts, tropes and practices and facilitating the subtle internalization of these notions and their underpinning rationalities. The donor-receiver dynamic reinforces a system of power relations that utilizes conceptual projections to embed powerful actors' conceptions of resilience into the imagination and policy frameworks of receiving subjects. As will be demonstrated, the projection of *sumud* as resilience displaces the registers and practices of the former and replaces them with those of the latter. The resilience-*sumud* discourse gives the semblance of local ownership and self-mastery. However, the deployment of external interventions is, in the first instance, based on the belief that local populations lack resilience and therefore need to be improved and made resilient.³

Discourse analysis methodology is used throughout the article to disentangle processes of meaning projection. I generally adopt a Foucauldian approach and therefore take discourse as (linguistic and non-linguistic) meaning-producing representations and practices that make certain identifications, subjectifications, political outcomes and power relations possible.⁴ Closer scrutiny of the resilience-*sumud* interplay shows the significance and power of translation and conceptual alignment to capture the Palestinian concept and practice of *sumud*, and graft an external rationality onto them. This interplay creates a simulacrum that casts a local, and even national, semblance and purchase over 'resilience' that facilitates the acceptance of its externally-defined registers without much resistance at the receiving end. And this discursive process is therefore integral to the performativity of resilience-building.

In this article, I focus primarily on the EU's resilience discourse and place particular emphasis on Palestine, with the intention of building on a theme that I have explore in more detail elsewhere.⁵ The significance of the findings however goes beyond a specific

³Mark Duffield, 'How Did We Become Unprepared? Emergency and Resilience in an Uncertain World', *British Academy Review* 21 (2013): 55–58.

⁴Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse'. In *Language and Politics*, edited by Michael Shapiro (New York: The New York University Press, 1984), 108–138; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁵Emile Badarin, 'Politics and Economy of Resilience: EU Resilience-Building in Palestine and Jordan and Its Disciplinary Governance', *European Security* 30, no. 1 (2021): 65–84.

actor or case, and more generally relates to how conceptual transfer and projections operate in resilience discourse. The EU has emerged as a key player in shaping the conceptual and normative agenda of international, governmental and non-governmental development aid organizations. For example, EU resilience interventions are often commissioned by international and national organizations (e.g. Save the Children, UNDP, WHO, UN-Habitat, Oxfam), European corporates and development organizations (e.g. France Expertise, Forward Thinking UK-based charity) and various development departments within EU member states (e.g. the Belgian Development Agency, DFID).⁶

Analytically, this article examines discursive projections through the optic of hegemony, which does not just rest on military and economic power, but also on cultural and normative impositions that involve the projection of external concepts and practices onto local subjects.⁷ International Relations scholars refers to these manifestations as ‘soft’ or ‘normative’ power.⁸ Language plays a particularly important role in enabling concepts to be transferred through discursive interchange. Translation from the languages and discourses of ‘developed’ donors into the languages of ‘developing’ subjects is a significant medium of power relations. Lawrence Venuti forcefully shows that translation is not innocent communication, but can instead be used to sway foreign conceptions into expressions of local value that speak directly to receiving subjects.⁹ The EU and other development actors convey resilience through domestic expressions while disregarding their cultural specificity and contextual significance, as will be illustrated later. For example, the EU, whose imperial past still shapes its foreign policy towards the Middle East,¹⁰ acknowledges that the success of resilience-building depends on ‘the extent of the “buy-in” from targeted subjects.’¹¹ Moreover, the insistence on resilience co-exists with tropes about ‘locally-driven’ and ‘locally-owned’ projects and initiatives is another attempt to imbue an essential association between resilience (as defined by hegemonic actors) and local ways of doing things. For this ‘buy-in’ to occur, translation and the discursive alignment of foreign concepts with (seemingly) local counterparts provide important mediums for conceptual transmission and the promotion of donors’ definitions of resilience, which both have the strong potential to influence and shape concrete practices and behaviours at the local level.

This article begins by briefly outlining the thinking behind resilience, and also provides insights into its rationality and the ways in which it is used in EU foreign policy and development discourse. The second section presents the concept and practice of *sumud* in the context of the Palestinian struggle against Israel’s settler-colonialism and demonstrates the inherent ontological and epistemological difference between resilience and *sumud*. In doing so, it aims to establish the background analysis that will support the

⁶Emile Badarin, ‘Politics and Economy of Resilience’ (2021).

⁷Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).

⁸Ian Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (June 2002): 235–258; Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

⁹Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (Routledge, 1998); Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁰Emile Badarin and Jeremy Wildeman, ‘Aid, Security and Fortress Europe: EU Development Aid in the Middle East and North Africa’. In *Routledge Handbook on EU-Middle East Relations*, edited by Dimitris Bouris, Daniela Huber and Michelle Pace (London: Routledge, 2021); Michelle Pace and Roberto Roccu, ‘Imperial Pasts in the EU’s Approach to the Mediterranean’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 6 (2020): 671–685.

¹¹European Commission, ‘Lives in Dignity: From Aid-Dependence to Self-Reliance’ Brussels, 26 April. COM(2016) 234 final, 2017), http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf.

subsequent section. In the third section, I explain how the EU's approach to resilience-building seeks to indigenize its conception of resilience by undertaking linguistic and discursive transfer that links resilience with *sumud*. The article concludes by highlighting the significance of discursive ensnarement and co-optation of locally resonant concepts that sustain the hegemony and influence of international actors in the Global South.

Stabilizing the meaning of resilience

William Connolly has cogently demonstrated that the meaning of political concepts is inherently unfixed and contested.¹² Nevertheless discursive struggles may generate broad consensus and agreement that help to temporarily stabilise concepts when certain understandings become hegemonic.¹³ Resilience is a clear example of a contested concepts that has been widely debated in academic and policy circles since the last decade. Although the meanings and goals of resilience are in flux, these discursive deliberations echo a set of registers that define resilience, even though it is understood and utilized differently by various sectors and area studies.¹⁴

The concept of resilience was mainly utilized in the fields of Ecology, Physics and Psychology. It has now travelled into other realms—such as urban planning, risk management, humanitarian aid and development, national security and foreign policy interventions. Initially, resilience was conceived as the ability of objects to 'bounce back' and return to their original form after being exposed to external forces and pressures. New thinking in Ecology and Complexity Theory reconceptualized resilience as the ability to absorb perturbations, adapt to changes and crises and continue functioning. This construes shocks and crises as opportunities for learning, reflexivity, transformation and development.¹⁵ The survival and durability of complex systems depends on their ability to alter, and even replace the 'least-fit', namely weak and poorly adapted components.¹⁶

This framing of the concept has strongly influenced the approach of international politics to risk and uncertainty. For the purpose of this article, I outline the relevant assumptions of different debates on resilience, especially those advocating for the benefits of resilience and the critical debate. Both debates agree that resilience is premised on the ontological assumption that the world is a complex, contested and unpredictable place. Proponents of resilience, argue that resilience thinking and practices are therefore justified on the grounds they make it possible to survive and cope with uncertainty by

¹²William Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); see also Michael Shapiro, 'Introduction'. In *Language and Politics* edited by Michael Shapiro (New York: The New York University Press, 1984).

¹³Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso Books, 2001): 111; Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1992): 74.

¹⁴Philippe Bourbeau, 'Resilience and International Politics: Premises, Debates, Agenda', *International Studies Review* 17 (2015): 374–395; Philippe Bourbeau, *On Resilience: Genealogy, Logics, and World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Jonathan Joseph, *Varieties of Resilience: Studies in Governmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁵Crawford S. Holling, 'Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems', *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4, no. 1 (1973): 1–23; Philip Anderson, 'Complexity Theory and Organization Science', *Organization Science* 10, no. 3 (1999): 216–232; Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Karl Folke, eds., *Navigating Social–Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Fran H. Norris et al., 'Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness', *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41, no. 1–2 (2008): 127–150; Brian Walker et al., 'Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social–Ecological Systems', *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁶Per Bak, *How Nature Works: The Science of Self-Organized Criticality* (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 1996).

adapting to change and unforeseen risks.¹⁷ In-built complexity and uncertainty render resistance to change ineffective, and this is why it is so essential to teach individuals and societies into to cope with, and adjusting to new circumstances and risks.

Walker et al. observes that 'stability dynamics of all linked systems of human and nature emerge from complementary attributes: resilience, adaptability, and transformability'.¹⁸ Resilience instructs adaptability to change.¹⁹ On this view, resilience is essential for the stability and survival of ecological and social systems. When socio-political discourse turns this framing into empirical resilience-building, the poorest and weakest strata of the society are captured as the 'least-fit', 'fragile' or 'vulnerable' component of the social system who are in need of interventions that will improve their resilience. In other words, this part of the society becomes a site for exerting power. Capacity-building interventions are deployed to render least-fit subjects resilient, and thus to better cope, learn, transform and even develop despite contingency and adverse conditions.²⁰ From this perspective, resilience-building is concerned with local knowledge, resources and solutions rather than being a top-down or external imposition.²¹

Critical discourse starts by assessing resilience's ontology and its implications. It is argued that this ontology is 'nihilistic' in that it advocates for a 'care for the self' based on survivability and continual transformation to better fit into the world. It abandons the progressive desire to create a life that is not characterized by an eternal struggle for survival.²² What sweeps from this ontology is a depoliticizing and technical rationality that instructs and demands that the most vulnerable strata of the society should assume responsibility for adjusting to change.²³ The governance of the conduct of vulnerable or least-fit subjects is central to resilience, which 'needs to be considered in terms of the attributes that govern the system's dynamics.'²⁴ In social systems, resilience interventions rely on neoliberal, biopolitics and governmentality, and also on disciplinary schemes that seek to govern conduct by promoting survival strategies.²⁵

¹⁷John W. Handmer and Stephen R. Dovers, 'A Typology of Resilience: Rethinking Institutions for Sustainable Development', *Organization Environment* 9 (1996): 482–511.

¹⁸Walker et al., 'Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social–Ecological Systems'.

¹⁹Handmer and Dovers, 'A Typology of Resilience: Rethinking Institutions for Sustainable Development'.

²⁰David Chandler, 'Resilience and Human Security: The Post-Interventionist Paradigm', *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2012): 213–229; David Chandler, 'Beyond Neoliberalism: Resilience, the New Art of Governing Complexity', *Resilience* 2, no. 1 (2014): 47–63; Olaf Corry, 'From Defense to Resilience: Environmental Security beyond Neo-Liberalism', *International Political Sociology* 8 (2014): 256–274; Kevin Grove and David Chandler, 'Introduction: Resilience and the Anthropocene: The Stakes of "Renaturalising" Politics', *Resilience* 5, no. 2 (2017): 79–91; Jonathan Pugh, 'Resilience, Complexity and Post-Liberalism', *Area* 46, no. 3 (2014): 313–319.

²¹EEAS, 'A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy', 2016, <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en>; Elena Korosteleva, 'Reclaiming Resilience Back: A Local Turn in EU External Governance', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2019, 1–23; Peter Rogers, 'Researching Resilience: An Agenda for Change', *Resilience* 3, no. 1 (2015): 55–71.; Nathalie Tocci, *Framing the EU Global Strategy: A Stronger Europe in a Fragile World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

²²Brad Evans and Julian Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014); Jonathan Joseph, 'Governing Through Failure and Denial: The New Resilience Agenda', *Millennium* 44, no. 3 (2016): 370–390.

²³Julian Reid, 'The Disastrous and Politically Debated Subject of Resilience', *Development Dialogue* 88, no. 1 (2012): 67–79; Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously*; Marc Welsh, 'Resilience and Responsibility: Governing Uncertainty in a Complex World', *The Geographical Journal* 180, no. 1 (2014): 15–26.

²⁴Walker et al., 'Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social–Ecological Systems'.

²⁵Badarin, 'Politics and Economy of Resilience' (2021); David Chandler and Julian Reid, *The Neoliberal Subject: Resilience, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016); Mark Duffield, 'The Liberal Way of Development and the Development—Security Impasse: Exploring the Global Life-Chance Divide', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 1 (2010): 53–76; Mark Duffield, 'How Did We Become Unprepared? Emergency and Resilience in an Uncertain World', *British Academy Review* 21 (2013): 55–58; Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously*; Jonathan

Resilience, when considered as a framework of governance, has infiltrated the sub-fields of International Relations, especially development aid, security and peace and conflict management.²⁶ The promotion of ‘sustainability based upon adaptive patterns of household and communal self-reliance’ is now a regular element of development discourse.²⁷ The EU provides an instructive example in this regard. In 2016, the EU adopted resilience as a foreign policy priority and integrated it into its external interventions.²⁸ The EU’s discourse echoes the proponent’s account. It represents resilience as a set of locally-owned and -driven interventions that seek to boost ‘the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks’.²⁹ Critical research demonstrated the neoliberal and the utilitarian EU approach to resilience as a governance strategy, conflict management and containment of security threats and immigration.³⁰

Discursive processes have been organized in a way that subtly normalizes the donor-accepted conceptions of resilience at multiple levels within the state (e.g. societies, local institutions, household, individuals) and eventually opens them up for reformation.³¹ EU foreign policy discourse stresses that resilience, including ‘*the capacity to reform*’ and assimilate encoded roles is the responsibility of targeted subjects and countries,³² and must be ‘firmly embedded [in their] national policies and planning’.³³ Some scholars observed the significance of the positive resonance of resilience. According to Natalie Tocci, the EU chose the term because it is sufficiently ambiguous to give various EU actors (especially those engaged in the development, humanitarian and security fields) the freedom to interpret and use it differently.³⁴ This ambiguity is viewed in positive terms

Joseph, ‘Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach’, *Resilience* 1, no. 1 (2013): 38–52; Joseph, *Varieties of Resilience: Studies in Governmentality*; Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper, ‘Genealogies of Resilience: From Systems Ecology to the Political Economy of Crisis Adaptation’, *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 2 (2011): 143–160.

²⁶ Ana E. Juncos, ‘Resilience in Peacebuilding: Contesting Uncertainty, Ambiguity, and Complexity’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 4 (2018): 559–574; Philippe Bourbeau, ‘Resiliencism: Premises and Promises in Securitisation Research’, *Resilience* 1, no. 1 (2013): 3–17; Badarin and Wildeman, ‘Aid, Security and Fortress Europe’ (2021).

²⁷ Duffield, ‘The Liberal Way of Development and the Development—Security Impasse’, (2010) 55–56.

²⁸ EUGS, ‘A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy’ (European Union, June 2016), https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf; European Commission, ‘The New European Consensus on Development: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future’ (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the EU, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels, 7 June 2017, 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf.

²⁹ European Commission, ‘The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises’ (European Commission, Brussels, 3 October. COM(2012) 586 final, 2012), 5, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2012_586_resilience_en.pdf.

³⁰ Rosanne Anholt and Giulia Sinatti, ‘Under the Guise of Resilience: The EU Approach to Migration and Forced Displacement in Jordan and Lebanon’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2019, 1–26; Sven Biscop, ‘The EU Global Strategy: Realpolitik with European Characteristics’, *Elcano Royal Institute*, 2017; Eugenio Cusumano and Stefan Hofmaier, eds., *Projecting Resilience Across the Mediterranean* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020); Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt, ‘Resilience as the EU Global Strategy’s New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 3 (2016): 414–430; On discipline see Badarin, ‘Politics and Economy of Resilience’ (2021); On governmentality see Jonathan Joseph, ‘The EU in the Horn of Africa: Building Resilience as a Distant Form of Governance’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 285–301; On conflict management see Ana E. Juncos, ‘Resilience in Peacebuilding: Contesting Uncertainty, Ambiguity, and Complexity’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 4 (2018): 559–574.

³¹ Joseph, ‘Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach’.

³² European Commission, ‘Fact Sheet, Joint Communication on “A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s External Action”’ (European Commission, Brussels, 2017), 1, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-1555_en.htm emphasis in original.

³³ European Commission, ‘The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises’, 2.

³⁴ Tocci, *Framing the EU Global Strategy* (2017).

as a ‘forward-looking’, ‘constructive’, focused on ‘solutions rather than problems’ and positioned on ‘a perfect middle-ground’ between liberal and pragmatic objectives.³⁵ Jonathan Joseph underlines the significance of this positive ‘spin’, especially when presented as ‘enabling local initiative and building upon local capacities’.³⁶ But while this discursive representation may provide expedient solutions for internal EU concerns and dilemmas (e.g. finding a common ground for ‘joined-up’ approach), it is of limited use in marketing resilience intervention abroad. In order to gain the targeted subject’s support for the donor’s framing of resilience, it is necessary to undertake conceptual transfer through different means, including translation and aligning resilience with local concepts and practices, as the rest of the article demonstrates.

Why resilience is not the equivalent of *sumud*

This section illustrates the core differences between resilience and *sumud*, and focuses in particular on their divergent ontological assumptions, objectives and practices. In doing so, it provides the basis for a critical engagement with the discourse of foreign development and aid actors who attempt to project their conceptions of resilience onto the local practice of *sumud* to suppress its anti-colonial and resistant potential. The next section will develop this in more detail.

I approach the concept of *sumud* from a settler-colonial paradigm. This provides a contextualized rendering of *sumud* and uncovers its decolonial ontology and its epistemology of resistance, both of which are opposed to, and mobilized against the settler-colonial logic of elimination. Settler-colonialism refers to a ‘structure’ of events and practices that facilitate land appropriation and the replacement of native populations and sovereignty with settler alternatives.³⁷ The scholarship on Israel-Palestine has increasingly started to use this paradigm to explain the conflict, including its origins and dynamics. Scholars use it to argue that land appropriation, the displacement of the Palestinians from their land and replacing them with settlers are central to Zionism (ideology and practices) and Israel as a state.³⁸ This paradigm can also be used to produce better interpretation of *sumud*’s political rationality.

Sumud emerged through an array of Palestinian everyday practices to confront Israeli settler-colonial policies. These routine practices include ‘simply living, eating, breathing in a land that is coveted . . . [and] hanging on to what remains and doing all the mundane tasks of trying to live (survive) in what remains of Palestine . . .’³⁹ In 1948, Israel was established on 78% of Palestine, after the majority of the native population had been displaced. The

³⁵Wagner and Anholt, ‘Resilience as the EU Global Strategy’s New Leitmotif’, 415–418.

³⁶Joseph, ‘Governing Through Failure and Denial’, 7, 15.

³⁷Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and Elimination of the Native’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 2; Lorenzo Veracini, ‘Settler Colonialism and Decolonization’, *Borderlands E-Journal* 6, no. 2 (2007), http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol6no2_2007/veracini_settler.htm.

³⁸Emile Badarin, ‘Settler-Colonialist Management of Entrances to the Native Urban Space in Palestine’, *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, no. 3 (2015): 226–235; Tariq Dana and Ali Jarbawi, ‘A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism’s Entangled Project’, *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2017): 1–23; Nadia Naser-Najjab, ‘Palestinian Education and the “Logic of Elimination”’, *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2020, 1–20; Ilan Pappé, ‘Revisiting 1967: The False Paradigm of Peace, Partition and Parity’, *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 341–351; Lorenzo Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and Elimination of the Native’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

³⁹Mazin Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 235.

Palestinians call this structure an-Nakba (the Catastrophe). The small number of people (approximately 100 thousand people) who remained in Palestine were placed under strict military rule until 1966.⁴⁰ In 1967, Israel conquered the rest of Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza). Unlike 1948, the majority of the Palestinian population stayed put on the land (*al-sumud fi al-ard*). From this perspective, *sumud* was the exact opposite of an-Nakba, which became equated with exile and elimination from the land.

In the 1970s, *sumud* started to be consciously articulated as a resistance strategy against the Israeli colonisation/occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. However, this does not mean that *sumud* was discovered only after 1967. The idea of tenacity and attachment to the land have deep cultural and historical roots in the Palestinian society. For example, the Palestinian 'minority' that escaped exile in 1948 employed practices of *sumud* to carve a space for themselves in the new conditions of the nascent Israeli state and its military rule.⁴¹ And accordingly, different groups used diverse practices and tactics to sustain their presence as a community in historic Palestine. Their *sumud*, the act of staying put on the little that remained from their conquered land, involved combining elements of 'hostile competition' with, and 'borrowing' from the new settler-colonial state for the purpose of 'overcoming the lender of these items'. This strategy regenerated 'a sense of community and identity at a level above that of the *hamula* [clan] or village, i.e. of nationalist and class solidarity'.⁴² In this context, *sumud* was made possible by reconnecting the various fragments of the Palestinian society that remained in its homeland after an-Nakba, and this was achieved by instilling a higher sense of identification that transcended primordial identities.

In the West Bank, Gaza and elsewhere, *sumud* emerged from the 'dialectic of oppression-resistance' as a 'collective and third way', positioned somewhere between violent resistance on the one hand, and submission and exile on the other. As a third way, *sumud* seeks to assert the Palestinian presence on the land.⁴³ The related literature tends to distinguish static/passive and active resistance. The so-called '*sumud muqawim*' (resistant *sumud*) emerged from the passive act of staying put on the land (static *sumud*),⁴⁴ and focused on establishing the institutional structures that would advance the Palestinian self-determination and independence in the OPT.⁴⁵ This territorialization and the association of *sumud* with the objective of realizing Palestinian statehood on a small part of Palestine (approximately 22%) is a recent development. It suited the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Arab regimes, who pledged financial support and established the so-called 'Sumud Aid Fund' in the Bagdad Summit of 1978.⁴⁶ *Sumud* therefore provided a conceptual platform for different methods of resistance, making it the 'default strategy' to defy Israeli colonialism in the OPT.⁴⁷

⁴⁰Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁴¹Sharif Kanaan, 'Survival Strategies of Arabs in Israel', *MERIP Reports*, No. 41, *Arabs in Israel*, 1975, 3–18; Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁴²Kanaan, 'Survival Strategies of Arabs in Israel' (1975), 16.

⁴³Samih Farsoun, 'Structures of Resistance and the "War of Position": A Case Study of the Palestinian Uprising', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1989): 59–86; Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way, a Journey of Life in the West Bank* (London: Quartet Books, 1983); Salim Tamari, 'The Palestinian Movement in Transition: Historical Reversals and the Uprising', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20, no. 2 (1991): 57–70.

⁴⁴Farsoun, 'Structures of Resistance and the "War of Position"' (1989).

⁴⁵Emile Nakhleh, 'The West Bank and Gaza: Twenty Years Later', *Middle East Journal* 42, no. 2 (1988): 209–226.

⁴⁶Emile Badarin, *Palestinian Political Discourse: Between Exile and Occupation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁷Jeff Helper, 'A Strategy within a Non-Strategy: Sumud, Resistance, Attrition, and Advocacy', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 5 (2006): 46.

Epistemologically, *sumud* is premised on the logic of resistance, which unfolds through a range of visible and invisible practices as James Scott observed.⁴⁸ It offers a counter philosophy to the settler-colonial logic of elimination. The strategy of *sumud*, or 'to stay here in the land', as a Palestinian activist put it, is to resist elimination and eviction from it.⁴⁹ This popular sentiment towards the land rests on the inherent interlinkage between *sumud* and the territorial dimensions of human existence. The materiality of land that enables people to perform the basic act of being physically and bodily there is what makes *sumud* possible in the first place. From this perspective, *sumud* operates at the intersection between normative (liberation, self-determination, decolonization) and material qualities (being on the land) of human life.

As noted earlier, the term *sumud* deploys evocations that relate to land at the imaginative and linguistic level. The essentiality of land derives from two aspects. The first is the historical and economic significance of land to the Palestinian society that has historically depended on agriculture. Land, as the only major source of income, determined the distribution of power relations and social identities in Palestine.⁵⁰ In addition to this particular value, the *sumud*-land nexus also rested on theological foundations, which affirmed the spiritual significance of the land of Palestine (or the 'Holy Land'). *Sumud* represents a contemporary and secular practice modelled on the Islamic concept and practice of *al-ribat*. While this is not the place for a thorough consideration of the meaning of *ribat* in Islamic philosophy, a brief reflection will suffice. In the context of Palestine, *al-ribat* refers to the religious duty of defending the 'sacred' land of Palestine, as numerous Qur'anic and Hadith verses suggest.⁵¹ It derives from Islamic and Arabic discourse, and specifically their designation of Jerusalem and 'its vicinity' as *ard al-ribat* (the land of steadfastness), which construes the act of *al-ribat* as staying 'tied to the land' and defending it from foreign conquest. This act is a collective, individual, religious and national duty.

In popular Palestinian discourse, however, *ard al-ribat* is a designation that refers to mandatory Palestine.⁵² The theological and conceptual affinity between *sumud* and *ribat* vigorously manifests in Jerusalem, where men (*murabitin*) and women (*murabibat*) see their physical presence and steadfastness (*sumud*) in sacred sites as embodiments of *ribat* to resist Israeli assaults on sacred spaces. This is particularly true of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is also a national Palestinian symbol. This affinity provides *sumud* with a potent religious discourse that mobilizes the masses and confronts the Zionist narrative by offering an alternative reading of the land's sacred history. While the exact limits of the sacred space have not been defined, Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian philosopher and thinker, draws on the Qur'anic reference to the 'vicinity' of Al-Aqsa Mosque and suggests that 'all of Palestine

⁴⁸James Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁴⁹Cited in Marwan Darweish and Andrew Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine: The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 95.

⁵⁰Samih Farsoun, *Culture and Customs of the Palestinians* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004); Kanaan, 'Survival Strategies of Arabs in Israel'; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁵¹Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Jerusalem: The Concern of Every Muslim*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Wahbaa Library for Publishing and Distributing, 2000).

⁵²Azmi Bishara, 'A Brief Note on Jerusalem', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, April 2010, accessed 9 November 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/995/focus.htm>.

should be Jerusalem'.⁵³ This does not only show the strong congruity between *al-ribat* and *sumud*, but also highlights the deep-rooted spiritual, moral and historical foundations of the latter.

The second quality of *sumud* relates to the settler-colonial struggle in Palestine, which primarily revolves around land. In her study of Palestinian daily practices, Julie Peteet refers to Israel's 'settler-colonial project with displacing impulses' and observes that 'staying put [in Palestine] and not emigrating can be a political act'. It allows temporary and tactical accommodation and adjustments to situational conditions of colonialism, but does not indicate acquiescence or acceptance.⁵⁴ This non-defeatist worldview considers colonial conditions as temporary, and therefore seeks to alter them while pursuing a future devoid of colonial domination.⁵⁵ *Sumud* is therefore a performative political act that embodies dissent and human agency.

Although there are multiple accounts of resilience, it is primarily a policy framework that attempts to govern human agency and conduct, whether through governmentality, disciplinary tactics, self-sufficiency, coping strategies or by drawing on local resources. This framework is underpinned by the ontological assumption of a permanently unpredictable, uncontrolled and complex external world. Resilience therefore promotes therefore strategies of accommodation and adaptation that may make it possible to cope with these conditions.⁵⁶ Thus, these structures and acts are permanent dimensions of resilience imaginaries and practices. When steadfastness in the face of colonialism is viewed from the same prism of resilience, it engenders intuitive evocations whereby settler-colonial outcomes may be considered as learning opportunities for survival and development. And when this perspective is extended further, the status quo of colonial domination in Palestine can be construed as a positive catalyst that inspires social, economic and political adaptation.

Like resilience, *sumud* is concerned with survival. Yet it does not privilege survival above all else, not least because death is always a possibility of the bodily act of *sumud*. In being put to the land, one is always exposed to the brutal violence of colonialism as Frantz Fanon observed.⁵⁷ Practices of *sumud* and *ribat* bring the materiality of land and a sense of nationalism and spirituality into play. In both cases, self-sacrifice and death, as elements of the duty of *al-sumud* (or *al-ribat*) *fi al-ard* (steadfastness in the land) are part of what it means to live a meaningful and dignified life. Death is not therefore something to be avoided at all cost. In this context, death and self-sacrifice are representations of martyrdom (*istishhad*, or *shahada*, which literally mean to witness and testify in Arabic) that leads to a dignified and bountiful afterlife. And, indeed, the notion and practice of being physically present to defend, witness and testify are integral to *sumud* and martyrdom.⁵⁸ In a Heideggerian sense,⁵⁹ then, *sumud* consists of 'dwelling' and staying mortal on the land; 'under the sky' and thus 'before the divinities'. This 'fourfold' of earth/land, sky, divinity and death present the essential elements of *sumud*.

⁵³ Azmi Bishara, 'A Brief Note on Jerusalem', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, April 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101205220744/http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/995/focus.htm>.

⁵⁴ Julie Peteet, *Space and Mobility in Palestine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 171.

⁵⁵ Badarin, *Palestinian Political Discourse* (2016).

⁵⁶ Brad Evans and Julian Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Translated by Constance Farrington, New ed. (London: Penguin Classics, 2001).

⁵⁸ Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 141–159.

Irrespective of the validity of these metaphysical claims, self-sacrifice and martyrdom are integral to *sumud's* philosophy of life and death. Poetry is of particular use in further developing this point because of its ability to capture and reframe these metaphysical claims that buttress resistance and dissent.⁶⁰ Samih al-Kassem, a renowned Palestinian poet, observes⁶¹

We declare it the Land Day

And the martyrs' blood declared it a Palestinian fete for *sumud* and sacrifice

Mahmoud Darwish, another celebrated Palestinian poet, uses the olive tree, the icon of steadfastness in Palestinian culture, to underscore the philosophy of life under *sumud*⁶²

We shall remain the green colour in the olive trees

And a shield around the land!

Nothing here points to a strategy of resilience that is imbued with permanent adaptation and coping with the colonial reality to achieve instinctive survival and avoid suffering. On the contrary, this indigenous literary work incites resistance, self-sacrifice and the shielding of the land without excluding the risk of death and martyrdom. *Sumud* rests on a revolutionary drive to overcome the colonial conditions of suffering and violence. Suffering is always a possibility when performing *sumud*, and it is not therefore an invitation to disengage from the 'long revolution', to use Raymond Williams's phrase, to change existing conditions.⁶³

Projecting resilience over *sumud*

The notion of resilience started to regularly appear in development aid discourses over the last decade, and some of this discourse has increasingly been translated into the local language of recipients. I will now critically consider Arabic language translations with the aim of examining how this discursive entanglement affects local conceptions and practices.

The Arabic version of the 2015 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) alternates between translating resilience as the '*al-qudra 'ala al-takayyuf*' (adaptation ability) and '*al-qudra 'ala al-takayyuf wa al-muwajaha*' (adaptation and confrontation ability).⁶⁴ While this projection better corresponds to the EU's conception of resilience—namely, the ability to adapt and 'bounce back',⁶⁵ it was abandoned. Instead, *sumud* is generalized as the equivalent of 'resilience' in the Arabic version of the EU's discourse, as shown by its major policy documents, such as 'The New European Consensus on Development'.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁰Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶¹Samih Al-Kassem, 'The Poem of the 30 March (Qasidat Thalathin Azar)', 1976, <https://www.alarab.com/Article/365007>.

⁶²Mahmoud Darwish, 'On Sumud', n.d., <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem2303.html>.

⁶³Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, revised (London: Penguin Books, 1965).

⁶⁴ENP-Arabic, 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy' (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels, 18 November 2015, 2015), 4, 7, 12, 13, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/pdf/key-documents/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_arabic.pdf.

⁶⁵EUGS, 'A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy' (European Union, June 2016), https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf.

⁶⁶European Commission, 'The New European Consensus on Development: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future. Arabic Version, SN 3109/17', 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf.

term ‘resilience’ is generally absent from Arabic literature and political discourse, and the EU and other international organizations therefore usually associate resilience with six major local terms: *sumud*, *al-muwajaha*, *al-ta’aqlum*, *al-takayyuf*, *al-ta’afy*, *al-istiadad* (steadfastness, confrontation, adaptation, adjustment/accommodation, recovery, preparedness, respectively).⁶⁷ All this must happen ‘swiftly’ (*bisur’a*).⁶⁸ Although presented as complementary to each other, they are, on a closer inspection, incompatible. While steadfastness (*sumud*) and confrontation (*al-muwajaha*) are longstanding anti-colonial strategies, they are also long-term and revolutionary practices that seek to alter rather than adapt to (*al-ta’aqlum*) and accommodate (*al-takayyuf*) colonial conditions, as the previous section demonstrated.

Besides translation, discursive alignment provides another method that can be used to wrap external conceptions into local expressions. To illustrate this point, consider how the EU aligned resilience interventions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) with the local discourse, and refers in particular to the English version of the Palestinian National Policy Agenda (PNPA) 2017–2020, which articulates ‘resilience’ as a national priority.⁶⁹ On the surface, it appears as if the EU and the Palestinians are speaking about the same thing. However, a closer reading highlights radically divergent understanding. The Arabic version of the PNPA speaks of *sumud* within a context of continuous Israeli ‘settler-colonialism’.⁷⁰ Salah Elejliah, a Palestinian economist, argues that the economy of *sumud* pursues ‘structural changes’ and the ‘establishment of a productive structure that rests on manufacturing and agriculture’ in order to ‘break free’ from the colonially-determined socio-economic order in the OPT.⁷¹ Meanwhile EU empirical resilience-building projects in the OPT focus on specific targets to achieve certain foreign policy and security objectives, such as stabilization, counterinsurgency and combating ‘radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’.⁷²

In addition to discursive ensnarement, the projection of *sumud* as resilience is conveyed through empirical resilience interventions, which are presented through expressions that resonate at the local level. The critical literature demonstrates that resilience-building, when conceived and developed within the framework of EU foreign policy, is used to pursue governmentality and disciplinary purposes.⁷³ Governance devices,

⁶⁷European Commission, ‘The New European Consensus on Development: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future. Arabic Version, SN 3109/17’, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf; UNDP, ‘365 Days of Resilience in Syria’ (UNDP, 2014), <https://www.sy.undp.org/content/syria/en/home/library/poverty/365-days-of-resilience-in-syria/>; (International Labour Organization) ILO, ‘Work for a Brighter Future’, 2019, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_662455.pdf; World Bank and IMF, ‘World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings 2019: Development Committee Communiqué’ (World Bank, 2019), <https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/news/press-release/2019/10/19/world-bankimf-annual-meetings-2019-development-committee-communiqué>.

⁶⁸European Commission, ‘Al-musaadat al-insaniyya wa al-himaya al-madaniyya (Humanitarian Assistance and Civil Protection)’, European Commission, European Commission, 8 August 2016, <http://www.echo-arabic.eu/content/>

⁶⁹PA, ‘National Policy Agenda 2017–2022: Putting Citizens First (English Translation)’, 2016, 5, 6, 43, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/npa_english_final_approved_20_2_2017_printed.pdf.

⁷⁰The English version adds a disclaimer explicitly stating that the Arabic version takes precedence if any differences between the two documents. PA, ‘Ajindat al-siyasat al-wataniyya 2017–2022: Al-muwatin Awalan (National Policy Agenda 2017–2022: Putting Citizens First) (Arabic)’, 2016, 6, 43, https://palaestina.org/uploads/media/NPA_Arabic_Final_Approved_20_2_2017_Printed.pdf.

⁷¹Mazen Elejliah, ‘National Economy and the Requirements for Building Sumud and National Renaissance’ (Masarat—The Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies, 2018), 4, https://www.masarat.ps/files/content_files/mzn_ljl.pdf.

⁷²Badarin, ‘Politics and Economy of Resilience’ (2021).

⁷³Jonathan Joseph, ‘The EU in the Horn of Africa: Building Resilience as a Distant Form of Governance’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 285–301; Badarin, ‘Politics and Economy of Resilience’ (2021).

external policy and security priorities and neoliberal orientations are, in this manner, subtly projected onto *sumud*. Moreover, resilience-building unfolds a range of exclusions and inclusions. For example, EU resilience interventions in Palestine leave structures of domination unaffected and are instead, applied to dominated subjects in an attempt to subdue their resistance and political agency so that stability and the status quo in the OPT may be sustained for longer.⁷⁴ In other words, the confrontation and resistance of Israeli colonial practice that have change physical, demographic and social condition in Palestine are removed from the remit of resilience. Meanwhile resilience-building (which is inverted so that it appears as to support Palestinian *sumud*) is coordinated with the Israeli authorities, and actively excludes large parts of the Palestinian society and groups who the EU considers to be part of the problem (e.g. Hamas).⁷⁵ And it even pursues neoliberal economic solutions that further entrench the Palestinian economic dependence on Israel.⁷⁶

There is more at stake with resilience discourse. Julian Reid cogently reveals how external actors seek to subjugate local imagination to the colonial ideology of resilience while presenting it as an indigenous trait.⁷⁷ The casting of *sumud* as the local term for the European-defined resilience is a discursive ensnare that portrays the EU (and other development actors) as being engaged in interventions that are 'locally owned and driven' undertakings.⁷⁸ The lexical usage of local expressions provides useful methods that introduce the set of values that underpin resilience thinking, and presents them as if they stem from indigenous perceptions, contextual realities and local traditions. Although resilience is conveyed through the domestic expressions of *sumud*, the established philosophy of *sumud*, along with its original context and history as an anti-colonial and liberation practice, is occluded. Instead, an exogenous set of political priorities and registers of resilience are maintained and misleadingly framed as elements of *sumud*. This discursive process displaces the historical and cultural registers of local practices, and replaces them with European (and other donors') priorities.

Alongside efforts to construct resilience interventions as locally-owned and -driven endeavours, attempts have also been made to represent resilience as a domestic concept and practice. One clear example of this is provided by the methodical deployment of *sumud* as the local term for resilience in the Arabic speaking world. What is at stake here is not semantic or translation problem; on the contrary, we are confronted by an attempt to make exogenous understandings of resilience say something of local value and expression. Linguistic entrapment of this kind appropriates indigenous notions and forcefully projects on them externally defined registers of resilience onto vulnerable subjects.

⁷⁴Badarin, 'Politics and Economy of Resilience' (2021).

⁷⁵European Commission, 23, Annexe 2.

⁷⁶European Commission, 'Annex 2: Of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme in Favour of Palestine for 2018. Action Document "Support to Sustainable Economic Development and Enhanced Governance"', 2018, 23, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/c_2018_7933_palestine_aap_2018.pdf, Annexe 2.

⁷⁷Julian Reid, "'Ensnare the Language": Imagination and Resilience in Indigenous Arts of the Self'. In *The Politics of Knowledge*, edited by Samuli Hurri and Iiris Kestilä (Helsinki: Samuli Hurri, 2019), 16–41.

⁷⁸European Commission, 'Commission Staff Working Document: Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013–2020.' (European Commission, Brussels 19 June, SWD(2013) 227 final, 2013), 3, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2013_227_ap_crisis_prone_countries_en.pdf.

It is worthwhile to note that the same linguistic ensnarement is also present in academic work that equates resilience with *sumud*. While a comprehensive engagement of the scholarly work is not the aim of this article, one example will suffice to demonstrate my point. Caitlin Ryan, for instance, frames *sumud* as 'resilience' or 'steadfastness' and holds that this 'attributes a more positive framing to those who act with *sumud*, thereby supporting a further empowerment of the concept'.⁷⁹ In addition to treating *sumud*, steadfastness and resilience as interchangeable, she also assumes that resilience is necessarily a form of positive empowerment. Although this assumption may ring true to some European languages, it may not stretch as far as other languages and traditions. The Latin origin of resilience (*resiliens*) signifies a form of movement like the act of rebounding or bouncing back, and this is why major English-Arabic dictionaries translate resilience as 'flexibility' (*murunah*), a term that can have both positive and negative connotations depending on the context.

Sumud, meanwhile, signifies the act of staying put, firm and stable on the land. This contrasting connotation is significant because it generates an array of imaginative associations that orient our perception.⁸⁰ Subtexts and historical traditions that undergird resilience and *sumud* in their native discourses and cultures are however more important. In the pre-colonial era, and before *sumud* became uniquely linked to anti-colonial resistance, the word was understood to convey different meanings, as both historical and modern Arabic dictionaries confirm. In the eighth century, for instance, it referred to 'robust firmness like a deeply anchored stone under the land's surface'.⁸¹ It is instructive to highlight such territorial metaphors of this kind because they demonstrate the lexical and thus the imaginative associations between land/territory and the practice of *sumud* as a form of resistance to settler-colonialism in the Israel-Palestine context (see the previous section).

More generally, the entanglement of resilience and *sumud* points to a general practice whereby dominant international actors and institutions co-opt indigenous concepts and practices into their discursive representations and interventions. To further elucidate this point, I propose to take a brief detour into how this practice is applied in another context. Consider, for example, the co-optation of the Pashtun concept of *jirga* into neoliberal schemes of state-building in Afghanistan after the US invasion in 2001.⁸² *Jirga* is a traditional Pashtun method of decision-making for resolving disputes through the

⁷⁹Caitlin Ryan, 'Everyday Resilience as Resistance: Palestinian Women Practicing Sumud', *International Political Sociology* 9, no. 4 (2015): 3; See also Philippe Bourbeau and Caitlin Ryan, 'Resilience, Resistance, Infrapolitics and Enmeshment', *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 1 (2018): 221–239. Bourbeau and Ryan use the notion of *sumud* to illustrate the complementary relationship between resilience and resistance. As they put it, 'resilience and resistance acquire meaning through each other in practices of *sumud*'. (p.230) This rendering, however, lacks the linguistic and cultural sensitivity that is necessary for a nuanced conceptual transmission. It also holds inconsistent claims. On the one hand, they frame resilience and resistance as two distinctive but complementary concepts. While on the other, they at once *sumud* as 'resilience' and argue that the it is 'a form of resistance' (p.231). Equating *sumud* with resilience while simultaneously arguing that it is resistance leads to conceptual conflation that suggests resilience as ('a form of') resistance. More importantly, the conceptual stretch of *sumud* as both resilience and resistance is unwarranted. It is a far-fetched decontextualisation to expect colonized subjects to show the same behaviours and practices (*sumud*) whether they are confronted with disasters or colonial oppression.

⁸⁰J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁸¹Al-Mu'jam Al-Waseet (Cairo: Academy of the Arabic Language, 2004), 522–523.

⁸²Toby Dodge, 'Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding: The Application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq', *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 5 (2013): 1189–1212.

assembly of elders. At the national level, the so-called 'lead nations' (the US, UK, Germany and Italy) forced their scheme into the Emergency Loya Jirga that was held in 2002, and primarily did so with the intention of providing a semblance of local legitimacy into their impositions.⁸³ Foreign actors empowered warlords and human rights violators, who dominated the Emergency Loya Jirga, and put forward the neoliberal proposals that had little grassroots significance within the society.⁸⁴ The notion of *jirga* was also incorporated into microlevel interventions. For example, the Commission on Conflict Mediation, which was founded in 2006 with support and funding from foreign actors, provided an impression of *jirga* procedures to impose 'an *alternative* dispute resolution mechanism, *akin to western* out-of-court arbitration'.⁸⁵

This discursive ensnarement reifies power relations between the foreign aid donors and recipients. It comes also with cultural and imaginative impositions that further embed donor hegemony. Economic power interlaces with soft power in the discursive terrain, and this serves the foreign policy objective of governing and disciplining from a distance. The ability to draw on local institutions, concepts and practices benefits the strategies and objectives of powerful international actors and facilitates the co-option and incorporation of warlord and tribal leaders into these exogenous political schemes. Evidence from empirical examination of EU resilience-building in Palestine, which I have explored in more detail elsewhere, demonstrates how these projects first and foremost seek to sustain the status quo (including the prospect of the two-state solution) and achieve security goals by suppressing the Palestinian resistance.⁸⁶ This policy is pursued mainly because stability, the two-state solution and the so-called Israeli-Palestinian peace process are fundamental elements of the EU's foreign policy in the Middle East.⁸⁷

Conclusion

External hegemony often solicits conceptual impositions that influence the imaginations, actions and dispositions of its subjects. In this regard, discursive practices, such as translation and alignment of exogenous notions with local expressions, are expedient mediums for conceptual transfer and impositions. Resilience has become a dominant concept in the discursive and intervention portfolio of powerful international actors, and it is regularly applied to the Global South. Resilience-building relies on the power play between the 'developed/robust' and 'developing/fragile' subjects, and is embedded into the domestic semantics and expressions of the latter subjects as a means of capturing their imagination of risks and governing their conduct. This article's critical interrogation of the resilience–*sumud* linkage transcends the linguistic dimensions and reveals a general practice of co-optation of locally resonant practices and notions that are integral to the hegemonic power of international institutions and actors rely.

⁸³Fatima Ayub and Sari Kouvo, 'Righting the Course? Humanitarian Intervention, the War on Terror and the Future of Afghanistan', *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008).

⁸⁴Ali Wardak, *Jirga—A Traditional Mechanism of Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan* (Pontypridd, UK: University of Glamorgan, Centre for Criminology, 2003).

⁸⁵The Liaison Office, 'Between the Jirga and the Judge: Alternative Dispute Resolution in Southeastern Afghanistan', 2009, 2, emphasis added, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/jirga_judge.pdf.

⁸⁶Emile Badarin, 'Politics and Economy of Resilience' (2021).

⁸⁷EUGS, (June 2016).

By drawing on the Palestinian concept of *sumud*, this article demonstrated how the power relations between development actors and ‘developing’ subjects unfold through a discursive interplay that projects European conceptions of resilience as being intrinsic to the Palestinian culture and practice of *sumud*. I have also displayed the difference between the two concepts through the paradigm of settler-colonialism. While *sumud* and resilience have overlapping features, they rest on distinctive and even opposing ontologies. Whereas the latter presents the world as a complex place and instructs coping and survival behaviour, the former insists on the need to resist and altering existing (colonial) conditions and structures. Moreover, *sumud* is animated by a sanguine view of the future, in the form of decolonized social relations that links the materiality of life and everyday practices with deeper normative, spiritual and national meanings. This opposing ontology explains the divergent aims and practices of *sumud* and resilience. The kind of transformation that resilience-building seeks is not a collaborative or grassroots endeavour that stems from the needs and perceptions of its subjects. On the contrary, it is based on the normative conceptions, worldviews and policy and security objectives of hegemonic states and international institutions.

Sumud unfolds through collective practices that involve the entire society in resistance to settler-colonial elimination. Whereas resilience is a framework of governance that considers adaptation and accommodation as essentially positive survival traits, *sumud* is a performative and inclusive political act of dissent, resistance and human agency that uses adaptation tactically. It is, to this extent, a ‘third way’ that seeks the higher purpose of establishing new conditions that free its subjects from eternal coping and the struggle for survival under colonialism. It is inconsistent to put *sumud* on par with the European resilience-building that considers the colonizer (Israel) to be part of the solution and excludes certain Palestinian actors that resist colonial domination. Palestinian *sumud* is, after all, a set of practices that defy the eliminatory essence of settler colonialism. Resilience’s oncology and practices normalize the colonial order and structure while demanding the subaltern subjects to adapt to, rather than revolt against the existing socio-political system of power. In acquiescing to resilience’s demand for continual adaptation, subaltern subjects are faced with the risk of internalizing the colonial domination and diminishing the possibility that their agency will enable resistance.

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