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The European Parliament's increasing role in the Common Commercial Policy: Parliamentary strategies to influence bilateral trade negotiations.

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Abstract

This master thesis seeks to analyse the manner in which the European Parliament (EP) concretely exerts influence in the negotiations of bilateral agreements between the EU and a third country. A set of strategies were thus deduced to better capture how this parliamentary influence works. The EU-Canada, the EU-Japan and the EU-Vietnam trade agreements will be used as case studies in order to retrace the manner in which the EP influenced the content and the way negotiations were conducted. The EP is effectively an influential actor, fully integrated throughout the entire negotiations process. The EP's influence was built through an active and creative interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty. Thus, using its "right to be informed" and its "right of consent", the EP's influence is more important before and during the negotiations talks. The preliminary phase is fundamental to build the EP position, strengthen its credibility and directly influence the content of the mandate. During the negotiations, the EP uses more or less assertive tactics to shape these trade negotiations. The EP relations with the Commission and other key actors involved in the negotiations process are necessary to get information and defend the Parliament's interests. Finally, when its interests are at stake, the EP developed more 'offensive' strategies to mobilise, enter directly in contact with the trade negotiators, or delay the vote. At the end of the negotiations, if any redlines are crossed, the EP can thus use its veto power but this power is rather used to influence the negotiations beforehand.