The European Parliament's Political Leadership: The Case Study of EU Foreign Policy towards Turkey

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Abstract

This article presents an empirical analysis of how the European Parliament's eighth legislature mobilised to shape European Union (EU) foreign policy towards Turkey during the refugee crisis. On a conceptual and methodological level, we propose an analytical framework based on the mechanism of political leadership to trace the EP's role in two specific areas of EU foreign policy towards Turkey: enlargement and cooperation on migration. We argue that EP foreign policy resources allow it to play a political leadership role in this policy domain. Empirically, the analysis feeds into the claim of New Institutional Leadership since it reveals that the informal governance at the time of the refugee crisis favoured the mobilisation of the EP, mainly to protect its institutional prerogatives. The analysis also shows that the EP adopted a contradictory approach to EU foreign policy towards Turkey that affected the Parliament's reputation as the guardian of EU values.

Studies on political leadership in the European Union (EU) have claimed that the latter is not only 'by no means leaderless' (Tömmel and Verdun 2017, 109) but also an 'intensively "leaderful" polity' (see also Aggestam and Johansson 2020; Müller and Van Esch 2020, p. 1052). However, only a few works (Judge and Earnshaw 2008; Maurer 2007; Schoeller 2019; Shackleton 2017) have explicitly analysed the political leadership of the European Parliament (EP), as a collective actor, in the EU political system and policy-making process.[1] These studies have focused on the direct/indirect role played by the EP in this process (Judge and Earnshaw 2008, p. 248); the norms promoted in terms of vision for the future of the EU (Judge and Earnshaw 2008, p. 256; Maurer 2007; Shackleton 2017) or the substantive content of legislation (Judge and Earnshaw 2008, p. 257); and the impact or lack thereof on the policy outcomes (Schoeller 2019, p. 142). Recently, scholars of New Institutional Leadership (NIL)[2] (Smeets and Beach 2020a, 2020b) have argued that the strengthened role played by the European Council in the context of crises has also enhanced the role played by other EU institutions. However, whereas in the case of the Commission, these studies have shown that it can play an instrumental leadership role in transforming the political

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[1]Some studies focus on the leadership of specific EP actors, like the European political groups (Chiru 2020), the Rapporteurs (Costello and Thomson 2011; Thierse 2019), or individual Members of the EP (MEPs) (Wilson et al. 2016).
[2]The theoretical approach of NIL shares the view with New Intergovernmentalism (NI) that the crisis context enhances the European Council-dominated governance. However, unlike NI (according to which other EU institutions, like the Commission, play a declining role), NIL claims that the crisis context creates better opportunities for other EU institutions to play a leadership role, even though this role is less visible.

priorities expressed by the European Council into specific reforms, only a few empirical studies have investigated the role played by the EP in the crisis context (Bressanelli et al. 2019; Brusenbauch Meislova 2019; Fasone 2022; Meissner and Schoeller 2019; Ripoll Servent 2019; Schoeller 2019, Ch. 5). Among these studies, only Schoeller (2019, Ch. 5) has explicitly used the concept of 'failed leadership', in the case of the Eurobonds, to explain the lack of the Parliament's impact notwithstanding its emergence as a leader.

In the case of EU foreign policy,[3] even though the EP is a 'very active player' (Wessel 2018, p. 146), its role is considered 'quite limited' (Keukeleire and Delreux 2022, p. 107). However, it has been observed, with specific reference to CFSP, that the EP's influence should not be limited to decision-making since the Parliament could potentially make a difference during the pre-decision phase or the post-decision phase (Riddervold and Rosén 2016, p. 691; Rosén and Raube 2018, p. 71). In the case study of EU foreign policy towards Turkey, most recent studies have focused on cooperation during the refugee crisis, appropriately arguing that the Parliament was sidelined in the European Council-based decision-making process that was conducive to the so-called EU-Turkey 'migration deal'[4] (Gürkan and Coman 2021; Slominski and Trauner 2018, p. 109; Smeets and Beach 2020b; Wessel 2021). However, these studies lack an empirical analysis of how the EP's eighth legislature mobilised to try to shape EU foreign policy towards Turkey in the context of the refugee crisis. Thus, this article aims to fill this empirical gap by suggesting using the mechanism of political leadership to trace the EP's role.

These are the main contributions of the article. We argue that EP's positional, reputational, and institutional resources in EU foreign policy allow it to play a political leadership role in this policy domain. We propose an analytical framework based on the mechanism of political leadership to trace the role played by the EP in shaping EU foreign policy. Empirically, the analysis of our case study feeds into the claim of NIL since it reveals that the informal governance of the refugee crisis, with the leading role played by the Heads of State or Government (HOSG), favoured the mobilisation of the EP mainly to protect its institutional prerogatives. The article is organised as follows. In the next section, we explain that the EP can play a political leadership in EU foreign policy, and we present our conceptual framework and research design. The subsequent section traces the the EP can play a political leadership role in eighth legislature in two specific areas of EU foreign policy towards Turkey: enlargement and cooperation on migration. In the conclusions, we discuss the factors that shaped the emergence of the EP's political leadership and its impact or lack thereof and the broader applicability of the concept of EP political leadership in EU foreign policy.

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[3]We broadly conceptualise foreign policy as 'the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor' (Hill 2016, p. 4). This definition, applied to the EU, includes the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and all areas of its external action (see also Keukeleire and Delreux 2022, pp. 11–12). We prefer to use the concept of 'foreign policy', rather than 'external relations' because foreign policy 'is both more and less than "external relations"' since it seeks to establish priorities among competing interests with an external dimension (Hill 2016, p. 6).
[4]This expression refers to the two political statements between the EU and Turkey, respectively, of November 2015 and March 2016 (EU-Turkey 2015, 2016).

I. The EP's Political Leadership in EU Foreign Policy: Theory, Conceptual Framework and Research Design

Based on the main characteristics identified by EU leadership studies (see, e.g. Aggestam and Johansson 2020; Müller and Van Esch 2020; Tömmel and Verdun 2017), including studies on EP leadership (Judge and Earnshaw 2008; Maurer 2007; Schoeller 2019; Shackleton 2017), we propose a conceptualisation of political leadership[5] as a process in which a collective actor, with different resources, mobilises, through strategies, to shape the policy outputs and debate according to its ideas. Even though the EP, as a collective actor, is not traditionally considered the institution to provide leadership in the EU (Judge and Earnshaw 2008, p. 246), we argue that thanks to its foreign policy resources, it can play such a role in this domain.

First, thanks to its position in the political system, the EP can count on some degree of autonomy and democratic legitimacy in foreign policy-making. Even though the eighth parliamentary term saw the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure, which challenged the doctrine of separation of powers (Shackleton 2017, 203), the EU's political system is not a full-fledged fusion of powers system. Hence, in contrast to the legislatures of the member states, the EP can pursue a much more autonomous foreign policy that is not necessarily in line with that of the executive (Goinard 2020, p. 119; Jančić 2016, p. 125). Furthermore, the Parliament can rely on its democratic legitimacy as the only directly elected supranational institution in the EU (Jančić 2016, p. 123; Judge and Earnshaw 2008, p. 264).

Second, over the years, the EP has built a reputation as a guardian of EU values and a strong supporter of human rights, democracy and the rule of law worldwide (Feliu and Serra 2015; Jančić 2016, p. 132; Keukeleire and Delreux 2022, p. 111; Wessel 2018, p. 145). Indeed, through its discussions, reports, resolutions and questions to the Commission and the Council, the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World (since 1983), its yearly Sakharov Prize (since 1988), the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (since 1994) and the observation of elections in third countries (since 1994), the Parliament has pressured the other EU institutions and actors external to the EU into taking these issues more seriously. Therefore, even though all EU institutions have to promote the same principles/values in foreign policy (see Art. 2 and 21(1) Treaty on the EU), based on this reputation, the EP is expected to adopt a more principled approach (than the HOSG and the Commission), which prioritises the promotion of EU's principles/values over more pragmatic or contingent issues.[6]

Third, being the largest supranational Parliament in the world, the EP has at its disposal a large number of institutional actors that can contribute to foreign policy-making, such as the President, the Conference of the Presidents, the political groups, the specialised committees on foreign policy, the inter-parliamentary delegations and individual parliamentarians. However, much of the day-to-day work in foreign policy is carried out by the following standing parliamentary committees: the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) with its two subcommittees on Human Rights (DROI) and Security and Defence (SEDE), the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), the

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[5]In this article, we use 'political leadership' and 'leadership' interchangeably.
[6]However, there are also cases in which the EP prioritised political and economic interests over the promotion of values (see Feliu and Serra 2015, p. 23).

Committee on Development (DEVE), the Committee on International Trade (INTA), the Budgets Committee (BUDG) and the Budgetary Control Committee (CONT). At the individual level, a key entrepreneurial role can be played by the President, the Rapporteurs responsible for preparing specific reports and the Chairs of the committees, according to their personality and political capital. The EP's administration supports all these political actors and, in particular, the General Secretariat with its specific Directorate-General for External Policies (EXPO), which can play a key role in policy shaping thanks to its institutional memory and knowledge of procedures and inter-institutional affairs. Moreover, EP committees can mobilise experts to gather the knowledge they lack on specific foreign policy issues. Although some studies are still outsourced to external experts, since 2013, the EP has established its think tank, the European Parliament Research Service, which 'has considerably stepped up the EP's in-house expertise' including on foreign policy (Roederer-Rynning and Greenwood 2017, p. 744).

Furthermore, regarding institutional resources, the EP has specific powers in foreign policy. We distinguish between decision-making power and 'soft power'. Indeed, while the EP can exert decision-making power in most areas of foreign policy through its legislative, budgetary and Commission oversight powers, it can also try to shape the policy debate through its 'soft power'. With this expression, we refer to the EP's consultative role on CFSP and the conduct of its (parliamentary) diplomacy. In terms of the EP's decision-making power in foreign policy, the EP co-legislates with the Council on external action and the external dimension of internal policies, and it must give its consent to international agreements.[7] It co-legislates with the Council on the EU budget, covering the geographic and thematic instruments dealing with third countries, including the budget for operating expenditures under CFSP. Moreover, the Parliament oversees the activities of the Commission in foreign policy areas. At the beginning of each new institutional cycle, with the appointment of the new Commission, the Parliament has the power to evaluate all the proposed Commissioners, including the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP), through hearings by its appropriate committee before the confirmation vote. After that, Parliament can scrutinise the activity of the Commission through dialogue, by asking specific questions, through discussion in open sessions of the general annual report of the Commission, as well as by establishing special committees and committees of inquiry on almost any subject.[8] In terms of EP's 'soft power' in foreign policy, first in the case of CFSP, even though the EP has only a very limited consultative role, its ideas can shape the policy debate through its non-binding resolutions, and the exchange of views with the main CFSP actors (European Council, Council, HR/VP and EEAS). Second, the EP can try to shape the policy debate by constantly monitoring external developments and exercising its diplomacy through interactions with third countries and international organisations (see Fonck 2018; Immenkamp and Bentzen 2019; on EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, see Scotti 2017; Raube et al. 2019; Stavridis and Jančić 2017).

However, since EP resources in foreign policy represent the pre-requisite for exercising political leadership, in this article, we search for evidence of political leadership's causal mechanism (Beach 2016) and its outcome. According to our conceptualisation,

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[7]Except for agreements that relate exclusively to CFSP.
[8]The Parliament also has the right to dismiss the Commission by a vote of censure, even though it has never been used.

Table 1: The EP's Political Leadership in EU Foreign Policy.

| Causal condition (X) | Political leadership's causal mechanism | | Outcome (Y) |
	EP strategies	EP ideas	
EP resources in foreign policy: - Positional - Reputational - Institutional	- Bargaining strategies - Normative pressure strategies	- Overarching goals/ objectives/priorities	- Impact on policy outputs - Impact on policy debate - Lack of impact

Source: Authors' Elaboration.

the mechanism of political leadership is unpacked into strategies and ideas in order to trace the causal process between the EP in the position of power (X) and its outcome (Y) in terms of impact on policy outputs,[9] policy debate[10] or lack of impact (see Table 1). Therefore, we distinguish between the emergence of political leadership (associated with deploying strategies and ideas) and its impact or lack thereof.

On the strategic component of political leadership, the literature on EP's (self-)empowerment in EU policy-making and institutional reform (Rittberger 2014; Héritier et al. 2019) has already identified the main strategies through which EP can mobilise and eventually have an impact on the policy process. These strategies have also been used to investigate the EP's role in a crisis context (Meissner and Schoeller 2019; Schoeller 2019, Ch. 5). Even though, as noticed by Schoeller (2019, pp. 34 and 37), the EP's political leadership can also emerge when other institutions pre-emptively behave as the Parliament wants them to, we focus only on those strategies through which the Parliament actively uses its decision-making powers or 'soft powers'. Indeed, while bargaining strategies (such as sanctioning, delaying, imposing ex ante constraints, arena linking and building alliance) can be associated with EP's decision-making power in foreign policy, normative pressure strategies (such as shaming, blame-shifting, leading by example and mobilising external actors) can be associated with the EP's soft power in foreign policy. On the ideational component of political leadership, the EP's ideas will be identified at the second level of generality (Schmidt 2008, p. 306), which concerns the general programs or paradigms that underpin (first-level) ideas on specific policy solutions. These second-level ideas can be operationalised in terms of the overarching goals, objectives and priorities that guide policies.

The case study of EU foreign policy towards Turkey in the timeframe 2014–2019 has been selected because it developed in the context of the refugee crisis that required the intervention of the European Council. This period was also characterised by a relaunch of EU foreign policy towards Turkey, in particular through the adoption of the EU–Turkey deal that focused not only on cooperation on migration with a total allocation of six billion euros but also promised to relaunch the accession negotiating process,

[9] In terms of legislative acts or political decisions.
[10] It is beyond the scope of this article to provide an accurate measurement of policy debate. Therefore, we only imply that the EP contributes to shaping the policy debate when (1) the EP is the first EU institution to introduce a specific idea or (2) other EU institutions follow this idea.

establish high-level dialogue, speed up visa liberalisation and update the Customs Union. The specific foreign policy areas of enlargement and cooperation on migration were selected because respectively Turkey has been an accession candidate country (since 1999), and since 2015 the refugee crisis led the EU to consider Turkey as a key transit country with which to cooperate in order to stem the flow of migrants across the Aegean Sea. Furthermore, the selected timeframe covers the eighth legislature, which assumes particular significance for EP–Turkey relations since the reaction of the Turkish government to the attempted military coup of 2016 led the EP, traditionally supportive of Turkey's accession, to express itself in favour of the closure of the accession door (see also Kaeding and Schenuit 2021).

The analysis draws considerably on the qualitative analysis of the eighth legislature's resolutions on Turkey and the statements and speeches of the EP President (in particular, Martin Schulz). The activities of the main EP committees and the role played by their Chairs and by the EP President have been reconstructed thanks to in-depth and strictly confidential interviews with MEPs[11] and officers of the cabinet of the EP President, of EXPO and of one political group's Secretariat (see Appendix I for more details). All these interviewees were directly involved in the EP's Turkish dossier. The empirical research has also benefitted from additional in-depth and strictly confidential interviews held with high-level officers of the Commission with expertise on EU–Turkey relations on enlargement and migration and with a former Turkish Ambassador who was directly involved in the negotiations of the EU–Turkey deal (see Appendix I).

II. The EP's Political Leadership in EU Foreign Policy towards Turkey (2014–2019)

In this section, we first trace the role played by the EP's eighth legislature in two specific areas of EU foreign policy towards Turkey – enlargement and cooperation on migration – by looking for evidence of the two components of political leadership (strategies and ideas). Second, we discuss the emergence of leadership and its main outcomes.

Enlargement: A Principled Approach

In the framework of the enlargement policy, the Parliament has two central decision-making powers. First, since the Single European Act, the EP has gained the power to grant or withhold its consent to accession agreements. According to Corbett et al. (2016, 297), the Parliament's power to block accession has 'proved to be (and remains) an influential factor, forcing the other institutions as well as the applicant and candidate states to pay considerable attention to Parliament's positions during the negotiations'. This means that even though the Parliament can exert its formal decision-making power at the end of the accession process, it can monitor this process by using different normative pressure strategies vis-à-vis the other institutions (and the candidate states). The Commission, for example, has to pay considerable attention to

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[11]Although MEPs in relevant committees from all political groups have been contacted, only members of the following groups were available for interviews: Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), European People's Party (EPP) and European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA).

the EP's positions on enlargement since after the release of its reports on the progress made by accession candidate countries in complying with the membership criteria, AFET has to issue its country reports that have to be examined and voted on in the plenary. And differently from the Commission's technical position, the Parliament is expected to express much more politicised conclusions (Interview 1) and outspoken positions driven by a targeted issue-driven agenda very much depending on the political and national composition of the committee itself (Interview 16). Second, in the annual budget framework, the Parliament decides on equal terms with the Council on spending under the pre-accession assistance within the overall ceiling previously established by the Multiannual Financial Framework, to which the EP has to give its consent. This means that the EP and the Council can modify the political direction of pre-accession assistance to promote a shared concern. In the following paragraphs, we trace the role played by the eighth legislature on Turkish enlargement in three main phases: (1) at the beginning of the legislature, that is, before the escalation of the refugee crisis; (2) during the peak of this crisis; (3) in the follow-up of this crisis, that is, after the attempted military coup in Turkey.

At the beginning of the new legislature, the EP's activity on Turkish enlargement continued in a path-dependent manner and was steered by the idea that accession negotiations should be taken seriously. This idea is well represented in the words of EP President Martin Schulz, who affirmed that 'because we take the negotiations with Turkey seriously […] we will be unambiguous in highlighting advances and pointing out where we fear there might be setbacks' (Schulz 2014). Indeed, in this initial phase, unlike the member states that were not showing a credible commitment to the Turkish accession process, President Schulz was very engaged in trying to relaunch the accession process. He believed the EU was losing credibility and was convinced that with a country like Turkey – a key regional player with the second largest army in NATO – the EU could have leverage over it only in accession negotiations (Interview 6).

Therefore, with its resolutions, the eighth legislature continued to normatively pressure Turkey to comply with the EU political conditions under the accession process. With its resolution of November 2014 on Turkish actions in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Cyprus, the EP was the *first institution to react* to the Turkish directive of 3 October 2014 that affected the blocks allocated by Cyprus to international companies for the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in the seabed soil. In particular, it urged Turkey to 'show restraint and act in accordance with international law' (EP 2014). Then, in line with the previous monitoring work of the Parliament on Turkey's accession (see, e.g. Phinnemore and İçener 2016; Scotti 2017, pp. 118–121), the eighth legislature continued to *lead by example* in expressing its concerns over the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. In line with the Parliament's reputation as a guardian of EU values, the eighth legislature adopted, in January 2015, a specific resolution on freedom of expression in Turkey that condemned the detention of several journalists and media representatives on 14 December 2014 and expressed its concern on 'the government's diminishing tolerance of public protest and critical media' (EP 2015a). The respect for EU political conditions was also assessed in the resolution of June 2015 on the Commission Turkey report for 2014, in which the eighth legislature expressed its concerns over the independence of the judiciary, corruption, freedom of expression and freedom of media (EP 2015c). Furthermore, in April 2015, it adopted a specific resolution on the centenary of the Armenian genocide, in which it continued to *lead by example* in

encouraging Ankara 'to come to terms with its past, to recognise the Armenian genocide' (EP 2015b). The recognition of the Armenian genocide has always been a constant theme in the EP's position on Turkey since, even though it is not part of the political conditionality, most groups in the Parliament expect a third country that carries a historical burden to recognise the mistakes made in the past before joining the EU (Interview 8; on the emphasis of the EP on the Armenian genocide, see also Gürkan 2018, pp. 115–118).

The peak of the refugee crisis that hit the EU in the second part of 2015 strongly shaped the activity of the eighth legislature on Turkish enlargement. In this context, the Commission and the HOSG, without any involvement of the Parliament, negotiated the EU–Turkey deal that, in exchange for Ankara's cooperation on migration, also promised to relaunch accession negotiations. During this second phase, the EP's activity was steered by the idea that contingent issues like the refugee crisis should not hide the violations of human rights perpetrated in Turkey nor the slow pace of reforms, which together should form the guiding principles of the accession process (EP 2016b). Indeed, even though the EU–Turkey deal was agreed upon at a time in which Turkey was becoming more authoritarian, there was no mention in the political statements that compose the EU–Turkey deal nor in any of the European Council conclusions of 2015 of the necessity for Turkey to comply with the Union's values, probably for fear that this would make President Erdoğan less amenable to stemming the flux of refugees in Europe.

Therefore, the eighth legislature strongly criticised and *shamed* the Commission and the HOSG for prioritising Turkish cooperation on migration rather than Turkish compliance with the EU's political conditions under the accession process. In particular, the EP first deplored the Commission's deviation from its standard operating procedure on the publication of accession reports, which showed that the Commission could be manipulated (Interview 3). Indeed, at the time of the negotiations of the first political statement with Turkey, the Commission decided to accede to the request from President Erdoğan to postpone the publication of the 2015 critical accession report until after the Turkish national elections, which Erdoğan called to re-establish his party majority in the Parliament (Interviews 3, 4 and 14). The eighth legislature affirmed that it was a 'wrong decision', as it gave the impression that 'the EU is willing to go silent on violations of fundamental rights in return for the Turkish Government's cooperation on refugees', and it asked the Commission 'to commit itself to publishing the annual progress reports in accordance with a specific and fixed timetable' (EP 2016c, point 3). Second, in its resolution on the Commission Turkey report for 2015, adopted by the plenary in April 2016 after the agreement on the second political statement with Ankara, the EP criticised the *de facto* transactional link established by the deal between cooperation on migration and the enlargement negotiations. It stressed that 'EU-Turkey cooperation on migration should not be linked to the calendar, content, and conditionality of the negotiation process' (EP 2016b, point 37). President Schulz had also expressed favouring decoupling the accession path from the refugee crisis to avoid being dependent on Turkey. In the speech he gave at the first EU–Turkey summit on 29 November 2015, he recalled that member states had for many years been reluctant to open new chapters with Turkey because of the lack of a free press in Turkey, and he stated that EU–Turkey relations should not be dictated by the urgency to deal with the crisis (Schulz 2015b). After the second EU–Turkey summit on 7 March 2016, he repeated that 'the accession path and the refugee crisis need to be dealt with separately', as issues such as media freedom, the rule of law and minority protection are 'non-negotiable' issues (Schulz 2016b, pp. 2–3).

Finally, the eighth legislature's activity on Turkish enlargement was remarkably affected by the attempted military coup that occurred the night between 15 and 16 July 2016, when military tanks and soldiers invaded the streets of Ankara. In the aftermath of the coup, President Schulz *took the lead and was the first* representative of the EU to visit Turkey on 1 September and to meet President Erdoğan. The objectives of his mission were to show solidarity with Turkey and to restore EU–Turkey relations (Schulz 2016d). However, as President Erdoğan initiated one of the harshest repressions of political dissent in modern Turkish history, the EP's activity was steered by the ideas that Erdoğan's actions were 'further diverting Turkey from its European path' and that the EU's policy towards Ankara should change accordingly (EP 2016c, point 8). This led the EP to gradually abandon its traditional supportive position towards Turkish accession (see Kaeding and Schenuit 2021, p. 242). First, with its resolution of 24 November 2016, the EP *moved first* in calling 'on the Commission and the Member States [...] to initiate a temporary freeze of the ongoing accession negotiations with Turkey' (EP 2016d, point 1; on the formal suspension of accession negotiations, see EP 2017b, point 8; EP 2019a, point 21; Interview 9). Second, the eighth legislature, starting from the annual budget for 2018, used its budgetary power to negotiate with the Council a cut of pre-accession assistance for Turkey (EP 2017c, 2018, 2019b), which overall amounted to 1.3 billion euros (Interview 1). Finally, with its last resolution on the 2018 Commission report on Turkey, approved in March 2019, the eighth legislature established, for the first time, that EU–Turkey relations should be 'redefined in terms of an effective partnership' (EP 2019a, point 21). This change was also reflected in the words of EP President Antonio Tajani, who affirmed that 'it is clear that Turkey is turning its shoulders to our core values' and that 'it will be hypocritical not to acknowledge this fact and not to draw the inevitable conclusions' (Tajani 2018).

This analysis shows that, in the case of enlargement, the eighth legislature mobilised, in all the three phases examined, to advocate a much more principled approach (than that of the HOSG and the Commission) that prioritised Turkish compliance with the EU political conditions over other issues. Three main factors favoured the emergence of political leadership. First, the EP was able to fill the 'leadership vacuum' (Schoeller 2019, p. 158) left by the strategic considerations of the HOSG and the Commission at the time of the refugee crisis. Second, the Parliament, differently from the HOSG and the Commission, was less concerned about the costs of its position, that is, the harsh reaction of Turkish authorities towards the eighth legislature (see, e.g. Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).[12] Third, during the eighth legislature, it was achieved 'a rare unanimity among the different political groups from the extreme left to the extreme right' was achieved, which, for different reasons, united against Turkey (Interviews 12 and 13). In terms of impact, the EP's political leadership in this policy area contributed to the critical decision of a drastic cut of pre-accession assistance to sanction Turkey for its backsliding on the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Furthermore, it seems that the EP contributed to shaping the policy debate on EU foreign policy towards Turkey. Indeed, the EP was the first EU institution to introduce the idea that Erdoğan's actions were 'further diverting Turkey from its European path' and to call for the formal suspension of

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[12]Indeed, the Parliament was not overly concerned by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' reaction to its resolutions (Interview 8).

accession negotiations. Later on, in June 2018, European ministers gathered in the General Affairs Council largely followed this idea, stating that 'Turkey has been moving further away from the EU' (EU Council 2018, p. 13) and bringing about a *de jure* temporary suspension of accession negotiations (Interview 1).

Cooperation on Migration: A More Pragmatic Approach

The EP's activity on cooperation on migration with Turkey concerned the conclusion and the implementation of the EU–Turkey deal. At that time, with the peak of the refugee crisis and the EU political system under stress, the whole migration dossier was considered to be under tight management by the member states, even though it has been a shared competence since the Lisbon Treaty. Therefore, the Commission operated 'under the strict surveillance of the European Council, with regular contacts with the representatives of the states' (Interviews 2 and 14), and the Parliament was completely excluded from the informal governance that led to the EU–Turkey deal. This was part of a recent trend in the EU to increasingly resort to 'soft' international arrangements, rather than formal international agreements with third countries, to ensure a swift adoption (by lowering the negotiation costs), but bypassing parliamentary influence (see Ott 2020, p. 597; Wessel 2021). In the following paragraphs, we trace the role played by the eighth legislature on three specific issues: (1) the decision to strengthen cooperation on migration with Turkey and the *de facto* recognition of Turkey as a safe third country; (2) the governance of the deal and its implementation concerning the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT); and (3) the acceleration of the visa liberalisation process with Turkey.

On the decision to strengthen cooperation on migration with Turkey,[13] the eighth legislature's activity was steered by the idea that cooperation with Turkey on migration *per se* should not be discarded (EP 2016b, point 37). In the same way, President Schulz agreed to cooperate 'operationally as a Union with partners such as Turkey on the management of our borders' (Schulz 2015a). Therefore, the eighth legislature welcomed the first political statement between the EU and Turkey (EP 2016b, point 43), and it only mobilised to criticise outsourcing the refugee crisis to Ankara. In particular, it affirmed that the 'outsourcing of the refugee crisis to Turkey is not a credible long-term solution to the problem', and it called on 'Member States' solidarity to increase the number of countries that will accept refugees for resettlement in a spirit of burden and responsibility sharing' (EP 2016b, point 37). In the same way, President Schulz stated that '[w]e cannot and should not outsource our problems to Turkey' (Schulz 2016b). Indeed, he was convinced that the crisis the EU was facing was not a migration crisis but a crisis of internal solidarity that should be solved through a common approach at the EU level (Interview 6). On the *de facto* recognition of Turkey as a safe third country, which occurred with the second political statement,[14] LIBE tried to criticise it. However, there was no unanimity since some groups thought it was 'inevitable' (Interview 13). Indeed, most political groups (EPP, S&D and ALDE) adopted a 'realpolitik' stance that prioritised the interests of the member states 'despite the risk of moral hazard in terms of human rights' (Interviews

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[13]EU–Turkey cooperation on migration was established in December 2013, when Ankara signed the Readmission Agreement with the EU, even though it was not fully implemented by Turkey vis-à-vis third-country nationals (Interview 10).
[14]Indeed, the second statement enabled the return to Turkey of asylum seekers arriving at the Greek islands after 20 March 2016.

5, 7 and 8). Only the greens and leftist parties (Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL) criticised the deal for overt breach of international norms on human rights (Interviews 5 and 7). Therefore, the eighth legislature could only *lead by example* in establishing its conditions for the *de facto* recognition of Turkey as a safe third country. It insisted that 'all forced return procedures from Greece to Turkey must be fully in line with international and EU law relating to access to asylum and international protection' (EP 2016b, point 41). And President Schulz (2016c), speaking at the June 2016 European Council, called on all actors involved to make 'this partnership with Turkey work on the ground and on the islands, in full respect of European and international law'.

On the governance of the deal and its implementation concerning the FRIT, the eighth legislature strongly mobilised steered by the idea that also, in a crisis context like the refugee crisis, the Community method of decision-making (and thus the Parliament's prerogatives) should be respected. Notably, on the governance of the deal, it *shamed* the Commission and the HOSG for having purposefully ruled out the involvement of Parliament at any stage of the decision-making process because it fostered 'a growing lack of transparency, democratic accountability and control' (EP 2017a, point 6). On the FRIT, as a new mechanism to mobilise funds from the EU budget and the member states, the eighth legislature considered it to be an instrument effective in its objectives since the Parliament wanted 'to support Syrian refugees and persons under temporary protection by funding access to education, health care, public services, and the labour market' (Schulz 2015a). President Schulz also welcomed the agreement between the member states on the arrangements for the FRIT, as '[i]mplementing projects directly with international organisations, NGOs and local authorities on the ground is the best way to show that the EU is engaged' (Schulz 2016a, p. 4). However, the eighth legislature *shamed* the Commission and the HOSG as they 'excluded Parliament from the deliberations on the setting-up of the Facility' (EP 2016a, point 22) and for allowing it to act only as an ex post budgetary authority for funds from the EU budget (Interviews 1 and 14). According to the Parliament, the FRIT was 'neither inside nor outside the EU budget, therefore lacking the necessary accountability and democratic process prescribed by the Community method' (EP 2016a, point 22).

On the acceleration of the visa liberalisation process for Turkey, the eighth legislature's activity was steered by the ideas that this process should be matched by credible advances in domestic reforms (Interview 11) and that the HOSG should respect the Parliament's prerogatives in this area. Indeed, after the second political statement, which established an acceleration of visa liberalisation for Turkey from October to June 2016, the eighth legislature affirmed that 'visa liberalisation is a merit-based process and that only when the standards have been met, will visa-free travel be possible for Turkish citizens' (EP 2016b, point 44). And President Schulz not only asked the Commission to 'advance a proposal [on visa liberalisation] only when Turkey makes concrete progress on the 72 benchmarks to show a credible and fair approach without adopting double standards', but it also reminded the HOSG that 'the final decision lies between the European Parliament and your Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in the Council. We ask the European Council to hold itself out of legislative detail' (Schulz 2016c, p. 3). Notwithstanding this, on 4 May 2016, the Commission tabled its proposal to initiate visa liberalisation even though five out of the 72 requirements had yet to be fully fulfilled. On the same day, the Conference of the Presidents (2016), at the initiative of President Schulz, declared that

'all applicant countries for visa-free travel will be treated equally and this means a proposal only once all benchmarks have been fulfilled'. However, the EP did not use or threaten to use its legislative power on visa liberalisation again because the attempted military coup in Turkey blocked the whole process.

This analysis has shown that the 'shadow of hierarchy' (Ripoll Servent 2019), which characterised the informal governance of the refugee crisis with the HOSG and the Commission bypassing the Parliament to find a solution urgently (Interviews 10 and 15), favoured the eighth legislature's mobilisation to protect the EP's institutional prerogatives. However, on the issue of the *de facto* recognition of Turkey as a safe third country, the eighth legislature (as a collective actor) was unable to mobilise to contest it. Indeed, on this issue, the leadership emergence was hampered by the lack of unanimity in the Parliament due to some political groups' perception of high national-level costs associated with leading. Therefore, on this issue, the eighth legislature advocated a more pragmatic approach that clashed with its reputation as the guardian of EU values in foreign policy. Even though there was no EP impact on the negotiation and adoption of the EU–Turkey deal, the EP's mobilisation probably contributed to shaping the policy debate. Indeed, in the weeks that followed the second political statement, the Commission negotiated with Turkey 'everything that was in the Geneva Conventions, covering Syrians and other refugees' (Interview 14). Similarly, the EP's mobilisation against *ad hoc* funding solutions outside the EU budget, like the FRIT, seems to have contributed (together with the reports of the European Court of Auditors) to shaping the policy debate. Indeed, in June 2021, the Commission announced that additional 3 billion euros to support refugees in Turkey would come 'entirely from the EU budget' (Von der Leyen 2021; Interview 15).

Conclusions

This article has traced the EP's political leadership in EU foreign policy towards Turkey during the refugee crisis. We have proposed a definition of political leadership as a process in which a collective actor, with different resources, mobilises, through strategies, to shape the policy outputs and debate according to its ideas. We have argued that the EP finds itself in a position of power thanks to its foreign policy resources. Therefore, it can mobilise these resources through bargaining or normative pressure strategies to promote its ideas. Moreover, we have distinguished between the emergence of political leadership (associated with deploying strategies and ideas) and its impact on policy outputs, debate or lack thereof. Finally, from an ideational perspective, we have expected the EP's reputation in EU foreign policy to make it adopt a more principled approach than the HOSG and the Commission.

The empirical analysis has shown that in both areas (enlargement and cooperation on migration), the Parliament emerged as a political leader since it mobilised, mainly through normative pressure strategies to advocate different priorities. Indeed, while in the area of enlargement, it prioritised Turkish compliance with EU political conditions, in the area of cooperation on migration, it prioritised the protection of its institutional prerogatives. The analysis reveals that the emergence of political leadership on a specific issue/priority can be enabled by (1) the crisis context with the consequent European Council domination of the informal governance of the crisis; (2) the presence of a leadership vacuum on that issue; (3) the Parliament's perception of no high costs of leading (at the member states level

or external level); and (4) the lack of division in the Parliament on that issue. In terms of the EP's impact or lack thereof, the empirical analysis reveals that, with the only notable exception of the Parliament's contribution to the drastic cut of pre-accession assistance, the EP was unable to shape the main policy outputs in both enlargement and cooperation on migration. Two main factors constrained the EP's impact on policy outputs: (1) the lack of formal decision-making power and (2) the informal governance of the refugee crisis that bypassed the EP's formal prerogatives. However, even though it should be further investigated, the analysis suggests that some of the EP's ideas introduced and mobilised by the eighth legislature, through its normative pressure strategies, shaped the policy debate on EU foreign policy towards Turkey. Indeed, our analysis preliminarily suggests that the EP's ideas might play a role in shaping the policy debate in the post-decision phases (implementation and evaluation) and also in the following legislative term. Therefore, future research might consider shedding further light on the feedback effects of the EP's ideas.

From an ideational perspective, the EP's political leadership in EU foreign policy towards Turkey revealed a contradictory approach. Indeed, it appeared more principled in the enlargement policy since it was inspired by the respect of EU political conditions and a set of normative procedural principles that the EU ought to follow in this policy.[15] Conversely, the EP's approach in the area of cooperation on migration was more pragmatic in that it focused more on protecting its institutional prerogatives, thus eventually accepting the *de facto* recognition of Turkey as a safe third country. This contradictory approach contrasts the expectations deriving from the long-standing reputation of the EP as the guardian of EU values and principles in foreign policy and deeply affects this reputation. Since the EP is a very active player in EU foreign policy, our conceptualisation of political leadership might be a helpful tool to empirically investigate both the strategic and normative roles effectively played by the Parliament in this policy domain.

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[15]No deviation from the standard operating procedure for publishing country reports and no transactional link between enlargement and migration.

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Appendix I: List of Interviews

Interview number	Place and date(s)	Institution (position at the time of the interview)
1	Remote: 5 June 2020; 14 and 28 August 2020; 10 November 2020	European Commission services (Head)
2	Remote: 24 June 2020; 29 November 2021	European Commission services (former Director General)
3	Remote: 1 July 2020; 9 December 2021	Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (former Ambassador)
4	Remote: 3 and 7 July 2020	European Commission services (Director)
5	Remote: 7 July 2020	MEP, GUE/NGL
6	Remote: 8 and 15 July 2020	Cabinet of EP President Schulz (Staff member)
7	Remote: 15 July 2020	MEP, Greens/EFA
8	Remote: 20 July 2020	MEP, EPP
9	Remote: 28 July 2020	European Parliament DG External Policies (Officer)
10	Remote: 16 October 2020	European Commission services (former Director General)
11	Remote: 22 October 2020	MEP, S&D
12	Remote: 13 November 2020	MEP, GUE/NGL
13	Remote: 17 November 2020	MEP, S&D
14	Remote: 17 November 2020; 3 December 2021	European Commission services (former Deputy Director General)
15	Remote: 9 February 2022	European Commission services (Director General)
16	Rome: 18 November 2022	EPP Secretariat (Staff)