Abstract

In 2015, an unprecedented number of migrants entering the EU, and the failure to coordinate the inflow of migrants on the basis of solidarity led to an exponential growth in externalisation policies aimed at curbing migration flows. Readmission composed an important part of this strategy, constituting one of the EU's priorities. Many of the readmission agreements signed during the 8th parliamentary term took the form of informal agreements in which the European Parliament has no formal role. Previous research on the topic has argued that, in the wake of the migration crisis, the European Council cast a "shadow of hierarchy" on the European Parliament, actively undermining its role. However, an in-depth analysis of the arguments and drivers from the perspective of the European Parliament had, so far, not been conducted. Therefore, this thesis aimed to answer the following question: **what drives contestation by the European Parliament of informal readmission agreements?** To explain limited but varying Parliamentary opposition to informal readmission agreements and identify the drivers and arguments for contestation, this thesis conducted a qualitative comparative small n case study of 3 agreements (Turkey, Afghanistan and Ethiopia). The theoretical framework by Thevenin, which identifies means and motives for contestation, serves as a basis for the analysis. The analysis found that informal while readmission is generally not considered an important topic by MEPs, six factors can drive contestation: information as a precondition, salience, concerns for the respect for human rights and international law, defence of the Parliament's prerogatives, prior relations with the partner country, and the ideological composition of the Parliament. The results of this thesis suggest that one should look past the idea of a simple shadow of hierarchy cast by the Council upon the EP; and that several motives for contestation explain, at least in part, the disengagement of the Parliament from informal readmission agreements.