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## How the European Parliament strives for influence in the EU's external action: A QCA evaluation of EU-China relations

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### Abstract

Foreign policy is usually recognized as the exclusive prerogative of the executives due to its high level of secrecy, and therefore parliaments are dispensable players at the periphery. However, in the case of the European Union (EU), especially after the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament (EP) broadly demonstrates its capability and witlessness in shaping the EU's external actions through an unprecedented veto on SWIFT Agreement and other cases. With an increasing activism in external relations, the EP incrementally consolidates its authority formally and informally. How can we account for the parliamentarization of the EU's external actions? Based on both rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, this study argues that *bargaining resource* is the primary factor, while *normative arguments* could also make a difference but under the constraints of the interaction environment, which compromises, for instance, *issue's salience* and *publicity*. To test these assumptions, I conduct a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of fifteen selected cases. Secondly, three detailed cases from EU-China relations add a new dimension to the preliminary results of QCA. These case studies indicate that the effectiveness of normative arguments and other factors are significantly compromised due to the EP's scanty leverage towards Beijing. This result thus contributes to not only refining our theoretical knowledge but also improving EU-China bilateral relations in practice.